

“THE GRIEVING BEFORE THE REJOICING”

Joel 2

An Army of Locusts

**Blow the trumpet in Zion;
sound the alarm on my holy hill.
Let all who live in the land tremble,
for the day of the Lord is coming.
It is close at hand—**

2

**a day of darkness and gloom,
a day of clouds and blackness.
Like dawn spreading across the mountains
a large and mighty army comes,
such as never was in ancient times
nor ever will be in ages to come.**

11

**The Lord thunders
at the head of his army;
his forces are beyond number,
and mighty is the army that obeys his
command.
The day of the Lord is great;**

**it is dreadful.
Who can endure it?
Rend Your Heart**

12

**“Even now,” declares the Lord,
“return to me with all your heart,
with fasting and weeping and mourning.”**

13

**Rend your heart
and not your garments.
Return to the Lord your God,
for he is gracious and compassionate,
slow to anger and abounding in love,
and he relents from sending calamity.**

14

**Who knows? He may turn and relent
and leave behind a blessing—
grain offerings and drink offerings
for the Lord your God.**

15

**Blow the trumpet in Zion,
declare a holy fast,
call a sacred assembly.**

16

**Gather the people,
consecrate the assembly;**

**bring together the elders,
gather the children,
those nursing at the breast.
Let the bridegroom leave his room
and the bride her chamber.**

17

**Let the priests, who minister before the Lord,
weep between the portico and the altar.
Let them say, “Spare your people, Lord.
Do not make your inheritance an object of
scorn,
a byword among the nations.
Why should they say among the peoples,
‘Where is their God?’”
The Lord’s Answer**

18

**Then the Lord was jealous for his land
and took pity on his people.**

19 The Lord replied[a] to them:

**“I am sending you grain, new wine and olive oil,
enough to satisfy you fully;
never again will I make you
an object of scorn to the nations.**

20

**“I will drive the northern horde far from you,
pushing it into a parched and barren land;
its eastern ranks will drown in the Dead Sea
and its western ranks in the Mediterranean
Sea.**

**And its stench will go up;
its smell will rise.”**

Surely he has done great things!

21

**Do not be afraid, land of Judah;
be glad and rejoice.**

Surely the Lord has done great things!

22

**Do not be afraid, you wild animals,
for the pastures in the wilderness are
becoming green.**

**The trees are bearing their fruit;
the fig tree and the vine yield their riches.**

23

**Be glad, people of Zion,
rejoice in the Lord your God,
for he has given you the autumn rains
because he is faithful.**

**He sends you abundant showers,
both autumn and spring rains, as before.**

24

**The threshing floors will be filled with grain;
the vats will overflow with new wine and oil.**

25

**“I will repay you for the years the locusts have
eaten—**

**the great locust and the young locust,
the other locusts and the locust swarm[b]—
my great army that I sent among you.**

26

**You will have plenty to eat, until you are full,
and you will praise the name of the Lord
your God,**

**who has worked wonders for you;
never again will my people be shamed.**

27

**Then you will know that I am in Israel,
that I am the Lord your God,
and that there is no other;
never again will my people be shamed.**

The Day of the Lord

28

**“And afterward,
I will pour out my Spirit on all people.
Your sons and daughters will prophesy,
your old men will dream dreams,
your young men will see visions.**

29

**Even on my servants, both men and women,
I will pour out my Spirit in those days.**

30

**I will show wonders in the heavens
and on the earth,
blood and fire and billows of smoke.**

31

**The sun will be turned to darkness
and the moon to blood
before the coming of the great and dreadful
day of the Lord.**

32

**And everyone who calls
on the name of the Lord will be saved;
for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem
there will be deliverance,
as the Lord has said,
even among the survivors
whom the Lord calls.**

I would like to take as the basis of my sermon this morning Joel two. Ordinarily, I would've preached on the third Fruit of the Spirit, peace. That was my intention originally.

Today we were supposed to have a guest preacher, **Francois Augustin**, but because of unforeseen circumstances he was not able to be with us today. So I have taken the opportunity to continue the sermon that I started last Sunday.

I feel a **sense of urgency** about this. This is why I am postponing the third sermon of the series on the Fruit of the Spirit.

Last Easter Sunday, I spoke of the valley of dry bones and the resurrection that needs to take place within the Church, both at an individual as well as a collective level.

Ezekiel 37 applies to the Church as a whole, to Lion Of Judah more specifically, and to each individual that makes up our congregation as well.

At the **center of this passage is the action of the Spirit of God**, giving Ezekiel the power to bring life to the dry bones, and to turn them from an image of death into a powerful army that will do God's will.

In our own time, it is clear that **only a powerful, unprecedented visitation of the Holy Spirit can**

change the dismal state of the world and the Church.

Especially, **only a Church moving in the power and under the direction of the Holy Spirit** can bring life to dead souls that desperately need the gospel. Only then will we be able to move in that Ezekiel power that is expressed in Ezekiel 37.

The **Church** of Jesus in our time **desperately needs revival**. We must passionately seek a visitation from God in our time. We must knock at God's door until we see the life of God emerging once more within the Church.

Again, **the benefit is not for the Church alone**. Revival is useful only to the degree that it leads to evangelism, consecration and the conversion of souls.

But revival is costly. It requires that we acknowledge our poverty, that we repent of our sins, and that we call out to the Lord for forgiveness and a fresh visitation.

This is the message of **2 Chronicles 7:14**:

14 if my people, who are called by my name, will humble themselves and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and I will forgive their sin and will heal their land.

These words were pronounced upon the **inauguration of Solomon's temple.**

God promises that in that place where he's being worshiped, he will listen to the prayers of his people in times of emergency like the ones we are experiencing now.

This is **not the time for us to expect cheap grace!** Revival will cost us something. As a matter of fact it will cost us death. If God is going to visit us, we have to enter into a process of renunciation and consecration of ourselves.

Each of us must begin to take God seriously. We must experience a sort of second conversion experience.

Jesus has said clearly that if **the grain of wheat** does not fall to the ground and die it will remain by itself. But if it dies it will bear much fruit. Let us stop

resisting the call to consecrate and sanctify ourselves.

The only way to become a productive, fruitful member of the kingdom of God is to yield ourselves to the Lord as a living sacrifice, according to the words of **Romans chapter 12.**

Also, **only then can we begin to experience** the blessing and the confirmation of the Lord upon our lives.

A Living Sacrifice

12 Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, *to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice*, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.

2 Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Let me repeat this: **the requirement for the Lord** to visit us in a powerful way, and for us to each

experience the blessings that God wants to send to us and to our families, is **to consecrate ourselves**, and to remove all that grieves his Spirit and prevents His power from manifesting itself through us.

Being more specific, **Joel chapter 2 is a spiritual recipe for us** at this time, on how to seek and experience the renewing visitation that we so need. **I will proceed to examine it in detail.**

The whole book of Joel is **a detailed description of a land in crisis**, ravaged by a plague of locusts which is an expression of God's displeasure with a people who have offended him with their sinfulness. As a result he has visited them with plague and judgment.

Wherever there is individual and collective sin, disaster is not far off. If we look at the first 20 years of this century, it has been one major disaster after another both at a national and an international level.

The Covid situation is just one example of many terrible things that we have experienced in the world in the past couple of decades.

It is clear that **God is up to something in our time**. Like never before, the world is experiencing

convulsions at a grand scale. **This is a time like no other.**

The Lord may not come tomorrow, but **it is clear that the day of his coming it's not far away.** Joel is a prophetic, end times book. Like the prophecy of Ezekiel, its fulfillment is for more than one time.

Clearly, it applies to **the historical time that Joel writes in**, referring to the people of Israel. But the apostle **Peter on the day of Pentecost also applied** this prophecy to what the church was experiencing during Pentecost. **(Acts 2:14-17)**

Peter's Sermon at Pentecost

14 But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them: “Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. 15 For these people are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day.[a] 16 But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel:

17

“And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh,

**and your sons and your daughters shall
prophecy,
and your young men shall see visions,
and your old men shall dream dreams;**

But **the book of Joel also speaks** about “**the day of the Lord**”. Other elements in the book would seem to suggest that it also has a final application, at the end of time.

“**The day of the Lord**” is a very specific term that is used for the end times, when the Lord sends his final judgment upon the earth before the Second Coming of Jesus. So, we’re talking about three applications throughout history to this prophecy of Joel 2. That’s how important it is!

The book begins with **a description of total desolation** in the light of Israel’s sinfulness.

Joel 1:11ff describes the barrenness of the land. This physical barrenness is a mirror image of the devastation at the spiritual level. It is immediately followed by a call to the people to repent and to cry out to the Lord.

That action **must begin with the priests**, who must sanctify themselves and cry out to the Lord with weeping and sack cloth. **See Joel 1:13-15.**

It is clear that **we pastors and spiritual leaders in general must lead by example** and be the first to seek this sanctification and this consecration. More than ever, I am feeling this call to banish from my life every possible thing that might grieve the Spirit of the Lord and prevent his power from manifesting itself through me.

I call upon all the leaders and pastors of this church to do the same thing.

This action of consecration must then continue on to the lay men and women of the church. I have a clear sense of urgency about this. There are many people in this congregation that are mere Sunday goers. Many of us need a major spiritual tuneup. Many of you also are very casual about your commitment to the Lord.

Men, the Lord is calling you to become spiritual leaders of your family, to become students and doers of the word of God, to lead your wives and your children into intimate relationship with the Lord. You must get up earlier and go to bed later seeking

the face of God and praying for him to visit you and to purify you.

Our **young people** need to start taking God more seriously: less Internet and more prayer. Less screen time and more God time.

Teachers and general leaders of the church: let's go into a deeper level of intimacy with God. Let us examine ourselves and ask the Holy Spirit to show us how to draw nearer to him, and how to let go of anything that grieves the spirit of the Lord.

All spiritual leaven must be removed from ur lives!

(From chosenpeople.com):

During Passover, observant Jewish people refrain from eating leaven. This tradition comes from God's commandment to Israel in the Torah, "For seven days no leaven shall be found in your houses, since whoever eats what is leavened, that same person shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he is a stranger or a native of the land. You shall eat nothing leavened; in all your dwellings you shall eat unleavened bread" (Ex 12:19-20). As Jewish people prepare for Passover, each family removes the leaven from their home. Then, during a

ceremony called Bedikat Chametz, every traditional household conducts a final search for leaven throughout the house, gathers it together and burns it, after which the house is kosher for Passover.

Paul uses this Jewish practice as the background to his discussion in 1 Corinthians 5:6-8, “Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.”

At that time, the believing community of Corinth was tolerant of gross immorality. Paul compares sin to leaven and commands the congregation at Corinth to clean out the sin from within their midst in the same way the Jewish community removes leaven from their homes during Passover. Just as leaven permeates an entire lump of dough, sinful behavior affects the entire life of an individual and congregation. If the congregation at Corinth did not deal with the wicked behavior in their midst, then this behavior would defile the whole community.

I believe the Lord may be speaking to me and to the whole church **to dedicate a time to seeking his face** more deliberately.

Let us pray in the next few days the Lord will show us how to do this and when to do it. I know that it is not too far from now. I pray that the Lord will give me and you the determination and consistency to do this. I pray that He will show us the specific way to bring about this time of congregational sanctification.

Joel 2:1-2 continues, declaring: “blow the trumpet in Zion.”

Then, beginning in verse 12 there is a repeated call to fasting and weeping and mourning, and intense crying out to the Lord.

Verse 15 reemphasizes this call in very specific, graphic terms. There is no doubt that this **consecration has to be completely general.** It involves everyone in the land— “the children, the elders and those nursing at the breast”. Nobody should miss out on this general consecration.

Again in verse 17 there is a call to the priests to lead the people in crying out to the Lord.

Beginning with Joel 2, verses 18 and following, There is a clear promise of blessing after this time of weeping, self- humbling and crying out to the Lord.

This time of grieving is immediately followed by the visitation of God. It is expressed in terms of images of abundance.

In verse 19, the images of grain, new wine and oil speak of the Word of God, the joy of the Lord and the anointing of the Holy Spirit flowing freely among God's people.

It is **not just physical sustenance and material prosperity**, but especially the blessings of God flowing generously among his people.

Verse 20b to verse 24 speak of the **great abundance that God's people will receive when they follow God's prescriptions** for renewal and revival.

And, finally, beginning with verse 28 until the end of the chapter in verse 32, there are glorious images of the power of God inundating and flooding his people.

This is the passage that Peter used on the day of Pentecost. Peter makes it clear that the visitation of the Holy Spirit that the apostles were experiencing was what Joel had prophesied in Joel chapter 2.

But of course, given **the last days nature of Joel 2**, we know that this very same prophecy is also for the end times.

This is the latter rain that must come before Jesus Christ comes again. **(James 5:7-9)**

Patience in Suffering

7 Be patient, then, brothers and sisters, until the Lord's coming. See how the farmer waits for the land to yield its valuable crop, patiently waiting for the autumn and spring rains. 8 You too, be patient and stand firm, because the Lord's coming is near. 9 Don't grumble against one another, brothers and sisters, or you will be judged. The Judge is standing at the door!

Before Jesus' coming, the Church will experience an **extraordinary visitation** of the Holy Spirit.

This is what we must be yearning and crying out for. There are glorious days ahead for the Church.

We must hold out for this great visitation of the Spirit. It is possible that this will take place during our time, the very time that we are living in right now.

Only after that will we see the second coming of Jesus Christ. We must prepare the way for his Second Coming. The time is now!