

Revive Us Again

Part 5—Sacred Assembly

October 5, 2014

Introduction

- Since we began planning for the Sacred Assembly event look at what has happened in our nation:
 - Our nation is at war with ISIS in Syria and Iraq, and the brutality continues
 - An American has been beheaded in Moore, OK
 - The ebola disease has arrived in America less than two weeks after President says, "Unlikely." Ten are currently in quarantine, and one hundred are reporting symptoms, but no diagnosis.
- All of these things are physical examples of our spiritual condition. Our defenses are down, we are vulnerable to attack, no one in authority seems to get it! "We need to be more like Disney World," Pierson reportedly said this past spring as she tried to downgrade her agency's security plan for President Obama's U.S.-Africa Leaders' Summit. "We need to be more friendly, inviting."
- Our friendly invitation will turn into deadly destruction if we don't wake up

Why God Calls His People to Sacred Assembly

Joel 1:1–2

- We are living in unprecedented times, we haven't seen this in our day or our father's day. The church, nation and world are all going crazy
- God calls His people to Sacred Assembly during unprecedented times

Joel 1:3

- We need to involve the generations and teach them so they don't repeat the same foolishness that has caused these times!

Joel 1:4

- A literal locust invasion that devastated the land, its resources and people. It was the result of God's displeasure with His increasingly sinful people. They recognized that and we haven't yet. President Lincoln said the Civil War was result of the nation's sin.

Joel 1:5

- Awake, you drunkards, and weep; and wail, all you drinkers of wine, because of the new wine, for it has been cut off from your mouth.

Joel 1:6–7

- These verses refer to locusts as a nation because symbolically they represent the nation coming to destroy Israel (or our nation today) if there isn't repentance.

Joel 1:8

- God says, "I want you to respond to this disaster by lamenting and mourning like an engaged virgin whose fiancé has been killed." Respond to these times like the death of dreams, hope and promise being unfulfilled, now!

Joel 1:9–14

- Verse 9–12 Joel speaks more about devoured resources
- God gives more responsive instruction—mourn, lament, wail, consecrate a fast, call a sacred assembly, gather the elders, and all inhabitants cry out to the LORD!

Joel 1:15–18

- We need to see with the eyes of the Spirit or we're finished as a nation. It's the church's responsibility to see that way, and not the government's job!

Joel 1:19–20

- I'm seeing and responding, even if it's only these beasts of the field and me. Ironically, the beasts seem to get it more than some people!

Joel 2:1

- God gives a more instructive response—blow a trumpet, sound the alarm, and tremble. The Day of the Lord is coming—personal, national and eternal. We need to make necessary changes now to prepare for all three!

Joel 2:2–11

- These verses describe the barbaric nation that is coming to attack Israel as God's judgment for their nonstop rebellious, and defiant sinning.

Joel 2:12–17

- God gives more detailed instructive response. Now, therefore, turn to Him with ALL your heart, fasting, weeping, mourning, rend heart, return to the LORD.
- He relents from doing harm, He might relent and leave a blessing if we blow a trumpet, consecrate a fast, call a sacred assembly, gather people, sanctify congregation, assemble elders, gather babies, the bride and groom come out from their chamber, weep, and intercede!

Joel 2:18–20

- God responds with zeal, pity, blessing and deliverance for His people!
- IMPORTANT: God responds how we want, when we respond how He wants!

Joel 2:21

- Fear not. Be glad and rejoice. Why? Because the Lord has done marvelous things!

Joel 2:22–27

- A list of blessings He'll pour out—resources, rejoicing, rain, overflow, restoration, satisfaction, and His presence in our midst!

Joel 2:28–29, 32

- Afterward—after responding in the way God asks us to respond we see an outpouring of His Spirit.
- Historical revival fact—sons and daughters prophesy, old men dream dreams, young men see visions, menservants and maidservants receive outpouring, and salvation of whosoever calls on Name of Lord.

The time is now for us to do what God has called us to do, in hopes that God will do what we ask Him to do. This doesn't happen apart from humbling ourselves and praying, seeking His face, and turning from our wicked ways. THEN God hears from heaven, forgives our sin and heals our land!

Discussion Questions

1. How have you seen current events change in the last two weeks? How does what is happening make Joe's message clearer and more urgent?
2. Do you ever struggle with feeling complacent? In what ways does Joel's vivid images of destruction awaken you from any spiritual stupor?
3. What is the danger of only listening to and following God one day a week (Sunday)? In what ways do these two chapters from Joel open your eyes to the necessity of faithfully following God every moment of your life?
4. Read Judges 20:26. The Israelites had a tradition of holding special services of national lament. Joel was convinced the time had come for such a service (a Sacred Assembly). Is it time for our nation to lament? What current misfortunes do you see as plagues (locusts in Joel)? How can we lament and repent from them? What are you doing to be a part of continual lamenting, mourning and praying for our country?
5. Joel first addresses the drunkards (Joel 1:5). This group may be blind to the present distress because of their intoxication. When will they be "wide awake"? Is it too late? What intoxicates our current world? What can wake us up? Is it too late?
6. Joel 2 says to blow the trumpet and sound the alarm because the day of the Lord is coming. It says to return to God with fasting, and weeping, and mourning, because the nation has gone against God. Are we living in the season of the Lord's return? What is God personally challenging you to do?
7. Read Joel 2:12-17. When the judgement of God is ready to break, the only escape lies in God Himself. Do you believe this? What are some ways in a culture fascinated by "me" that we could help people see God Himself?
8. Read Ezekiel 33:11. What is God's response to people who repent? Does that give you hope for our country? Why? What are some ways you can communicate His love and mercy to others whom you meet?
9. Joel 1 and 2 calls people to a change of heart, to return to God. What is God telling you in these verses? What challenges you? What are you going to do as a result?
10. What was your response to Sacred Assembly?