

I. THE ESCALATING GLOBAL CRISIS AND COMING SHAKING (PS. 2)

A. When asked about the signs preceding His return, Jesus likened 18 major trends to “birth pangs” that would be discernible, simultaneous and universal to awaken the Church to prepare (Mt. 24; Mk. 13; Lk. 21).

***Mt. 24:4 “Take heed no one deceives you. 5 For many will come in My name, saying, ‘I am the Christ,’ and will deceive many... 7 Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes... 8 All [18 of] these are the beginning of sorrows [lit. birth pangs]”.***

B. In Psalm 2 David prophesied of a global crisis that would crescendo in the generation of the LORD’s return. Charles Spurgeon [1834-1892] described Psalm 2 as theatrical drama having four acts.

ACT I. *Kings’ opposition*: Seeking to remove the influence of God’s Word in culture and society (2:1-3)

ACT II. *Father’s declaration*: Exalting Jesus as King and confronting the rebellion against Him (2:4-6)

ACT III. *Jesus’ intercession*: Interceding in agreement with the Father’s decrees about Him (2:7-9)

ACT IV. *Holy Spirit’s exhortation*: Calling people to gratefully engage with God in reverent joy (2:10-12)

C. ACT I: Kings (heads of state) and rulers in society rage in defiant opposition to Jesus’ rightful leadership, along with His ways (moral standards), as seen in His Word, seeking to completely remove its’ influence from culture and society, including the sanctity of life, marriage and sexuality (2:1-3). They see God’s Word, as “*bonds*” enslaving them to ancient ways and “*cords*” hindering their personal freedom and human potential.

***Ps. 2:1 Why do the nations rage, and the people plot a vain thing? 2 The kings of the earth [heads of state] set themselves, and the rulers [leaders in society] take counsel together, against the Lord and against His Anointed, saying, 3 “Let us break Their bonds in pieces and cast away Their cords from us.”***

D. The rage in society against Jesus will escalate far beyond people merely *voicing negative opinions* against God’s people and truth to kings and world leaders using their authority and state resources to *war against God’s plans and His people* via hate crimes, prison, and even death (Rev. 11:7; 12:17; 13:7; 17:14; 19:19).

***Mt. 24:9 They will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations...***

E. ACT II: The Father’s responds by declaring His purpose to exalt Jesus as King over the nations (v. 6), while distressing the kings with judgment (v. 5). The Father is raising up faithful witnesses and will shake the nations (Hag. 2:6-9; Heb. 12:25-29). At the 7th trumpet, loud voices declare Jesus’ dominion (Rev. 11:15).

***Ps. 2:4 He who sits in the heavens shall laugh... 5 He shall speak to them in His wrath, and distress them in His deep displeasure: 6 “Yet I have set My King [Jesus] on My holy hill of Zion.”***

F. ACT III: Jesus responds to the escalating crisis by *simply agreeing* with the Father’s will (2:7-9). Why? Faith-filled words of agreement are the *primary way* God establishes His divine will and releases His power.

***Ps. 2:7 “I will declare the decree: The Lord [Father] has said to Me, ‘You are My Son... 8 Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Your possession.”***

G. ACT IV: Holy Spirit exhorts all to gratefully engage with God in reverent joy that flows from affection not just duty (vs. 10-12). In context this includes *speaking His message* (vs. 5-6) and *engaging in prayer* (v. 8).

***Ps. 2:10 Therefore, be wise, O kings; be instructed, you judges of the earth. 11 Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice [gratitude] with trembling. 12 Kiss the Son, lest He be angry, and you perish in the way...***

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## II. THE PSALM 2 CRISIS, REQUIRES A JOEL 2 RESPONSE, RESULTING IN AN ACTS 2 OUTPOURING!

A. God is calling the Church to understand the *escalating crisis* and *promised victory* in this hour, so we can respond in the way Scripture teaches. The book of Joel was graciously given by the Holy Spirit to teach God's people how to respond to Him in national crisis (when there is no human solution) so He can intervene with great power, mercy and deliverance. What God does to Israel He will do to all in *like kind*, but *lesser measure*.

B. Due to God's merciful nature, He progressively shakes a nation, giving them time to respond in voluntary agreement (Ps. 107). If they refuse, the pressure continues to escalate (Lev. 26:14-45; Am. 4:6-12). Since the purpose is to remove disagreement with His will (rebellion), shaking need not occur where there's agreement.

***Lev. 26:27 'After all this, if you... walk contrary to Me, 28 then I... will chastise you seven times more...***

C. Joel 1 begins with unprecedented *natural disaster* (v. 2) and God releasing four waves of *locust* that devour the land (vs. 4-6), followed by *drought* (vs. 8-12), *famine* (vs. 16-18), *economic crisis* and finally *wildfires* that burn up Israel's agricultural reserves (vs. 19-20). Joel attributed this crisis to the LORD (v. 15) and calls Israel to gather before Him in the house of prayer. Why? Because of His earlier promise (2 Chr. 7:13-14).

***Joel 1:14 Consecrate a fast, call a sacred assembly; gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land into the house of the Lord your God, and cry out to the Lord. 15 For the day of the Lord is at hand...***

***2 Chr. 7:13 When I shut up heaven and there is no rain, or... devour the land [natural disaster], or send pestilence... 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, forgive their sin and heal their land.***

D. Due to Israel's inability to discern God's involvement and lack of wholehearted response, what began as *natural disaster* (Joel 1) escalates to *military invasion* in God's desire to get their full attention (Joel 2:1-11).

***Joel 2:1 Blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble... 2 A people come, great and strong, the like of whom has never been; nor will ever be...***

E. God shows us how to *confidently respond* to Him during a national crisis (with no human remedy) so He can intervene with great power, mercy and deliverance. We are to *turn to Him* with all of our heart (2:12-17) and pray for a *great outpouring* of the Holy Spirit (2:28-31), while asking Him to *relent in mercy* (v. 13).

***Joel 2:12 "Therefore," says the Lord, "Turn to Me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning." 13 So rend your heart, and not your garments; return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness; and He relents from doing harm. 14 Who knows if He will turn and relent, and leave a blessing... 15 Blow the trumpet in Zion, consecrate a fast, call a sacred assembly; 16 gather the people... the congregation... the elders, gather the children and nursing babes...***

F. The result of our wholehearted gatherings of prayer (vs. 12-17) is the promised outpouring of the Holy Spirit (vs. 28-32), as seen in Acts. Peter responded to the accusation of drunkenness by pointing to Joel 2!

***Joel 2:28 "And it shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions... 30 And I will show wonders in the heavens and in the earth... 31 Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord. 32 And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."***

## III. THE MERCIFUL GOD WHO RELENTS FROM HARM AND RELEASES A BLESSING

A. When God shakes a nation to awaken love He's looking for only *one response* – a wholehearted turning of the heart expressed through individual repentance and corporate gatherings - *sacred assemblies* (Joel 2:12-17). “Who knows” if God will *relent* and change His decree of judgment by sending blessing (1 Sam. 14:6; 2 Sam. 12:15-23; 16:12; Joel 2:14; Zeph. 2:1-3; Am. 5:14-15; Jon. 1:6; 3:9; Jer. 51:6-8; Dan. 4:27; Hab. 3:16)?

**Joel 2:14 *Who knows if He will turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind Him... ?***

B. I marvel that God has it in His heart to reason with men (Isa. 1:18; Joel 2:17), even “changing His mind” or changing the outcome based upon our wholehearted response of agreement with His heart, will and ways.

**Jer. 18:7 *The instant I speak concerning a nation to pluck up, to pull down, and to destroy it, & if that nation... turns from its evil, I will relent of the disaster that I thought to bring upon it.***

C. There are *two stages* in God's judgments:

1. A decree of judgment is established in God's heavenly court (1 Kgs. 22:19-23; 2 Chr. 18:18-22; Dan. 4:13-17; 7:9-10, 22, 26; Zeph. 2:1-3).

**Dan. 7:9 *The Ancient of Days was seated; His garment was white as snow, and the hair of His head was like pure wool. His throne was a fiery flame... 10 The court was seated, and the books were opened.***

2. The decree is issued in *fullness*, releasing angels to execute judgment (Ezek. 9; Dan. 7:22, 26; Rev. 8-9; 15-16), or it can be *minimized* (2 Sam. 24:10-14), *delayed* until future evaluation (1 Kgs. 21:21-29; 2 Chr. 34:22-28), *reverted* after release (2 Kgs. 20:1-11; 2 Chr. 7:14; 33:9-13; Isa. 38:1-8) or *averted altogether* (Gen. 18:22-33; Ex. 32: 9-14; Jer. 18:7-10; Ezek. 18:21-22, 27-28; 33:10-16; Am. 7:1-6; Jon. 3:4-10).

**Zeph. 2:1 *Gather yourselves together [sacred assembly]... 2 before the decree [of judgment] is issued... 3 Seek the LORD, all you meek of the earth... Seek righteousness... it may be that you will be hidden [protected from judgment] in the day of the Lord's anger.***

D. Due to the agreement of God's people there will be “pockets of mercy” where people, cities and whole geographic regions are “*hidden*” (i.e. protected) during judgment (Zeph. 2:3; cf. Ezek. 9:4-5; Am. 4:7; Hab. 3:16-19), like Noah (Gen. 6-9), Israel in Goshen (Ex. 7-12), Rahab (Josh. 6:17) and the 144k (Rev. 7:1-8; 9:4).

**Ex. 8:22 *In that day [of shaking] I will set apart the land of Goshen, in which My people dwell... in order that you may know that I am the Lord... 23 I will make a difference between My people and your people.***

**Amos 4:7 *I also withheld rain from you... I made it rain on one city, I withheld rain from another city.***

E. Where there is no agreement with God's heart, will and ways He sends the fullness of judgment to remove rebellion in His timing (Gen. 15:16). However, in mercy the LORD seeks intercessors to stand in agreement with Him (Gen. 18:16-32; Ezek. 22:30), so that future judgment can be averted (Ex. 32:7-14; Num. 16:1-41; 16:41-50; Ps. 106:21-23; Jer. 18:7-8; Am. 7:1-6) and past judgment might be *reversed* (2 Chr. 7:14).

**2 Chr. 7:14 *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, forgive their sin and heal their land.***

#### IV. THE VITAL ROLE OF INTERCESSORS IN CHANGING HISTORY

A. A national disaster can be stopped in response to the prayers of God’s people. God is looking to intervene in crisis and change the disaster that would have occurred (Gen. 18:22-32; Ex. 32: 9-14; 2 Chr. 34:22-28; Jer. 18:7-10; 51:6-8; Ezek. 18:21-28; 33:10-14; Dan. 4:27; Amos 5:14-15; 7:1-6; Jon. 3:4-10; Mal. 3:16-4:6).

***Ezek. 22:30 So I sought for a man among them who would make a wall, and stand in the gap before Me on behalf of the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found no one.***

1. Abraham reasoned with God on behalf of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 18:20-33; Amos 3:7).

***Gen. 18:17 And the LORD said, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am doing... ?” 23 And Abraham said, “Would You destroy the righteous with the wicked? 24 Suppose there were fifty righteous...? 25 Far be it from You... Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?” 26 So the LORD said, “If I find... fifty righteous... then I will spare all the place for their sakes...” 32 Suppose ten should be found there?” And He said, “I will not destroy it for the sake of ten.” 33 So the LORD went His way...***

2. Moses stood in the gap multiple times for Israel (Ex. 32:7-14; Num. 16:1-41; 16:41-50; Ps. 106:21-23).

***Ex. 32:10 “Let Me alone, that... I may consume them. And I will make of you a great nation.” 11 Then Moses pleaded... “Why does Your wrath burn hot against Your people...? 12 Why should the Egyptians... say, ‘He brought them out to harm them...’? Turn from Your fierce wrath... 13 Remember Abraham, Isaac, and Israel... to whom You swore by Your self... ‘I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven...’” 14 So the LORD relented from the harm He said He would do to His people.***

3. Amos appealed to God’s mercy and averted the judgment of locusts and fire in Israel (Am. 7:1-6).

***Amos 7:1 The Lord GOD showed me: Behold, He formed locust swarms at the beginning of the late crop... 2 I said: “O Lord GOD, forgive, I pray! Oh, that Jacob may stand, for he is small!” 3 So the LORD relented... “It shall not be,” said the LORD. 4 Thus the Lord GOD showed me: Behold, the Lord GOD called for conflict by fire, and it consumed the great deep and devoured the territory. 5 Then I said: “O Lord GOD, cease, I pray! Oh, that Jacob may stand, for he is small!” 6 So the LORD relented concerning this. “This also shall not be,” said the Lord GOD.***

4. God relented from Nineveh’s judgment due to their response (Jon. 3:1-10; Mt. 12:41; Lk. 11:32).

***Jonah 3:4 [Jonah] cried... “Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!” 5 So the people of Nineveh believed God, proclaimed a fast... from the greatest to the least of them... 7 by decree of the king... let neither man nor beast... taste anything... 8 and cry mightily to God... 9 Who can tell if God will turn and relent? 10 Then God saw their works and... relented from the disaster...***

B. God is setting a generation with a heart like Jacob (Gen. 32:24-30; Ps. 24:6; Isa. 62:6-7) and faithfulness of Anna (Lk. 2:42-44) to contend in fervent intercession for His will to be done on earth (Mt. 6:10; Lk. 18:7-8).

***Lk. 18:1 He spoke a parable... that men always ought to pray and not lose heart... 7 And shall God not avenge His own elect who cry out day and night to Him, though He bears long with them? 8 I tell you He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on earth?”***