

## Day Five

### God's challenge for spiritual revival

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#### **Today's reading: Joel 1,2**

**You cannot revive something that is already dead. But you can revive something that is barely alive. "Barely alive" is a term that could be used to describe the spiritual temperature of the church in Western Europe. That is why we need revived to a new and vibrant relationship with Jesus.**

The prophecy of Joel comes as a response to an imminent danger; a natural disaster in a form of a plague. There was nothing worse, in the natural realm, than a plague of locusts. The plague would be followed by a catastrophic drought.

One of the headlines in the beginning of 2020 read: "the most devastating plague of locusts in recent history could come within weeks."<sup>4</sup> By the middle of 2020, the Eastern coast of Africa was experiencing a devastating plague of locusts, that had caused great concerns, threatening the lives of over 10 million people.

Joel was a prophet during the early days of king Joash (2 Kings 11-12), most likely when Jehoiada acted as a mentor and protector of the king. We are told that Joash became a king at the age of seven. It was customary for young kings to have an older official as mentor and protector.

King Joash is known for some amazing reforms and the spiritual revival of Israel. The revival in Joash's time could easily be linked to how Israel responded to the prophecy of Joel and God's call to fasting and prayer. The whole book of Joel is centred around the theme of "the day of the Lord". This would be a day of judgement. Therefore, the people of God were called to prepare themselves.

Joel's interpretation of the three coming events is contained in his short prophecy. There would be three separate days of the Lord coming, the immediate, the imminent and the ultimate. The first would be the locusts, causing devastation and death. The second would be the Assyrians, who would come and conquer Judah. The ultimate day of the Lord would be the Final Judgment Day.

In the first event, the locusts seem to be a metaphorical army, bringing devastation and sorrow. In the second event, the locusts seem to be a real army, the Assyrians. They were well known for their ruthless attitude in war. Such a conquest by the Assyrians could only

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/most-devastating-plague-locusts-recent-history-could-come-within-weeks-n1133171>

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be interpreted as God's judgment. In the third event, the locusts are not mentioned at all. They are replaced by real armies which are dangerous and lethal.

However, in spite of the fact that Joel's prophecy sounds dark and doom-laden, God gives great and powerful promises. God also uses Joel to challenge His people to a spiritual revival. He calls Judah to repent and turn away from sin. Part of that challenge is a call to fast and pray.

Before the day of judgment, the prophet Joel tells us, the Spirit of the Lord will be poured out on all flesh (Joel 2: 28- 32). This promise was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost, when the Holy Spirit came upon the disciples gathered in the Upper Room.

During that day, the judgment will be poured out. (Joel 3: 1 -16) This is yet to happen at the end of this age, when the earth and the heavens will pass away, and every soul that has ever lived will be called before God to give an account for their lives.

After that day, blessing will be poured out. (Joel 3: 17 - 21) This is the promise of a new creation where righteousness will dwell forever. There will be no more sin or suffering or pain. *"He will wipe every tear from their eyes, and there will be no more death or sorrow or crying or pain. All these things are gone forever."* - Revelation 21: 4

Joel, as a prophetic book, plays a significant role in the Bible. Joel constitutes the foundation of the first public sermon in the church age, delivered by Peter on the day of Pentecost.

Joel 2, in the Old Testament, is a chapter about the Holy Spirit just like Romans 8, in the New Testament. In both chapters, written centuries apart, we find the wonderful promise of the Holy Spirit who comes to empower us, to live a life worthy of God's name.

The promise, in Joel 2, begins with a proclamation: *"Sound the trumpet in Jerusalem. Raise the alarm on my holy mountain! Let everyone tremble in fear because the day of the Lord is upon us."* - Joel 2: 1 In the verses that follow, we are told about how devastating this day of the Lord will be. There will be terror, people will be gripped by fear and even the sun and the moon will go dark. This day of the Lord will be an awesome terrible thing and no one will escape it.

The proclamation is followed by a call to revival: *"That is why the Lord says: "Turn to me now, while there is time. Give me your hearts. Come with fasting, weeping, and mourning. Don't tear your clothing in your grief, but tear your hearts instead."* - Joel 2: 12 Notice that God's call for revival include fasting, weeping and mourning. The call continues in verse 15: *"Blow the ram's horn in Jerusalem! Announce a time of fasting; call the people together for a solemn meeting. Gather all the people – the elders, the children, and even the babies."*

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The call to revival is followed by a promise of restoration, in verse 25: *"The Lord says, "I will give you back what you lost to the swarming locusts, the hopping locusts, the stripping locusts, and the cutting locusts. It was I who sent this great destroying army against you."* Revival, as someone described it, is a new beginning of obedience to God. It is simply the beginning of God's restorative power at work in the church. Everything that "the locusts" have eaten can and will be restored by God.

The promise of restoration is followed by the assurance of God's outpouring of His Holy Spirit, in verse 28: *"Then, after doing all those things, I will pour out my Spirit upon all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your old men will dream dreams, and your young men will see visions."*

### **Chapter Summary**

In conclusion, revival is a day of a new beginning with God when the flickering amber bursts into flames, when sleeping Christians are infused with power and vitality, when the church learns to depend on God 100%, with total and sure abandonment to His will and purposes.

Here are some applications we can take from the book of Joel. God has promised to pour out His Holy Spirit. He has done that on the day of Pentecost. This promise also includes the fact that when the church answers God's call to repentance and returns to Him with fasting and prayer, the Lord is able to revive it.

God also promised that there will be signs in heaven and on earth. The book of Acts is filled with miracles and wonders, in heaven and on earth, which have proved God's word over and over again. The Apostles, following a threat from the Sanhedrin - the Religious Council of the Jews, prayed: *"Stretch out your hand with healing power; may miraculous signs and wonders be done through the name of your holy servant Jesus."* I find no Biblical reason not to pray, today, just like they did. God has not changed at all. He is the same miracle worker, as in the days of the Apostles.

God's promise in Joel 2 also includes the salvation of all those who call upon the name of the Lord. In every revival there has been a natural consequence upon societies and communities. The revival of the church will bring about the salvation of many souls.

Just like I said before, revival is the work of the Holy Spirit in the church, turning the lukewarm Christian into a spiritually "highly flammable" follower of Jesus. The Holy Spirit can turn an indifferent Christian into a compassionate and loving person.

We understand that the Holy Spirit is here for this age of grace. We stand forgiven and there is no more condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. Revival starts in the heart, it changes the spiritual atmosphere in the church and then, ultimately, it affects the community around us. Revival begins here and it must begin on a personal level.

# Day Five

## Personal Focus

When was the last time you prayed for the revival of your own heart? Today it's all about your relationship with the Holy Spirit. God's promise is for all of us. The fulness of His Holy Spirit is available to us all. However (as a dove) the Holy Spirit is sensitive to sin and anything that can cause grievance to him.

Ask God to search your heart and reveal some of the things that need addressed. This is how personal revival begins:

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## Public Focus

The revival of God's church begins with an attitude of humility, as we seek God. God revives those who come to him in honesty and present their desperate need of Him.

Does your church need revival? Can you take time, as a church, to ask God for a spiritual revival? Fasting and prayer is a way to show God you are serious about it.

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