

Joel

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[0 : 00] Thank you all for being here this morning. We appreciate your presence, and I'm excited about being able to start a new study. We're going to engage one of the shorter books in all of the Bible. It's just a few chapters. It's the book of Joel, but it has great and important truths to share with us.

So if you will open your Bibles to the prophecy of Joel, Hosea, Joel, and we will have a word of prayer, and we'll get right to it. We're grateful, Father, for what you've been pleased to reveal, because apart from it, we would be completely in the dark about so very many things. And yet, because of the revelation you have been so gracious to impart through individuals like Joel, we have a measure of enlightenment that the world knows not of, and we do not take that for granted.

Help us this day, we pray, to understand and appreciate the text and its implications and what our individual responsibility is in light of it. We thank you for the time to share together in Christ's name. Amen.

I want to get some preliminary things out of the way, and perhaps we will be able to cover the entire first chapter of Joel, because it's dealing primarily about, what is it they call them, entomologists?

[1 : 19] These are people who specialize in insects. When we were kids, we just called them bugs. And there are all kinds, thousands and thousands of varieties.

And this morning, you are going to get an introduction into something that you probably didn't know you couldn't live without. But it's something about the, what is it, 80 different varieties of locusts that we know of, and there may be even more.

So we'll look to that, and it pretty much takes up the first chapter of Joel. But let me explain a couple of things up front. First of all, the name Joel literally means, in Hebrew, Jehovah is God.

And you'll remember on Mount Carmel, when Elijah dealt with the prophets of Baal, and the expression that was finally given when Elijah called forth fire from heaven that consumed the sacrifices, licked up the water in the trench and everything.

And the conclusion, of course, was Jehovah, he is God, as opposed to Baal being God. So the very name, Joel, is actually a compound word in the Hebrew, the first part of which, J-O, relates to the Jehovah aspect, and the E-L ending, which so many names in the Old Testament and New Testament either begin with or end with, like Elijah and Elisha and Elkanah and so on.

[2 : 58] The E-L part relates to Elohim, which in the Hebrew refers to God, as it comes across in our English Bible, with G-O-D.

So it is the Lord, he is God. In other words, Jehovah is God's personal name, and God, or Elohim, is his generic name, in the same way that man is your generic personhood, and Shirley or Mike or whatever your first name is, that's what identifies you in your personhood.

So the name Joel is a very revered name among those who are of the Hebrew persuasion, because it literally means Jehovah is God.

We are unable to pinpoint a date for the prophet Joel. Scholars are all over the map on this, and usually you can pinpoint the time that a prophecy was given, or the prophet spoke, in accordance with who he identified as being on the throne as a king, either in Israel or in Judah at a particular time, but there is no reference point like that made.

So we can only speculate, and I just didn't think it would be worthwhile to give you all the arguments for a late date, and all the arguments for an early date, because we are really primarily only concerned with the message of it, and I think you will see that the date when it was actually written won't mean that much when we get into it.

[4 : 37] Prophets are messengers from God with one of two pronouncements. I do not know of an exception to this, and it seems to be pretty much across the board.

They always had one of two pronouncements, and first they either dealt with the warning of a coming judgment, or the promise of a coming blessing.

They either had something negative or something positive to say, and many of the prophets said both. Many of them had words of warning and words of blessing, promises of blessing.

The warnings that are given were always designed to invoke repentance and turning to God, which would prevent the judgment.

And we see this dramatically played out in what Jonah was called upon to do, was to go to Nineveh with the message, that 40 days and Nineveh shall be overthrown.

[5 : 43] That was the warning. But that was forestalled because the nation of Nineveh repented.

The city of Nineveh repented. And of course that did not come, although a hundred years later it did come because they had lapsed back into the thing that Jonah had preached to them about.

The promise of blessing is to encourage the hearers that God's grace is active and forthcoming following the repentance.

And this is a recurring theme. And you know, I guess I was in ministry and I preached for probably, I hate to say this, but probably preached for 40 years before I really got a handle on the subject of repentance.

And it was one of those subjects that I always thought I really understood before, but come to find out, I didn't understand it that much at all. And it has so impressed me that every time I have an opportunity, I want to make it clear.

Because as I've referred to it, repentance is God's silver bullet for change. And repentance is the thing that delights the heart of God.

[7 : 05] Because in a spiritual context, repentance always refers to, and I'm talking about a spiritual context, there's a broader application where it means to change your mind about anything.

But in a spiritual context, repentance always refers to coming from a position of being wrong about something, morally, usually morally, and coming to the conviction that you need to change your thinking and your mind about that, and you reverse yourself.

And nothing delights the heart of God more than that, because he is a God of truth and accuracy, and when we come from a position of being wrong, that's something that's always opposed to him, and his light, and his revelation, over to a position that is right.

And this is, I'm satisfied, this is why the reference is given in Luke, that there is joy in the presence of the angels, over one sinner who repents, because that is really a big deal.

And you will not have reason to repent, unless you are given information. And when you're given information, data, warning, then you take that information in, and you process it, and you reach a conclusion.

[8 : 26] You may take the information in, process it, and the conclusion you reach is, hey, this guy's all wet. This is a bunch of hooley. I don't believe any of that stuff. And I reject it.

That's called being unrepentant. You maintain the position that you had before. Nothing has changed. But when you hear information, you process it, and you say to yourself, you know what? That's right. I need to do something about that. I need to change my position, because now I know I have been wrong.

And I don't want to pursue that any further. I want to repent. I want to change my mind, change my position about that. This is ever the message that these prophets have to deliver.

All of the minor prophets, and all of the major prophets, every one of them, without exception, gives the message. They give information. They dispense information.

[9 : 25] And the people are to take it to heart. And if you take it to heart, you will have a change of heart. And that repentance leads to not only a change in your attitude, where you discover you were wrong, but ultimately it leads to a change in your actions, in your agenda, in what you do.

And this is the broad overview message of all of the prophets, without exception, major and minor prophets. It was the burden of John the Baptist. Repent.

The kingdom of heaven is at hand. It was the burden of Christ when he delivered the message. It was the burden of Stephen when he was stoned. It was the burden of Peter when he preached on the day of Pentecost.

What shall we do? Repent. And be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, and you'll receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, and so on. This is so key and so critical, it pains me that I never knew it well enough to emphasize it earlier on like I should have.

So, a change attitude results in changed actions or behavior. Prophets prophesy and produce prophecy.

[10:41] And there's a little bit of confusion about this term, so I just want to explain something here. It's very basic, but maybe it'll help you to understand better. Prophecy is a noun.

And prophesy is a verb. So, when a prophet gives forth information, he is prophesying, and in his prophesying, he may deliver prophecies, which has something to do with the future event.

This word, prophesy, as a verb, really means nothing more than preach. Deliver a message. Son of man, prophesy against Israel.

Saying unto them simply means give them a message. Preach. But when we are talking about prophecy, as opposed to prophesy, prophecy has to do with a prediction or a foretelling of some event that is yet to transpire.

And it's easy to get the words mixed up, but you can see how a prophet both prophesies and may deliver prophecies. On the other hand, some prophets prophesy, and they don't particularly deliver anything about the future.

[12:19] I'm thinking of Elijah. Well, no. Elijah did too. He also predicted the future. He prophesied and he uttered prophecies, yet three years there will be no rain.

That's a prophecy. prophecy. And, of course, it came to pass. So, most prophets, especially what we call writing prophets, engaged in both.

And in the case of prophets predicting or foretelling a future event, something of the present that is familiar to all of the hearers is utilized to explain that which is coming or that which has already occurred.

Usually, a known physical thing is used to reveal something of moral and spiritual significance. And we saw that big time in our last study regarding Hosea, where something or someone that was physical was used to explain something that was spiritual.

Do you remember what that was? that was Hosea and Gomer. And the marriage that he was to engage in with an adulterous woman. This was a very physical thing.

[13:40] She was a very physical being as was he. And yet, what God was using in that extraordinary marriage relationship, he was using them as an illustration to depict the relationship between the nation Israel and himself.

Where Israel was playing the part of the spiritual harlot, in that Israel was engaged in idolatry and God was, of course, the faithful husband to which the unfaithful Israel was related.

In today's consideration of the prophet Joel, the locust devastation is used to illustrate the forthcoming devastation of a physical human army of invaders, whether the Assyrians from the north or the Babylonians from the east, whichever it happened to be.

Yet, there is an even greater catastrophe coming that Joel refers to as the day of the Lord.

And this is a very significant term. You're going to hear more and more about it, especially when we work in the context of the book of the Revelation and the day of the Lord.

[15:02] In fact, John opens his prophecy in Revelation by saying, I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day.

And he wasn't talking about Sunday. He was talking about the day of the Lord, which is a time of wrath, judgment, etc. that is coming upon the earth.

And this is going to be the theme of the prophet Joel. Remember, in Acts 2, at that enormous Pentecostal event, when they were speaking in languages that they had not learned, and everyone was trying to figure out, what's going on?

What's the explanation? And one presented a solution. Well, these guys are drunk. That's obviously. They're drunk. And Joel said, Peter stood up and said, these men are not drunk, as you suppose, seeing it's only the third hour of the day.

It's nine o'clock in the morning. They're not drunk. But this, this which you see and hear, is that which was spoken of by the prophet Joel.

[16:11] And this is going to be the very heartbeat of Joel's prophecy, which we'll see when we get into chapter three, because the day of the Lord is contrasted with the day of man. We are now living in the day of man.

And this does not infer that God isn't still in control and in charge of all that happens, but it means more that God is giving man and mankind pretty much free reign today.

And that's why we see so much evil abounding everywhere you look. The violence, the corruption, the murders, the beheadings, and everything else. This is man doing his thing.

And God is pretty much standing aside and allowing man to act out with the volition that he had given him. But the time is coming when God is going to say, that's enough.

And when he steps in and begins his deeds, that will begin the day of the Lord, as opposed to the day of man.

[17 : 15] And we'll see that and how it is played out very dramatically. So, Joel will be addressing five different groups of people in this first chapter, and we'll get to that in just a moment.

But before we do, I want to share with you some things from the pen of a couple of authors who have provided some important background material. One is James Montgomery Boyce.

He's got an excellent commentary on the minor prophets, and I want to share this with you. It's a little lengthy, but I don't apologize for it because it's so fascinating and insightful.

This is what the people to whom Joel is speaking is going to have to contend with. He begins this paragraph by saying, in 1915, so we're talking precisely 100 years ago when relatively good records were being kept.

In 1915, a plague of locusts covered Palestine and Syria from the border of Egypt to the Taurus Mountains. The first swarms appeared in March.

[18 : 30] These were adult locusts that came from the northeast and moved toward the southwest in clouds so thick they obscured the sun. The females were about two and one-half to three inches long and they immediately began to lay eggs by digging holes in the soil about four inches deep and depositing about 100 eggs in each.

The eggs were neatly arranged in a cylindrical mass about one inch long and about as thick as a pencil. These holes were everywhere.

Witnesses estimated that as many as 65,000 to 75,000 eggs were concentrated in a square, in a single square meter of soil.

Think of that. Just about a yard square. What is a meter? 39 inches? Something like that? Just a little bit more than our yard? 65,000 to 75,000 eggs deposited in a space no bigger than that.

And patches like this covered the entire land from north to south. Having laid their eggs, the locusts flew away. Within a few weeks, the young locusts hatched.

[20 : 03] These resembled large ants. They had no wings, and within a few days they began moving forward by hopping along the ground like fleas.

They would cover four to six hundred feet a day, devouring any vegetation before them. By the end of May, they had molted.

In this stage, they had wings, but they still did not fly. Instead, they moved forward by walking, jumping only when they were frightened.

They were bright yellow. Finally, the locusts molted again, this time becoming the fully developed adults that had invaded the land initially.

According to the description of this plague by John Whiting, in the December 1915 issue of National Geographic magazine, the earlier stages of these insects attacked the vineyards.

[21 : 09] Once entering a vineyard, the sprawling vines would in the shortest time be nothing but bare bark. When the daintier morsels were gone, the bark was eaten off the young topmost branches, which after exposure to the sun were bleached snow white.

Then, seemingly out of malice, they would gnaw off small limbs, perhaps to get at the pith within. Whiting describes how the locusts of the last stage completed the destruction begun by the earlier forms.

They attacked the olive trees, whose tough bitter leaves had been passed over by the creeping locusts. They stripped every leaf, berry, and even the tender bark.

They ate away, layer after layer, of the cactus plants, giving the leaves the effect of having been jackplaned. Even on the scarce and prized palms, they had no pity, gnawing off the tenderer ends of the sword-like branches, and diving deep into the heart, they tunneled after the juicy pith.

This is precisely what Joel and his contemporaries experienced in their day. And the various stages of the molting insects probably explain the four different Hebrew terms Joel uses.

[22 : 41] In the authorized version, the Hebrew words are the palmer worm, the locust, the canker worm, and the caterpillar. These are essentially all the same insect in a different stage, and each one does a different kind of damage.

The New International Version says locust swarm, great locusts, young locusts, and other locusts. For lack of adequate English words, probably these are all stages of the same insect, and if so, Joel certainly captures the nature of the utter destruction by reporting, no doubt, with perfect accuracy. Listen to how Joel put it. What the locust swarm has left, the great locusts have eaten. What the great locusts have left, the young locusts have eaten.

What the young locusts have left, other locusts have eaten. This all in that very first chapter.

Whiting, who quotes this and other opening verses of Joel's prophecy in his article, writes, We marvel how this ancient writer could have given so graphic and true a description of a devastation caused by locusts in so condensed a form.

Well, for those of us who accept the inspiration of the scripture, it isn't all that marvelous because it was none other than the spirit of God that was informing Joel with the information that he needed to write what he wrote.

[24 : 20] So, for those of us who are into biblical inspiration, we do not marvel at the accuracy of the identification that he sets forth. I mean, after all, with God providing the information, what else can you expect other than detailed and complete accuracy?

So, and one other paragraph, if I may, and this is from the pen of David Levy, who is an area representative for Friends of Israel, and his commentary on the book of Joel.

He says, those in the Middle East call locusts the army of God. As an army, they march in a regular order, camp in the field at night, and in the morning rise with the sun, dry their wings, and fly in the direction of the wind.

Quoted both in Proverbs 30, verse 27, Nahum 3, 16, and 17. They number in the billions. Jeremiah 46, 23.

Covering an area up to 10 miles in length and 5 miles wide, and have been known to fly 17 hours at a time, covering over 1,500 miles.

[25 : 46] Their vast number can blot out the sun, bringing a temporary darkness over the earth. Joel 2, 2, and verse 10, Exodus 10, 15.

Nothing stops them, not ditch, fire, wall, door, or window. Joel 2, verses 7 through 9. Their appetite is never satisfied.

They devour all the vegetation in their path. The locusts, get this, the locusts are symbolic of those invading nations who will come upon Judah, destroying the land as presented in verses 6 and 7.

So, let's turn to the prophecy now, if we may, Joel 1, and note those that Joel depicts and how he treats them.

The word of the Lord that came to Joel, the son of Bethuel. Hear this, O elders, and listen, all inhabitants of the land.

[26 : 58] Has anything like this happened in your days or in your father's days? Tell your sons about it, and let your sons tell their sons, and their sons the next generation.

What the gnawing locust has left, the swarming locust has eaten, and what the swarming locust has left, the creeping locust has eaten, and what the creeping locust has left, the stripping locust has eaten.

It's as though each of these had a little bit different appetite, and would take care and consume whatever the previous hoard left behind.

It was just like a rhythmic machine, where each one was reducing the vegetation a little bit more, and a little bit more, and a little bit, and by the time they get through, you've got nothing.

I mean, absolutely nothing. And they number in such a horde, in such an innumerable number, that there is just no defeating them, or defending against them.

[28 : 07] It's interesting to note the individuals that he depicts here as those who should take special note of this swarm. And look at who he addresses first, the drunkards.

Well, what part do they have in this? Why should they? Well, they're not going to have anything to drink, because the locusts are going to destroy all the vines, and when you have the vines destroyed, you've got the grapes gone, and when the grapes are gone, you don't have any wine.

So this is a solemn message to all the winos in the land. And of course, wine was a standard table drink in this day, but it was not the kind of wine that we drink today.

It was a wine that was more heavily diluted with water, because in many parts of the world, water is not nearly as pure as the water we drink, which we often take for granted, which sometimes is in doubt, even in our own country.

Water in a lot of areas in the world is not all that great for drinking, but the alcohol in wine tends to serve as a kind of sterilizer, and it can kill a lot of bacteria, and that's one reason that they mixed wine with water, because it would kill some of the biological life forms in there that you don't want to drink.

[29 : 34] And one would have to consume an enormous amount of standard table wine served at the Hebrew table in order to become intoxicated. I'm not even sure it could be done.

But that's when you dilute it properly, as they usually do for the custom. But if you drink it more straight without the dilution, then of course the alcohol content is a lot higher, and this is what some people did, of course.

They got hooked on it, and the book of Proverbs talks about drinking strong wine when it is red in the cup like that, and it's less diluted, and you can become alcoholic that way.

So he's addressing the drunkards, this is going to affect the lowest people in the totem pole and the highest. Awake, drunkards, and weep, and wail, all you wine drinkers, on account of the sweet wine that is cut off from your mouth.

For a nation has invaded my land, mighty and without number. Its teeth are like the teeth of a lion, and it has the fangs of a lioness.

[30 : 43] We are told that these little creatures, only two to three inches long, have a teething and gnawing capacity, and a crunch factor of an incredible amount of energy to crush things and eat things and gnaw on things that is just unreal.

It is disproportionate, the crushing power they have in those tiny teeth and jaws as opposed to the size of their body. It's amazing what they can cut into and gnaw on and eat.

He's made my vine a waste, and my fig tree splinters. It has stripped them bare and cast them away.

Their branches have become white. Wail like a virgin girded with sackcloth for the bridegroom of her youth. What Joel is setting forth here is, listen, this is going to be the saddest, sorriest situation that you could possibly imagine.

and he uses these different descriptions to depict how severe this is going to be. He pictures a virgin, a girl who has just consummated her marriage like the night before, the wedding night, and now she has to adorn herself in sackcloth because her mate has been taken.

[32 : 19] This is lamenting the likes of which few people would ever know. And it is so sad and so sorry. And he goes on saying, the grain offerings and the libation are cut off from the house of the Lord.

The priests mourn. The ministers of the Lord, they're all out of a job. They have nothing that they can do because the priests were responsible for caring for the meal offerings and the drink offerings and their livelihood is cut off.

Because you remember how the priests were supported? They were supported by the people. The priests, when the nation of Israel settled in the land and all of the land was parceled off so that the land of Gad is here and the land of Asher is there and the land of Naphtali is here and they gave them all of these borders and parceled out all of the land of Israel.

But the Levites didn't get any land at all. They were completely omitted. And the scripture says that the Lord is their portion, that in place of their having land or real estate, they have a connection with the Lord through the priesthood that nobody else has.

So that meant they had no acreage, no land on which to raise crops or to graze cattle or sheep or anything like that. So they were dependent entirely upon the other eleven tribes and the crops that they raised and the animals that they raised to sustain the priesthood.

[33 : 59] So when people brought in animals for sacrifice, unless it was a whole burnt offering, in which case the whole animal was consumed, I mean everything, nothing was left to eat.

But when they brought in a priest, when they brought the animal to the priest for the sacrifice, the priest would slit the throat, hang the animal up, drain it of all its blood, and it would be offered to the Lord.

But what did they do with that animal then? They ate it. It was butchered, cut up, carved up, and distributed among the priests. And when you have all of these animals coming in, I mean some of

them are beef and some are sheep and some are goats, and you can be sure they're everything but pork.

And that was how the priesthood was sustained. That was their pay for serving and ministering in the temple. They lived off of what the people provided.

But now they're not going to have anything. And there will be no possibility of continuing their livelihood. And then in verse 11, the farmer is devastated, and the word that is used in the Hebrew is that the farmer is ashamed because there's no way that he can plant or grow crops.

[35 : 17] It's just an impossibility. And the word for ashamed in Hebrew is that the farmer is turned pale. He is ashen. It's just like life is just drained out of him, and he is pale in his appearance.

And then in verse 11 also, the vine dressers wail because they're virtually out of business. And the wheat and the barley, the harvest of the field is destroyed, the vine dries up, the fig tree fails, the pomegranate, the palm also, and the apple tree.

All the field, all the trees of the field dry up. Indeed, rejoicing dries up from the sons of men. There isn't any rejoicing going on.

It's just lamenting. Just, oh, woe is me. And why all of this? And here's where I want to digress a little bit, and perhaps you've got some thoughts that you'd like to share.

We don't have any difficulty seeing divine intervention in situations like this, especially because of the relationship, the peculiar relationship that Israel had with Jehovah.

[36 : 34] And when these kind of things came upon the land, whether it was Judah or Israel, when these kind of things came upon the land, the Lord always made it quite clear who was responsible for it.

He was. It was devastation and judgment brought upon the people because of their idolatry, because of their sin, and they were always forewarned.

It isn't that they had no possible knowledge that something like this might be coming, because the prophets that came on the scene that preached these messages to the people, repent and turn and return to the Lord and put away your idols and everything, they were given adequate warning.

And in each case, the prophet always told them what was going to happen if they ignored the prophecies. So they have more than adequate warning, and nobody can be surprised.

And the question that I would like to pose to you, because I frankly just don't know the answer to it at all, is, does this pertain and apply only to the nation of Israel?

[37 : 51] Or might God be speaking through calamity and disaster to others? And if so, was there an adequate pre- warning?

And what was it? Now, because we are all Americans, let's just try to put the good old USA in the bullseye here, and say, is there any possible crossover or application here?

And the reason that I say, I don't know, I just can't pinpoint this, is because it would appear to me, this is okay, this is Wiseman logic, and it may very well be flawed, as you well know, but it seems to me that if a particular judgment, devastation, whether tornado, hurricane, whatever it might be, comes, and if it is the direct hand of God bringing it, what benefit would we derive from that unless we knew that it was directly from God?

Because there are certain things that are set in motion just by virtue of creation. I mean climatological things, geographical things, hydrogen cycle things, the wind patterns and all of this that are set in motion as part of creation, and sometimes conflagrations take place because of the combination of things, and I'm not saying God has nothing to do with that, but we generally think of these things as acts of nature.

Insurance companies call them acts of God. Is it really an act of God? And if it is, wouldn't it be far more effective if God had taken some avenue or some route to let us know, I'm behind this, rather than it just happening?

[40 : 10] In other words, is there not for real benefit to be derived, is there not a need for the source of the thing to be known and identified rather than to just vaguely say it's just, you know, well, like I said, we use the term an act of God, but insurance companies that use that usually don't even believe it, you know, where they're coming from.

But the thing that troubles me about, and take the twin trade towers. some were quite convinced that when those planes crashed in to the twin towers, that that was God's wake-up call to this nation.

But how do we know that? Because people can make the accusation, and preachers make the accusation. and I'm not saying that they're wrong, because they may be right. And some have said that on top of the fact that we have murdered 50 million fellow human beings before they even had a chance to take their first breath, and add the profligacy and the corruption and the brutality that is going on in this country, the twin towers was God's wake-up call. Well, if I knew that for sure, I certainly would be making a whole lot more noise about it than I have. [41 : 49] But I can't, because I don't know that for sure. And my suggestion is, it seems to me, that for God to expect us to benefit from something like that, he needs to make it really clear that this is his doing.

Boy, I'll tell you, then it's time to get your ducks in a row. Then it's time to really start shouting from the rooftops and get people serious and really start making some noise about it.

I don't know. It seems to me that God is silent in these things, and yet I know if he wants to speak and make himself heard and provide some unequivocal way of our knowing, yes, this really is the hand of the Almighty, and buddy, you better wake up and listen and change your ways.

Boy, that sure gives me something to preach a whole lot more dogmatically than what I have now. What do you think? Scott?

just the short sayings, you know, come to mind. It rains on the just and the unjust alike. Right. But God also chases those that he loves.

[43 : 03] Right. And, you know, if God's not in control of everything, you know, then literally nothing. Yeah, I see your point.

If God isn't in control of everything, he isn't in control of anything. Right. Yeah. Yeah. And I would add to that a little quip that has come to my mind that I've passed on to a lot of people over the last few weeks that God doesn't do anything.

God doesn't allow anything without taking everything into consideration. salvation. Because his having not only the big picture, but his having the whole picture enables him to do that.

And all we know is what he is pleased to let us know. And I guess my dilemma is we see what we call natural disasters happening all around us and all over the world.

Whether they are tsunamis where a quarter of a million people are wiped out. And people say things like, well, where is God?

[44 : 15] And we've got a great philosophical and a spiritual dilemma in trying to reconcile the existence of an all-powerful God, a good all-powerful God, and the existence of evil.

people. How can these coexist? And the answer of some is, it's an impossibility.

They cannot coexist. One of them has to go. And because we cannot deny the existence of calamity and disaster and physical destruction, you can't deny that, or you're not living in reality, then the only option is to jettison the other, which is God.

And that's where, of course, the atheist is coming from. Unless you want to reverse that and say, no, we insist that there is a God, but along with this all-powerful, all-good God, evil and matter does not even exist.

So you've got to eliminate one of the two because you can't coordinate them, at least in the minds of many, you cannot coordinate them. And someone has pointed out that even in Eastern mysticism, where they deny not only the reality of evil, but the reality of matter, the Hindu still looks both ways when he crosses the street in Calcutta.

[46 : 00] So things start to fall apart there, too. This is probably the number one human dilemma when it comes to affirming the existence of God and dealing with the reality of things that a good and all-powerful God is supposed to be in control of.

what's going on here. Okay, we've got some hands. Let's start with Chris. I think often it's confusing that things do happen, like 9-11, but I don't see that as a judgment, that where God is judging us, but it does afford an opportunity.

I mean, a lot of people went to church after 9-11, so they were for a couple of weeks, anyway. They were on human nature, though, to try and find answers, so when things like that happen, though, we have a great opportunity to share what we know is the truth.

Yeah, true. People become more receptive to things that they perhaps wouldn't be receptive to before. It's kind of like attending a funeral. People tend to be a little more open to the truth of God than they are when they're walking down the street.

Sheila? I was going to say something pretty much like Christine, except that how short that was. I mean, yeah, everybody was like, oh my goodness, you know, it was a wake-up call for such a short moment.

[47 : 34] And then they forget and they go back to their worldly whatever, just like in the Bible with the Israelites, how soon they forget. How soon they forget. Yeah, the point has been made that anybody can repent and change their behavior for the weekend.

you know, but what genuine repentance involves is changed behavior over time.

Marie? I was thinking of the cause and effect come into play too, doesn't it? Okay, elaborate. Well, the way that went up with the fall came changes and like the wind patterns and like the storms and stuff, it's just the way the cause and effect that God has put into play.

The tides and all that, the cause and effect is... Okay. Okay. For people's sin, there's a result. All right. Yeah, that's the fallenness and the negative behavior that comes from the fallenness.

Marvis? Well, I kind of think that all that stuff is a wake-up call. 9-11 definitely was, is a wake-up call and everything that happens is a wake-up call for different people in different situations at different times.

[48 : 55] Yeah. I think. Okay. We don't always wake up, but God is there saying, hey, I'm here.

Okay. And to finish the chapter, Joel, Joel has no question and no doubt as to the fact that God is behind this thing.

The fact that locusts are what we would call a phenomenon of nature and therefore they are natural in what they are doing, yet Joel recognizes that this is from God and this is just the first shoe dropping.

So it contains a warning also that there is more to come if you don't heed this. So what is he saying? It should be their response to it. And we've already touched on this here, that to take it as a wake-up call and how many people there were in church the following Sunday as opposed to a few weeks later.

So look at verse 14. Consecrate a fast. Hey, people, it's time to get serious. And when you're talking about fasting, well, I don't know, this may have even been an involuntary fast.

I don't know if there was anything left to eat or not. Consecrate a fast. Proclaim a solemn assembly. This is serious stuff. Gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land to the house of the Lord your God.

[50 : 24] That's get yourself in church, kind of like the equivalent. Alas for the day, for the day of the Lord is near.

The Lord is near, and it will come as destruction from the Almighty. Remember what Peter said in Acts 2, this is that which was spoken of by the prophet Joel.

And Joel's theme is the day of the Lord. And Peter is saying, this is the beginning of the day of the Lord there in Pentecost.

Now, let me throw this in. Was that followed up with more of the day of the Lord? No.

No. It wasn't. It stopped right there. And this is so critical. So, if you don't get anything else I said today, get this.

[51 : 31] The reason the day of the Lord did not continue on in Pentecost, in Acts chapter 2, was because of the perpetual rejection of Israel of their Messiah.

Because shortly after Acts 2 and 3, in chapter 4, the persecution begins. It intensifies in chapter 5. It seems to culminate in chapter 7 with the stoning of Stephen.

So, what Peter is saying, this is that spoken of by the prophet Joel, this is the beginning. Your young men shall see visions and your old men shall dream dreams, or the other way around, whichever it is.

but that's the beginning of the day of the Lord. That's what he's saying. And it's all going to come to a screeching halt. And they just had a very, very little taste of the day of the Lord.

And what was that little taste? it was the speaking in languages not learned and the accompanying physical miracles that they witnessed. And that goes on just a little bit in the book of Acts and you see it waning more and more and more until finally it gets to the time where there are virtually no physical miracles being performed at all.

[52 : 48] Everything kind of peters out because of Israel's continued unbelief. The day of the Lord is near and it will come as destruction from the Almighty.

Has not food been cut off before our eyes? Gladness and joy from the house of our God? The seeds shrivel under their clods. The storehouses are desolate.

The barns are torn down. The grain is dried up. How the beast groan. Why are they groaning? They don't have anything to eat. Cattle are dying of starvation. No pasture for them.

The locusts have eaten everything. Even the flocks of sheep suffer. To thee, O Lord, I cry. For fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness and the flame has burned up all the trees of the field. Even the beasts of the field pant for thee. For the water brooks are dried up and fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness.

[53 : 54] It's about as bad as it could get. Blow a trumpet in Zion, the next chapter. Put everybody on warning. Send out the signal. This is the emergency siren that we would install today in our city hall buildings and other places where people can hear when something of real significant disaster is about to come upon us.

We have sirens and we used to during the war they had air raid sirens to let you know that enemy planes were on the way. And this is the equivalent here. Blow a trumpet in Zion.

Sound the alarm. Things are really really bad. It's all a picture of what is coming. And you know what? The one thing that can turn all of this around is national repentance.

repentance that has not yet ever come on the part of Israel. But it will. Mike? Is it true that all during the Old Testament and the four Gospels the Lord was dealing with the nation of Israel and the change that occurred then that came about through the death of Jesus on the cross was that he is now dealing with the individual and not nations?

That's right. Yeah. Absolutely. Absolutely. The national platform has been put on hold. And I am sure that God is not at all disinterested in Israel.

[55 : 32] He's very much interested. But at the same time they are not front and center like they were in the Old Testament and in the Gospels. The time is coming when they will be returned to that position of prominence and they will be the key player.

But that is not now. Yes? It seems to me then that if the Lord is not dealing with nations, it's dealing with individuals. Repentance of the United States, for instance, is not likely to happen.

Well, you're right. Repentance of the United States as a nation is not likely to happen because nations, what are nations made up of?

Individuals. So the repentance has to start with me, has to start with individuals. And this, by the way, this is the whole rationale for preaching.

This is the only reason that there's any preaching. This is the only reason that preaching is assigned and designated by God to be carried out. Because when you preach, you give people information.

[56 : 45] You give them a reason to change their mind. You give them information. And today, much preaching, especially if you're talking about preaching regarding sin and bad behavior, or what they often call hell, fire, and brimstone, preaching comes in for more ridicule today than it does anything.

It is even looked upon as inappropriate. And in a great many circles, here in the good old USA, preaching would be viewed as judgmentalism.

You're judging me. What gives you the right to tell me? This is where we are today. This is the philosophy out there today.

And it is fed by, I hate to say it and sound like a broken record, but it is fed by relativism.

Because when everything is relative, and morals are relative, and morals are what they are to you, and for you, and nobody else, then each person becomes their own standard, and nobody is wrong about anything.

[58 : 01] So in essence, there's really nothing to preach about. And the religious pluralism covers everything so that all faiths and beliefs are of equal validity, and none is superior to another, and nobody has the truth.

So the truth is what you want it to be, what you embrace, behavior is what you want. This, by the way, this is why we have an element in government today, that are incapable of being embarrassed.

You cannot shame some people. And the reason you can't shame them is because shame and embarrassment comes only from the violation of a moral standard.

But, if I set my own moral standards as to what is right or wrong, I can lie, I can cheat, I can steal, because I am the one who determines what's right or wrong.

So, if I'm brought up short on it, or confronted about it, or something of that nature, I don't need to be embarrassed because I haven't violated any standards. I haven't violated my standards, and my standards are the only ones that's legitimate.

[59 : 24] embarrassment. And the standard line is, I am guilty of no wrongdoing. And that's when you don't have the leverage of embarrassment of somebody, and we've got a ton of politicians today, you can't embarrass them.

It doesn't make any difference what they do or what you catch them in. They still hold their head high and smug, and there's no repentance. It's incredible. But what do you expect when moral relativism prevails?

And it's everybody is their own authority. That's where we are. Scott? Yeah, two quick comments then, I guess. The locust mentioned there was the same one that John the Baptist ate with honey, so there probably wasn't a dietary restriction.

Yeah. Well, I don't know that for sure, but you may very well be right. Yeah. Okay, and the other is about repent. How does that apply to spiritual growth?

Would repent be the right word to use as you study you change your mind? Absolutely. Absolutely. Absolutely. And it does not apply only to spiritual things.

[60 : 40] And the confusion about the word repentance is almost everybody associates something religious. with repentance. And when you talk to a Roman Catholic about repentance, they almost always think in terms of doing penance.

You say so many Hail Marys or Our Fathers or you light so many candles or whatever. That is their form of what they think is repentance. But the word literally means to change your mind and it always has to do with coming to a different position than what you held previously because you are now convinced the previous position you held was wrong.

And you want to come to the right. And this is why I've often said nobody is saved by repenting. Nobody can be saved without repenting. Because when you are unsaved, you are apart from Christ.

Christ. And once you are informed of that, the only way you can be saved is to acknowledge, recognize that you are apart from Christ and why you are and change your mind.

So the repentance is a bridge to believing. You will not believe if you have not repented. This is why the message is repent and believe the gospel of repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ.

[62 : 10] You are not going to have faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ if you haven't repented. It's an impossibility. And yet some, because I'm convinced that they misunderstand this, they think, now you're adding to the gospel.

We are justified by faith only. We don't have to repent. Oh, yes you do, because you cannot get there without changing your mind. You've got to change your mind from being wrong to what the right is.

So nobody is adding anything to the gospel. But repentance has to come first. Yeah. So with spiritual growth you could repent twice because as you continue to gain knowledge you could say well, what I thought was, you know, now I'm back to my other position.

Exactly. Exactly. And I can't tell you how many times I've repented over the last ten years. And it has nothing to do with my spirituality or with my love for the Lord and it has nothing to do necessarily with sin.

It just has to do with you know what? This is what I used to think about. That's wrong. I can't buy that anymore. That does not comport. I've got to change my mind.

[63 : 21] And that never makes me feel good. I always enjoy, there is a joy of learning and it's exciting. I don't think there's anything that can take the place of it.

but every time I discover that I've been wrong about something, it always bothers me because I can't help but wonder how many people have I influenced with this thing about my wrong thinking. Boy, that's a sobering thought. And I want to close with this because our time is gone. And you've heard me say this before, that every preacher, and I'm sure every prophet, has two major fears. One is that people will not believe what he says. And the other is that people will believe what he says. And the fallout from both of those is pretty significant.

So I think this is why James says don't be overly eager to be a teacher because teachers will receive greater judgment.

[64 : 35] They're in a position of influence and power. And, buddy, you better take it seriously. It's a lot at stake. All right. Thank you for your presence this morning.

favor. Thank you. for ■. Thank you.