

Session 4 Establishing a Joel 2 Spiritual Culture

Please refer to the teaching notes for this message.

INTRODUCTION

This is our fourth class, and we're on Session Notes No. 5. Now we're beginning the verse-by-verse part of the book of Joel. Here we are in the first paragraph, developing or establishing a spiritual culture. That's what Joel is really talking about here. We'll read verses 2-3, where Joel begins this day of the Lord message. It's heavy, not just because of judgment, but because of the glory of the greatest revival in history. That's what Joel is talking about.

“HAS ANYTHING LIKE THIS HAPPENED IN YOUR DAYS OR THE DAYS OF YOUR FATHERS?”

He says, “Hear, you elders, and give ear, all you inhabitants of the land. Has anything like this happened in your days?” (Joel 1:2). He's talking about the crisis right here: “Has anything of this level ever happened in your day? In living memory? Or even the days of your fathers? Can you go back a few generations and remember the stories of your father or grandfather telling you about this level of crisis?” We know this was a very unique hour of crisis, this locust and agricultural crisis; it wasn't just a bad summer on the farm. It was unprecedented even compared to the generations before.

Verse 3: “Tell your children about it. Don't ignore it. Don't hide it. Don't cover it up. Tell them the story, the whole story. Tell the trouble. Tell them the warnings; give them the answer. Build this into their spiritual genetic code, so to speak. Let your children be so marked that they tell their children; and their children tell the next generation” (paraphrased). He's talking about a development of a spiritual culture.

GOD LOVES US TOO MUCH TO LET US GO WITHOUT CONTENDING

I. Verse 2. “Hear, you elders, and give ear.” Hear and give ear. He says, “Give ear, all you inhabitants of the earth.” Paragraph A. The first exhortation Joel gives in his message, before he even describes the negative, is calling them to hear. He says, “Pay close attention. Pay close attention to the whole message, the whole story. Don't get part of the story; get the whole story.” It's the story of Joel 1-2, but really for our purposes, it's the Joel 1-3 story. We're going to apply this to the whole message. Why does God want us to pay close attention? Because He desires that His people would avoid the judgments that He doesn't desire to release, but He has to wake them up because He loves them too much to let them go without contending. If we'll live in relationship with Him based on agreement with His heart—He doesn't just want relationship on our terms; He wants relationship on His terms. That's critical. We all know that, but it's important to stress it. In the Body of Christ today, we talk about relationship with Jesus. To a lot of people, that means something that's not even a biblical concept. They're just talking about Jesus a little at Easter and Christmastime. He's just an ornament in their life. We're talking about living in relationship with Him, based on agreement with Him on His terms. That's what He wants.

THE MESSAGE OF JUDGMENT AND REVIVAL: THE GLORY AND THE GORY

Paragraph B. This is what He's after, the overall message to which we must give ear. It's the message of the glory, in the positive sense. It's also the message of the judgment. I call it the glory and the gory. The both/and. It's not enough only to hit the crisis without the glory, the revival, but nor is it right to preach the revival without the crisis. That's not the whole story, either. It's the glory and the crisis, but living in relationship with a

God who is kind, a judge who is kind because the Judge is also a bridegroom. He's the Bridegroom Judge. He's the Bridegroom King.

THE JUDGE IS FILLED WITH KINDNESS, BUT HE CANNOT BE MANIPULATED

Joel 2:12-14 says, "Return to the Lord with all your heart," and it gives us five reasons: "He is gracious, He is merciful. He doesn't get angry very fast at all. He's very slow to anger. He's kind. No, He has great kindness" (paraphrased). The Judge is filled with kindness. He's a judge filled with tenderness, but He cannot be manipulated. His kindness isn't the sort we can take advantage of or manipulate. He relents from the harm that has already been decreed or established in heaven, but He gives time. He says, "I will cancel it," so to speak. "I'll relent of the harm that's due this geographic region, to wake them up as well as to stop them from their oppression." There are always two dimensions: wake up His people and stop the oppressors from harming the people. There are two different dimensions of His breaking in.

THE LORD IS INCLINED TO RELENT FROM THE HARM THAT'S DESERVED

In verse 14, He says that glorious mention, that mysterious dimension we don't like: "Who knows if He will turn?"

I don't like the "who knows?" I want to know for sure. "What's the number we have to get to respond? Is it 1,000, 2,000, 10,000, a million? Who knows? Come on Lord, tell me. Is it two percent, five percent? I want to know where I'm at."

"Who knows? You press in hard. I'm really kind, I'm really generous. I'll answer. I'll give you a better deal than you deserve. Trust me."

"I appreciate that, but I still want to know the number." He leaves us with the "who knows." One translation says *perhaps*. We know from His character that He's inclined to relent of the harm that's deserved. That's His nature, but He only gives the harm to wake up and free. That's the reason He gives the harm, to wake up and to free. He says, "My love is the balance of My love. I love you, therefore I'm coming after you. I love you, therefore I'll be tender and give you time, but I love you, therefore I'm coming after you." He says He'll leave a blessing. The disaster zone is turned into a revival center, a blessing. He says, "That which would have been a disaster will be a revival center, a place of blessing."

SOLVING THE RELATIONAL DILEMMA WITH DEEP WHOLEHEARTEDNESS

Here is the message to which we should give ear: Wholeheartedness makes a difference. Wholeheartedness with God really matters. A lot of people think, "It doesn't matter that much." It really does matter. The problem is relational. The problem of the earth is relational, with humans and God. That's really the issue. Solving the relational dilemma is the main answer, not the only answer, but it's the main answer. We can change the course of history, we really can. A small number of wholehearted people, I don't know the number, but a small number can change the course of history and increase the quality of life for a region and a nation.

THE CALL TO HEAR AND GIVE EAR: A CALL TO MEDITATE AND GO DEEPLY

Paragraph C. The call to hear and give ear. This is very strategic statement, verse 2, "Hear this, you elders, and give ear, all you inhabitants of the earth." The call to hear and to give ear is a call to study. It's a call to meditate. It's a call to go deeply. It's the twofold message. It's the glory, revival, and it's the judgment, the crisis. It's the both/and message, not the either/or. It's not just revival or judgment, it's, "I want a response of

wholeheartedness. I want a relational connection with you that's strengthened. I will show myself as the kind Judge." That's the message, that the Judge is kind and He wants to bless.

“HE WHO HAS EARS TO HEAR, LET HIM HEAR”

In paragraph E, Jesus used this same phrase, this same principle. He said, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear,” thirteen times, if I remember correctly, in all the New Testament; Jesus used this phrase or a very equivalent phrase, “He who has ears, let him hear.” It's the number one teaching of Jesus. Jesus preached this more than any other single one sentence in terms of a one-sentence message. This was the most repeated message of Jesus' ministry: “Pay attention, He that has ears.”

Here is what it means when it says, “He that has ears, let him hear”: You have to pay close attention, because it takes the help of God to get what's being said. That's what Joel starts with. “Hear this. Understand what's being said is very, very significant, and also understand that it's going to take the Holy Spirit's help to get it.” Why does it matter? When I read the book of Joel, I'm not happy to read it through and say, “Well, that's that.” I look at this and say, “This is a ‘give ear’ portion of the Bible.” That means I will pray, I will ask the Spirit for help, I will ponder it, I will put energy into it. I will throw fasting in, because fasting is what I call an “accelerator.” It accelerates the process of growing in understanding. You don't earn more when you fast, but it accelerates the growth process, the learning process.

So when the Lord starts off by saying, “Give ear and hear,” He's saying, “Pay close attention, there's more than meets the eye. There are levels of understanding to be had here. Pay very close attention to this Bible information because if you don't, you'll end up explaining it away or neglecting it.” Many people explain away the passages like this. They say, “Well, it was symbolic, it was for that day; it doesn't really matter.” Joel says, “Don't do that. Pay attention. Give ear.” It's this phrase that Jesus spoke more than any other one phrase. What Joel is really saying is, “Learn the message and respond to it. Take time to go deeply. Take time to go deeply and learn it.”

AN ENCOURAGEMENT TO GO MORE DEEPLY IN THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD'S WORD

Page forty-eight. Hearing doesn't happen automatically. You're not hearing because you're in a class. A teaching class like this is really a big advertisement. That's really what this is. It's like a neon sign saying, “Study Joel. Study Joel. Study Joel.” It's giving you a few little points, I trust, a few sparks in your heart saying, “Huh, OK.” You can't remember that much a few days later. You won't remember that much of what you've heard. That's why I always like to give notes, but no matter how smart you are, you cannot get that much in a hearing. Really, I want you to walk away saying, “I will go after this. I remember the feeling a few times in different classes, a sense of urgency. I had better go after that.” If you feel that, then this has been a successful session, a successful course even.

THE PROCESS OF CULTIVATION BEGINS WITH DELIBERATE, MEDITATIVE STUDY

Know this, hearing isn't automatic. It takes time to cultivate hearing. I've been studying Joel for some time now. It's unfolding more and more. I can just imagine the Spirit saying to me, “Give ear. Hear, Mike. Give ear. Give ear. He who has ears, let him hear.” There's more than meets the eye here. It's going to take the Holy Spirit's help. You're going to need a Holy Spirit escort to go deeply, saying, “Let Me mark your heart.” Take time with this passage. Don't go over it fast. Hear it; give ear to it. That's what this passage is saying here in verse 2.

Paragraph G. The process of revelation begins with studying. Studying isn't enough, but it begins with studying. We read it; we don't feel that much when we read it. When I began to study the book of Joel, it was sort of interesting. Occasionally it inspired me, but mostly it confused me. It was interesting, not very inspiring, a little confusing. I went, "Huh." It begins with studying, but you stay with it. Then over time, as you study it, something begins to happen. Living understanding begins to grow like a seed in your heart. Maybe only a little. Stay with it, though. Eat the scroll. That's what the angel told Ezekiel in Ezekiel 3: "Eat the scroll." Which means, "Devour the prophetic message," because there was a prophetic message on the scroll. That was the idea. To eat the scroll meant to digest the prophetic message. The angel told John the same thing in Revelation 10: "Eat the scroll. Digest this." It's not just a casual run through the book of Joel. "I did the Joel course, now I have Joel down." No, you won't get Joel on a quick drive by. That won't happen. It's not Joel fast food—fast food at Joel's place. Really, you need to go deeply; you need to give ear. I've looked at that verse over the years and I think it grabbed me because it's the most quoted principle statement of Jesus. Because when you read it, when you really think about it, Jesus, I believe, was quoting Joel 1:2. He was looking back to that passage: "Give ear." He might not have had that passage in His mind, but He very well might have. That's where the early Church was born, in the Joel 2 spiritual environment.

BECAUSE OF THE UNPRECEDENTED NATURE OF THE CRISIS, HEARING WILL BE HARDER

II. Joel asked the question, "Has anything like this ever happened in your days, or even in the days of your fathers?" (Joel 1:2, paraphrased). It's unprecedented. Therefore, it's unfamiliar. There's the problem. Because what's going to happen in the future is so unfamiliar to us, it's a stumbling block. The greatness of the revival is so great, it's far beyond the book of Acts, and the greatness of the judgment is far beyond any act of history, any season of history. The unfamiliarity of it, not being able to connect with it, makes it difficult to hear. When Joel says, "Hear it," he says, "But I want to warn you that it's hard to hear because it's so unprecedented and so unfamiliar. Hearing won't be easy and it won't be automatic. It will take time to hear this." Because again, hearing doesn't just mean "hear it with your ears;" it will take time to cultivate understanding of this passage because it's completely unprecedented. There's nothing like it in history.

HE WILL SHAKE EVERYTHING THAT CAN BE SHAKEN

Paragraph B. Haggai 2:7 speaks of the generation in which the Lord returns. God says, "I will shake all nations" (Hag. 2:7). All nations. All 262 nations will be shaken, every single nation. They'll be shaken with the spirit of revival and shaken with the spirit of trouble. Part of it will be the Devil, part of it will be the escalating sin of men, and part of it will be the judgment of God. It will be shaken. Every single nation will be shaken and we cannot imagine what it looks like for every nation to be shaken with glory and trouble from the Devil, man, and God simultaneously all in the same period of time. We cannot even imagine what that kind of environment on the planet looks like. Joel says, "Know this, I told you to give ear. I warned you there's more than meets the eye. I warned you that you won't get it quickly. I warned you that it's unprecedented, unfamiliar, it will take time, but it will be worth it." That's what he's saying.

"IN THE LAST DAYS SCOFFERS SHALL COME, WALKING AFTER THEIR OWN LUSTS"

Paragraph C. we must not yield to a scoffing spirit. Look at 2 Peter 3:3-4. This is a very significant passage. Peter says in verse 3, "Knowing this first..." (2 Pet. 3:3, paraphrased). What a statement! He says in effect, "The first thing, above everything else, is to know this."

It's like, "What? What could follow this introduction? Of everything to know, this is the first thing to know about the end times. What would that be? Jesus is appearing in the sky?"

“That’s a really big one, but I want you to know something else. Know this first. Scoffers will come. Know this first, in order for you to connect with the message, you will have to resist the spirit of scoffing that will be prevalent in society, both in and outside the Church” (2 Pet. 3:3-4, paraphrased). “Know this first: There will be an opposition against faith and a spirit of scoffing. Scoffers will come.” He says, “Here is what I want you to understand. They aren’t empowered or motivated by revelation; they are motivated by their lusts. These scoffers are walking according to lust.” It doesn’t just mean rank perversion. They are motivated by their agenda for their pleasure, their comfort, their honor, and what they want. They’ll take the Bible and make it say anything they want to support their agenda, their lust. They aren’t being moved by revelation. They have an agenda they want to uphold, so they’ll read the Bible and they’ll minimize it. They’ll scoff at it and dismiss these real things.” For the heart of faith, you must know this first. There will be men in and outside the Church motivated by their own agendas. They want things to be good because it makes their ministry plan work well. It makes things go well for them. They aren’t so concerned with what the Bible is really saying. They’ll search the Bible to find ways to dismiss these concepts. They’ll have clever Bible passages and elaborately-planned presentations and arguments. He says, “Know this, they are being motivated by lust, not by revelation and not by love of the truth.”

EXPOSING THE LIE THAT EVERY GENERATION HAS BELIEVED THEY WERE THE ONE

Peter says, “Here is what they’re going to say. Here is what the common logic will be: ‘Where is the promise of His coming? Where is this great revival and where is this great trouble? Ever since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the very beginning of creation. Everything is the same as it always was.’” That’s their basic message. Know this, if you’re going to hear this message, you’ll have to resist a scoffing spirit. Again, it’s in the Church and outside the Church. They’ll say, “Where is the revival? Where is the trouble? Every generation always said that they were the generation in which the Lord was going to come.” Which is absolutely not true at all, by the way. It is probably true that in every generation, there were at least ten people on the earth or a few more who thought it was that generation. But this is my guess, that number was far less than one percent of the Body of Christ in all these generations. I haven’t interviewed the whole human race, so I wouldn’t have a scientific number, but I’m guessing that when you look over Church history, the vast majority of the Church never believed they were the last one. There’s always this one man on a hill, and this one other man, and this one teacher, but the vast majority has not thought this. There are only two generations in which the majority of the people of God will believe it’s the coming of the Lord for a sustained period of time. That’s the generation of the apostles and the generation of His coming. All the generations between maybe had a fraction who believed that for a short while.

The scoffers will say, “Well everyone has always said that.” They are actually fulfilling what Peter said they would say. “It won’t make any difference anyway. It’s always the same as it has always been.” They don’t want a crisis and a drama. They don’t even want it on their mind because it messes up their plan. He called it their lust, their agendas.

What we need to do is throw away our agendas and say, “We want the spirit of truth regardless of what it means to us personally. We trust Your wisdom, we trust Your power, we trust Your love. We’re going with You. What do You have to say? Whether it’s this hour, the next hour, or the one after, what do You have to say about this hour of history?”

Number one, Peter foresaw scoffers. Number two, their worldview doesn't come from revelation of Scripture. They have many revelations of Scripture, many biblical truths, but not related to the end times. You can have many biblical truths that are real, and alive, and you may have a sincere heart for Jesus, but when it comes to the end times, you can still have a scoffing spirit. I know many people who have a very warm relationship with the Lord, but a scoffing spirit related to the end times. Peter said, "Know this first of all: Scoffing will be the thing you have to resist and overcome. Beyond anything else, be guarded against that one thing."

THE PREVALENCE OF THE OSTRICH SYNDROME IN THE BODY OF CHRIST

Top of page forty-nine. Paragraph D. I call it the ostrich syndrome. The vast majority of the people I know in the Body of Christ have what I call "the ostrich syndrome." They put their head in the ground and say, "It'll just take care of itself." I love what Allen Hood says. People say, "Well, it will all work its way out. It will pan out."

He says, "Yes, it will pan out, but the question is, how will it pan out for you?" It really matters if you know and understand what's going on. It really matters. Yes, it will pan out, but he says, "How will it pan out for you and for those on whom you have an influence?"

Putting our head in the ground and saying, "I don't want to bother with this because it's really messing up my five-year, ten-year and forty-year plan; I don't really want to think about it," won't help you. The Word of God won't go away because we don't want to think about different things. Obviously we know that.

PROPHETIC SCRIPTURE IS FILLED WITH RELEVANT REVELATION FOR THE RIGHTEOUS

Joel says this, "Has anything like this ever happened?" It's new ground for everyone. It's the greatest revival and the greatest crisis, ever, coming in all the nations together simultaneously. The best days and the worst days for the planet are yet ahead of us. I believe it's in the lifetime of people alive on the earth right now. If that be true, if it's in the lifetime of your lifetime, your children, or grandchildren, then it's absolutely relevant to get this stuff clear, because again, there are 150 chapters in the Bible on this subject, and most of the Body of Christ is illiterate on about ninety-five percent of those 150 chapters. Yet they are really filled with relevant revelation for the people of God.

NOAH TOTED HIS UMBRELLA WHEN THERE WASN'T A CLOUD IN THE SKY

Paragraph E. Noah. Speaking of unprecedented... I've thought on the Noah situation. I'll give you a verse: Genesis 2:6. In Noah's day, God watered the ground from beneath. It never rained. It never rained from the top down. God watered the ground from below.

Noah came out; he said, "It's going to rain."

Everyone said, "Good. What's rain?"

It had never rained. They didn't know what he was talking about. He said, "Water is going to come down."

They said, "Noah, we love your heart, but you skipped science class in second grade. It's obvious. Water doesn't come from above; it comes from below. Scientists can prove it."

He says, "Yes, I know, I did that class. I did well in it, but I heard God."

“Well how do you suppose the water down there is going to get up there? How is it going to stay up there?”

“I don’t know! Somehow God is going to get the water up there and pour it all down here.”

“That’s cool. That’s good, Noah.”

NOAH, MOVED BY GODLY FEAR, SPENT 120 YEARS PREPARING A BOAT FOR HIS FAMILY

Noah spends 120 years building a boat. We don’t know exactly how long, but that’s the parameters of the story, 120 years. For most of that time, he was actually building the boat. Can you fathom preparing for something for ten years, twenty years, thirty years? How about 120? Some people go hard for a summer and they need a three-year reprieve after a hard summer. Imagine 120 years of cutting wood to build a boat. It’s never rained before. The society is absolutely laughing at him. It says here in Hebrews 11:7, he was “moved by godly fear.” He didn’t neglect it, he didn’t explain it away. He was moved by the fear of God. I love that phrase. *Moved* is the same idea as a hearing ear. He was moved. Most people neglect it, dismiss it, explain it away somehow. Some are stirred for a month or a year or two, but the initial stirring lifts and evaporates because they never cultivate a hearing ear.

Joel said, “Hear and understand. Listen. Listen. Cultivate hearing on this subject.” You might get inspired for three months or a year or two. Ten or twenty years from now it may not even be on your mind. I’ve seen people get inspired by the unique dynamics of the generation the Lord returns for a summer or a year. It’s far away from their mind now because, after they felt the initial stirring, they didn’t feed their spirit on the Word of God in a continual way. They didn’t cultivate a hearing ear.

Can you fathom how unprecedented this was to Noah? I always think of the family dynamics. The three sons each had a wife. The wife had a mom and dad. They went home to mom and dad’s house: “I told you not to marry that boy. His dad is a kook!”

Picture the dynamics, “I know mom, but he’s so sincere.”

“I tell you, that man is no good and his dad is a kook.”

“AS IN THE DAYS OF NOAH, SO ALSO SHALL THE COMING OF THE SON OF MAN BE”

Picture the dynamics going on in the neighborhood and everything. How did this man sustain motivation for so long? It was unprecedented. The Lord says in Matthew 24, “It will be like the days of Noah” (Mt. 24:37, paraphrased). There are five or six ways it’s like the days of Noah. Not just that it’s sudden, but it’s unprecedented. It’s like the days of Noah in that it’s unprecedented. It’s like the days of Noah in that most won’t believe it before it happens. It’s like the days of Noah in a number of different ways, but the unprecedented dimension is particularly like the days of Noah.

I’m saying, “Lord, I want to have a hearing heart. I want to hear and give ear. I want to do what Jesus said and have ears that hear.” Cultivate more than just catching it for a minute. That’s talking about a profound heart of understanding on the subject matter Jesus was teaching.

He says, “There’s more than meets the eye and it won’t happen easily or automatically. Stay with it. Stay with it.” That’s what the phrase means, “He who has ears, let him hear.”

GOD IS RAISING UP LEADERS WHO WILL SEARCH THIS OUT

III. “Hear this, you elders.” It begins with leadership. God is raising up leaders who will search this out. It starts with the elders. I’m talking mostly to twenty year olds. You’re the leaders. I’m not talking about the other group. I’m talking about you. Get a vision. Twenty, twenty-one, twenty-two, twenty-three, you will be a leader that hears.

In a few moments, we’re going to wait on the Lord and respond. My prayer is that you say, at twenty years old, “I have a vision, Joel 1:2. I will be an elder who hears.” *Hears* means to follow through: “I will respond. I will go deeply in this. I will eat the scroll,” using the terminology of Ezekiel 3 and Revelation 10.

THE TIME TO RISE UP AND START LEADING IS NOW

Paragraph C. One of the greatest gifts God can give a nation is to raise up leaders, to raise up twenty-year-old leaders who become thirty and then forty, and then, lo and behold, when they least expect it, they’re fifty. I didn’t read that in a book; it’s true. Ask God to visit you right now and give you a resolve, because you’re going to be thirty in a minute and forty after that. You’ll have ministries. Some will have large numbers, and some one on one. Yet those are as significant to God as the large ones are. Here is the question: even now you’re called to leadership. You say, “I’m not doing anything.” There are a whole bunch of twelve year olds who need your leadership. Jump in and start leading them. “I don’t know any.” Open your eyes; there are about 10,000 of them within a five-mile radius. Open your eyes, go find three or four or five of them and start leading them to the Lord. Then teach them the Gospel of John. Guess what? You’re a leader in the Body of Christ. That’s another subject for another day. What I’m saying is, don’t think you’re only a leader tomorrow. You’re actually leaders now. Get a vision to be an elder who hears.

FIRST THE LEADERS HEAR, AND THEN THE PEOPLE

Here is the progression. D, leaders hear and then the people hear. First it’s the leaders, then the people. Judges 5:2 is a great verse. It’s that song of Deborah. Deborah was the great judge of Israel. She was an anointed woman who was the senior prophetic voice of the nation of Israel. Here’s what it says: “Bless the Lord when leaders lead and the people voluntarily follow” (Jud. 5:2)—when they voluntarily cooperate and offer themselves. “Bless the Lord when leaders lead and the people will follow.”

Say in your heart, not, “I will be one who follows.” That’s cool, but say, “I will be one who leads.” I tell you, the people will follow. There will always be some who see your revelation and your conviction and your boldness and they’ll be empowered by it. They’ll follow. That’s what it says in Joel 1; first the elders, and then the inhabitants. That’s the divine order.

JESUS WASN’T KILLED FOR DOING MIRACLES, BUT BECAUSE HE TOLD THE TRUTH

Top of page fifty. It’s not enough to have a hearing ear, to cultivate revelation. He says, “Tell. Tell the children. Tell them. Say it. Don’t just study it, say it.” Studying it is fun. Debating it is fun. Sharing it with a friend is fun. Telling it to the next generation, that’s a whole different issue. When you tell it, then a whole lot of other implications start happening, because other people start weighing in when you start proclaiming it. They don’t like it because they think it’s not helpful. They have a hundred reasons why they don’t like it, but the point is that part of really hearing, part of really hearing is proclaiming. You don’t proclaim at the front end because you want to get clear on at least part of it. You don’t really have a hearing ear until you’re willing to say it, even if it’s one on one.

The price we'll pay for boldly standing for the truth can be seen in the persecution of the Old Testament prophets. They were criticized, ostracized, imprisoned, and killed because of the things they said. Jesus wasn't killed because He did miracles; He was killed because He made statements. If He had performed miracles and voted for the right team, they would have loved the miracles. The miracles aren't what offended them; it was His statements. If He had only skipped about five key statements, things would have been great. He said, "No, I'll say the whole truth." Then the miracles backed up with those statements made those statements far more explosive in society.

GOD IS RAISING UP PEOPLE WHO ARE WILLING TO BEAR THE REPROACH OF THE TRUTH

God is raising up people who are willing to bear the reproach of the truth. Like I tell people, this is just a guess; I haven't interviewed the whole earth, but the most hated person on the earth, I believe, is the president of the United States. It's really true. All over the nations, he has more people who say, "If you would just change your policy in America, things would be better for us." They don't like him. But not to worry; over the years, the only person I know of more hated than the president is God. It's really true. The nations don't like God's leadership. "Why do You not do it differently? Why are You not doing more? Why are You not? How come? Why did You?" If you have power to make a difference, then people don't like the decisions you make.

My point is this, the nations don't like God's ways, and what happens when you become a voice for God? You're thinking, "Wow, I will be in the stadium, I will be popular, things will be good."

That's the wrong dream. They don't like Him. A billion will, but billions won't. I mean, billions won't. They don't like Him. You say, "I want to be faithful to You." If you're going to join the hall of fame of history, the prophets were killed; the apostles were killed. The prophetic voices throughout history have been imprisoned and killed. We have to shift gears from, "I want to fill a stadium, be rich and famous, and tell mom I really did make it," to, "I want to be loyal to the truth. I might die for it; I'll certainly lose a lot friends for it. I'll be tender, kind, faithful, and stick with it. A lot of bad will happen, along with some good."

Bad people will resist, and when it happens, we don't say, "Bah-hum-bug." We say, "We get it."

He says, "Tell. I want you to say it. Tell the children; yell the next generation. Pass it on."

THE PERSEVERANCE AND ASSISTANCE REQUIRED TO PLUMB THE DEPTHS OF GOD

Paragraph B. This is Jesus now, taking on this theme of, "He who has ears to hear, let him hear." Again, this is the teaching He gave more than any one teaching in His ministry. Here in Mark 4, what He says in essence is that if you're faithful with the revelation He gives you, He will give you more. It starts off in verse 23: "If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear" (Mk. 4:23). Jesus is saying, "There's more than meets the eye. There are levels to what I'm saying. You won't get it immediately, not automatically; you need to go after it. You need the Holy Spirit's help. It will take perseverance." That's what He means by, "He who has ears, let him hear." Again, I think He's quoting Joel 1:2.

THE ONLY WAY TO KEEP THE GROUND YOU'VE GAINED IS TO GAIN NEW GROUND

Then in the next verse He says, "Pay attention to what you hear" (Mk. 4:24, paraphrased). He's not talking about listening to Christian music vs. non-Christian music; that's not the subject right here. The reason I say that is because when I was younger, that was the verse they always used: "Pay attention to what you hear." I

think that's a true concept. We need to pay attention to what we hear; but that's not what He's saying here. He's saying, "You pay attentive to what kind of understanding you cultivate when you approach the Word of God. To the same measure you use what you get, you will get more" (v. 24b, paraphrased). Or, if God gives you some initial inspiration and you never use it, that inspiration will go away. You'll either gain ground and keep growing in revelation, or you'll actually lose ground. The only way to keep the ground you've gained is by gaining more ground. If you quit taking ground in the Spirit, I assure you that you'll lose ground. There's no static place.

"But on a scale of one to ten, I got to a five. OK. I got to a five, I'm twenty-five years old. I think I'll camp out here and retire at a five." No, it doesn't work that way. The only way you'll keep a five is if you go to six. If you camp out at five, you'll become a four in a short amount of time. You'll go backwards; you won't stay the same. The only way to keep the ground you've gained in the Spirit is to take new ground.

Jesus said, "If you keep the inspiration I gave you and grow in truth, use it, speak it, grow in it, say it, take a stand for it, I will give you more and more. If you don't, the inspiration you had back in that one summer, you will lose." It won't be on your mind; as a matter of fact, you'll get cynical against it in the years to come. What a sober passage. He's talking about the way we steward truth here. That's what He means by, "Take heed what you hear." He's not talking about movies and all that stuff. That's a point for another day, but that's not the point here. He's talking about our approach to truth. We have to use that which has inspired us instead of stacking it in a corner. We have to use it; we have to invest it. We have to say it, take a stand for it, and take the reproach for it, and we'll get more and more of it.

THE FOUR-GENERATION MANDATE

V. Now Joel speaks of establishing the dynamic spiritual culture. "Tell your children about it, let your children tell their children, and their children another generation" (Joel 2:3). Paragraph A. There's a four generation mandate here. Paragraph B. every child should hear the message of the primary events that are prophesied in the Bible about the return of Jesus. They need to know two or three of the positives or two or three of the negatives. They need to grasp what the future looks like. As they get older, as they now become nine, twelve, fourteen, and fifteen, it's normal for them to believe what the Bible says about the future instead of weird, because their mind and heart are like wet cement. Whatever you write on it or don't write on it will dry. That's what they'll be like. We want children believing it's right to seek Jesus wholeheartedly. We want them believing prayer meetings are a normal part of the kingdom of God. We want them to believe that giving money away, standing for truth, and blessing our enemies is normal Christianity. We want them to believe the key, broad-stroke things as they're picturing their future and their little minds are being formed; we want them to believe what God says is going to happen. So when they become twenty, thirty, forty, they don't say, "I don't really buy any of that stuff. My church never really talked about it in any way. I don't really know." The stuff you hear so much today.

A VISION TO INVEST IN THE NEXT GENERATION

It was normal for Noah's three boys, over time, to grasp that a flood was coming. We want it to be normal for the young ones and the ones after them and the ones after them to believe there are unique dynamics happening. It is very, very possible they will have a direct role, and they need to begin to see what God says about it. Imagine, grand-dad, dad, son, and grandson, all of them, and daughters and wives, everyone together, and they get it; they understand. There's a spirit of faith. When the four generations are all in unity together, it's not odd to go to a solemn assembly. It's not odd to empty your bank account to help someone in a big missions event.

It's not even crazy. It makes sense to all of them. It's not odd to study what the Bible says about what's coming. Because it begins to develop a spiritual culture, and people grow in faith. It's normative for them to make sense of this. That's what he says about that, but it begins with us. I'll mention my final point here, paragraph I. Lenny and Tracy LaGuardia. I met Lenny in 1985; that's twenty-five years ago. He was saying many of these things back then. He was saying, "I want to teach kids to flow in the spirit and to prophesy and to preach Jesus and experience the love of God, etc." He's fifty now; he was twenty-five back then. I remember him. He stayed with this for all these years. I just had to mention him because we're talking about children. His wife has held the line with him. Talk about investing in the next generation! We want to be a people who hear it; we have a vision to be leaders and we want to invest in the next generation. Amen.