

Session 6 Military Invasion in God's End-Time Plan

Please refer to the teaching notes for this message.

INTRODUCTION

“Blow the trumpet in Zion” (Joel 2:1). Zion, by the way, is the city of Jerusalem, and almost every time you see Zion mentioned, it’s a reference to the city of Jerusalem. It’s talking about the temple. “Sound an alarm in My holy mountain” (ibid). That’s where the temple was built, on the mountain of God. “Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble”—the land of Judah, the whole region; let them all tremble. “For the day of the Lord is coming, for it is at hand.” That was a day of judgment. We know the day of the Lord is positive and negative. In this case, it was negative in order to bring the positive afterwards.

“A DAY OF DARKNESS AND GLOOMINESS, A DAY OF CLOUDS AND THICK DARKNESS”

“A day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness, like the morning clouds spread over the mountains. A people come”—or a nation comes—“great and strong, the like of whom has never been, nor will there be any such after them, even for many successive generations. A fire devours before them, and behind them a flame burns” (Joel 2:2-3). So the fire is in front of and behind them. “The land of Israel is like the Garden of Eden before them” (v. 3b, paraphrased)—it was lush, fruitful, and filled with vegetation. We know this is some years after the locust plague has occurred. The land of Judah and Jerusalem is like a Garden of Eden before them. The vegetation is all returned, but this army leaves the land desolate like a wilderness.

“Surely nothing shall escape them”—surely nothing will escape the onslaught of the Babylonian army coming against Israel. “Their appearance is like the appearance of horses; and like swift steeds, so they run” (v. 4). They are coming rapidly. They run, these soldiers. “With a noise like chariots over mountaintops they leap, like the noise of flaming fire that devours the stubble, like a strong people set in battle array” (v. 5). The sound of war is like the noise of flaming fire devouring, like a big forest fire. The sound of war, the noise, is like that.

“THOUGH THEY LUNGE BETWEEN THE WEAPONS, THEY ARE NOT CUT DOWN”

“Before them the people writhe in pain” (Joel 2:6)—before this army, the people of Jerusalem, the victims in the city, writhe in pain. “All faces are drained of color. They run like mighty men, they climb the wall like men of war” (Joel 2:6-7)—this hostile Babylonian army. Jerusalem had walls around it. This army breaks in the walls everywhere. Everyone in this army marches in formation. It’s a disciplined army. They don’t break ranks; they don’t push each other. Even in the heat of battle, they march in order and in columns. “Though they lunge between the weapons, they are not cut down” (v. 8). They run to and fro across the city of Jerusalem (v. 9). They attack and go over the wall. Once they get inside the wall, they climb into the houses and “enter at the windows like a thief” (v. 9). Imagine soldiers entering into a city and all of them breaking into the homes. How terrifying is this picture? This is an absolutely terrifying picture.

MOSES PROPHECIES THE LOCUSTS AND ARMIES A THOUSAND YEARS BEFORE JOEL

Roman numeral I. The background to this Babylonian invasion. Paragraph A. Israel entered the Promised Land in 1500 B.C. That was in the time of Moses. David lived and ruled in 1000 B.C. Joel lived around 600 years B.C. Moses lived about 1,000 years before him. Just to give the context, Moses prophesied. Before they entered the Promised Land, they came out of Egypt, and journeyed in the wilderness for forty years. They were about to enter the land of Canaan, the Promised Land. Moses gave them a prophecy. This was his last message to them after forty years of being in the wilderness; then Moses died and Joshua took them into the land. Moses said, “If

you sin, when you get into the land in a few minutes, when Joshua brings you into the land, terrible things will happen to you as a nation. If you get into that land and you break your covenant with God, terrible things will occur.” Because the blessings of the covenant are so great, the consequences for violating them are great. Why? Because God is zealous for the relationship for which the covenant stands. He told them, “A locust plague will come after you.” Moses said that almost 1,000 years before Joel. He said, “The locust plague will come after you.”

Solomon said the same thing. Solomon said, “If the locust plague comes and you cry out to the Lord, then the Lord will heal the land.” God sends locusts as His judgment.

Then Moses said, “Things will get worse. There will be a nation from afar, the Babylonian army. They will come after the locusts.” That’s exactly what’s happening in Joel.

THE THREE GREAT INVASIONS OF ISRAEL’S HISTORY

Paragraph B. The Babylonian invasion occurred over a twenty year period, from 606 to 586 B.C. I told you a few sessions ago that 586 B.C. was the height of it. That was the most horrifying year. If you just remember 586 B.C., that’s one of the most important dates in Old Testament history. The city of Jerusalem was decimated. There were three stages, three waves of attack. About every ten years, the Babylonian army came in another wave. That’s what Moses said in Deuteronomy 28:64. He said, “The Lord will scatter you. He will bring you captive to nations all around you. It will happen” (Deut. 28:64, paraphrased).

This happened on a major scale three different times in Israel’s history. This is important if you’re going to understand the Old Testament prophets. You need to understand these three, because Babylon was a really serious one. There was the Assyrian’s attack in 721 B.C, in which they took the nation of Israel into captivity. Then about 100 years later, the Babylonians did it, and then six hundred or seven hundred years later, Rome did it right after Jesus, in 70 A.D. It’s happened three times in the last several thousand years. They’ve been attacked many times. Those are the three big ones, the ones referenced by the prophets.

THE ULTIMATE INVASION OF EVIL, THE ATTACK OF THE ARMIES OF THE ANTICHRIST

Paragraph C. All three of these big attacks against Israel, over a 2,000 year period, are foreshadowing the ultimate invasion that Moses was talking about when the Antichrist comes at the end of the age. He is the ultimate enemy; all the other invasions have been down payments, so to speak. They are pictures of how bad it will be when the most evil man that ever walked the planet will lead armies against the nation of Israel to discipline them for their sin. Again, the Devil just wants to destroy them. God is allowing this to happen to discipline them, so that a remnant would be saved, so that they would call on Jesus, so that the King would come and the millennial kingdom would begin and all those things.

WE LOOK AT THE PAST AS A PICTURE OF HOW TO INTERPRET THE FUTURE

Page sixty-four. Paragraph D. Why do we want to understand this Babylonian invasion in Joel 2? If we understand what happened in Babylon in this invasion, it equips us to understand the future invasion that will take place when the Antichrist comes against Jerusalem. The Antichrist isn’t only going to come against Jerusalem; he will come against many Gentile nations as well. We say, “What will it be like?” We study Joel 2 to see how severe it will be and what God wants. The model of Joel 2, the Babylonian invasion, gives us insight into the Antichrist’s invasion of Israel and also his invasion against other nations of the earth. Then we understand the severity and we understand what God requires to alleviate the trouble. Joel 2 is an important,

very critical passage of Scripture to let us see what God wants and what God is after in the midst of all this crisis that is yet to come. I study the past to gain insight in how to interpret what's happening in the days to come. I read the other passages about the end-time events, but I read them through the grid of understanding the trouble in the past. We look at the past as a picture of how to interpret the future. That's why I care about understanding Joel 2. I want to know what God is thinking; I want to know what God wants us to do in that hour. If you study Joel 2, you will know what to do in a future crisis when a nation is being disciplined by the Lord or attacked by the Devil, either one, because often they will go hand in hand. It will be God's discipline, but the Devil's rage, along with man's sin.

JESUS IS COMING IN THE CONTEXT OF A MILITARY CONFLICT

Roman numeral II. Jesus prophesied military invasions. The reason I'm saying this is that this is a new idea to some people. Some people, when they think about the future and the events related to the coming of the Lord, aren't thinking of military invasions of nations. Let me tell you, Jesus is returning; the second coming is actually in the context of a military crisis around Israel. He isn't just coming in a vacuum in the sky; He's coming as a military leader to deliver Israel, and even to deliver the Gentile nations from this evil military man. Jesus is coming in the context of a military conflict.

This is new to some people; they think, "Well, things will get better and better, or maybe worse and worse. Either way, Jesus is going to come and rapture us out. It doesn't matter anyway." That's not what's going to happen. The Body of Christ will see the military conflict. Jesus will rapture the Church, but in the context of this global scenario of crisis that's developing, we need to know how to interpret the crisis and respond to God in the midst of it and what to tell the nations is happening in the Spirit. That's why we want to understand this.

In Luke 19:43-44, Jesus prophesied the military invasion of Jerusalem. My point is that the Jesus of the New Testament prophesied military invasions. Some people have this really confused idea that the God of the Old Testament is different from the God of the New Testament. There's only one God. He never, ever changes, one God in three persons, fully loving in the Old Testament and fully holy. He's fully loving and fully holy in the New Testament as well and there is absolutely no variant of change in His personality at all. The God who used military invasion to discipline a nation in His plan in the Old Testament is the same God who is leading the nations in the New Testament. His name is Jesus. He prophesied it in Luke 19:43-44.

Paragraph B, He prophesied it a second time in Luke 21:20-24. He said, "A military invasion is coming" (paraphrased). Jesus went to the cross in about 30 A.D. Rome came along forty years later. He said, "Rome is coming; they will surround the city. It will be a military invasion. It will level the city." We're talking about the tender, loving Jesus prophesying a military destruction in the city of Jerusalem. It didn't happen for forty years, but it happened. Sometimes, because the Lord delays and gives people a chance to respond, people think, "Well, I guess it won't really happen."

THE NEAR FULFILLMENTS AND FAR FULFILLMENTS OF BIBLE PROPHECY

Even that prophecy that Jesus gave for Jerusalem has two fulfillments. For many prophecies in the Bible, there are double fulfillments. There's a near fulfillment that happens within a generation or so; there's a far fulfillment that happens at the end of the age. One prophecy, two fulfillments. The near fulfillment is a partial fulfillment. The far fulfillment is at the end of the age, a long time from when the prophet gave it. It has a complete fulfillment. Here, even in Luke 21, the prophecy has double fulfillments. He said, "Jerusalem, you will be surrounded" (Lk. 21:20, paraphrased). That happened forty years later in 70 A.D. However, 2,000 years

later, it will happen in an even more severe way. Beloved, it's coming again. Jerusalem will again be surrounded by nations.

THE BATTLE FOR AND FALL OF JERUSALEM DESCRIBED BY ZECHARIAH

I want to give you a verse to write in your notes. Zechariah 14:2-4 is one of the clearest descriptions. God says that all the nations of the earth will gather against Jerusalem to battle against her. Beloved, that's yet to come. This is far more intense even than what happened in 70 A.D. when Rome came against her. It's far more intense than what Babylon did. The nations of the earth, every nation of the earth is going to gather. There has never been a time when every nation of the earth gathered against Jerusalem. This is a prophecy yet to be fulfilled. Zechariah tells us the city shall be taken and captured by the bad guys. The city of Jerusalem will be captured again. It's going to happen. God wants to wake up the nation. It's not surprising; the Devil wants to destroy the nation and God wants to wake the nation up.

“BEHOLD, A RED HORSE!”

Paragraph C. John prophesied it. I have the verses there from the book of Revelation. Speaking of the generation in which the Lord returns, he said he saw a red horse released that would take peace from the earth (Rev. 6:4). He will take peace and many will be killed by a great sword. That's military conflict. It is yet ahead. John prophesied it, but who is the man who is releasing the red horse? Jesus is. Jesus is the one releasing the red horse. You read the book of Revelation, chapter 6; He's the one releasing it. It doesn't surprise Him; He understands what's happening. He knows there's a greater good coming out of this global conflict. There's something that will result from this conflict that wouldn't happen without this conflict. Again, though it's Satan's rage and desire to destroy, it's also God's discipline, the desire to wake them up to righteousness, love and truth.

“WHEN THEY SHALL SEE, ‘PEACE AND SAFETY’... SUDDEN DESTRUCTION COMES”

Paragraph D. Paul warns us about military conflicts. He said there will come a time when there's peace and safety on the earth, and that's a false peace and safety. It will be a delusion. There's a time in the future when all the nations will say, “Peace and safety!” Paul says, “Don't believe it. The Antichrist is orchestrating it. It's a counterfeit peace; it's a false peace. It's not safety; it's temporary. It only endures for a moment.” It's false until he pulls his mask off and you know he's not the Prince of Peace. He's dealing with the gods of war, as it says in the book of Daniel (Daniel 11:38). He makes the god of war his god. Paul said, “When they say, ‘Peace and safety,’ don't believe it. There will be sudden destruction, war, the opposite of peace and safety” (1 Thess. 5:3, paraphrased). War is coming on a global level.

Paragraph E. The Old Testament prophets, and Jesus and Paul and John, all prophesied end-time military conflicts. It's in the future of the planet. We need to be prepared; we need to be able to interpret what's happening in the spirit: why it's happening, what role God has, what role the Devil has, what role the Church has, and how we're supposed to respond and how we're supposed to interpret it. The book of Joel equips us for that.

“BLOW THE TRUMPET IN ZION, SOUND AN ALARM IN MY HOLY MOUNTAIN”

Page sixty-five, Roman numeral IV. Joel 2:1-2. “Blow the trumpet in Zion” (v. 1)—or in the city of Jerusalem. He says Zion because it's the covenant people he's talking about. Today Zion is still the city of Jerusalem. This application is to all those who are in covenant with God in Jesus. They are to apply this in their context as well,

though it has a particular application to the city of Jerusalem. It also has a broad application to anyone in covenant with God through Jesus, the only way you can be in covenant with God.

He says, “Blow the trumpet” (Joel 2:1). A man was literally blowing a real trumpet. He actually blew the trumpet in the temple. The way we do it, our trumpet is a prophetic message. We make known the trouble that’s coming. In that day, because they were all in one city, when that trumpet blast was heard, everyone knew an emergency was around the corner. Today we don’t blow a trumpet because we aren’t all in one city. So the trumpet is prophetic preaching that alerts people an emergency is coming. “Blow the trumpet in Zion, sound an alarm.” The sound must be clear enough that the people are alarmed. If it doesn’t alarm the people, the sound has not gone forth in a clear way.

“LET ALL THE INHABITANTS OF THE LAND TREMBLE”

Here is the next thing God wants: He wants all the inhabitants of the land to tremble (Joel 2:1b). He wants an alarm so clear that the people tremble; meaning, they get it. It’s not vague like, “Well, in God’s own way, in God’s own time, one of these days it’s going to get harder, but hey, it’s all going to work out...”

No. We’re not talking about a passive, “Well I snuck it in there somewhere. I said trouble was coming! I put it in the message!” That won’t alarm anyone and it won’t make anyone tremble. We’re talking about clear, precise prophetic preaching. We have the Scriptures. As we get nearer to the time of more global conflicts, the Spirit will be speaking in very precise ways of how to apply these Scriptures to nations. My point here is that we’re girding ourselves to prepare ourselves to declare this kind of message.

GOD IS RAISING UP LEADERS WHO WILL PROCLAIM THE LOOMING CRISIS FOR DECADES

“For the day of the Lord is coming, for it is at hand” (Joel 2:1c). It’s still future; there’s still time to change the future. The day of the Lord, the trouble isn’t here, but it’s coming. “It’s right around the corner,” is the message. You don’t wait until the day it rains before you tell the people a flood is coming. Noah told them for 120 years. He didn’t wait until the day of the rain and then proclaim, “It’s going to rain.”

“I know, it’s raining now!” You tell them for enough time to where people can receive it, and Noah told them for over 100 years. God is raising up preachers who will talk about the trouble for some decades before it even mounts up. It prepares the other generation to respond to it, and it also gives people in the nations of the earth a chance to hear it and make sense of it. We don’t wait until the trouble is at a full crescendo and then start saying it. There’s nothing prophetic about telling people in the middle of a war, “A war has started. Prepare for the war!”

“It already started, what are you talking about? What do you mean *prepare?*” The way we prepare is by understanding and by placing our heart in a vibrant spirit with God. We’re preparing in context of our relationship with God. It’s not like we’re storing guns, storing this and that so we can eat and everyone else can starve. It’s not that kind of thing. The preparation here that Joel is talking about is spiritual preparation. It’s an understanding: it’s about having understanding as well as a vibrant spirit with God.

He says, “A day of darkness, a day of gloom” (Joel 2:2, paraphrased).

People say, "I don't like doom and gloom." You need to line up with the Bible. The Bible has a day of gloom. God isn't asking the human race for their approval on it. We announce it. We don't only announce gloom, but if you aren't announcing the gloom, you aren't preaching the whole council of God.

It's very popular to say, "I'm not really into that doom and gloom." Then you aren't really into the whole council of God. You're picking and choosing what's popular and that which is pleasing to the people, which isn't necessarily bad. Popular, pleasing things aren't necessarily bad. God loves you as popular and pleasing. I love that message. But the whole message is that God loves you, so He's going to wake up the earth because He loves us so much. It's a day of gloom. Don't apologize that you have doom and gloom because, again, that's a caricature. People will say it to ridicule and dismiss you. Their plan is that you'll back away. Say, "If God says it, I agree with God. I'm His ambassador. I don't originate it; I just agree with Him because He's wise and He's good and He's powerful and I'm going with Him."

ONE BIBLE, ONE LIFETIME ON EARTH, ONE CHANCE TO MAKE THIS RIGHT

Besides that, He's the Judge you stand before at the end. That's all I care about in terms of my messaging, that at the end He says, "That was good. That was clear stuff down there, Mike."

I say, "Yes, yes." That's what I'm going for.

The Lord hears every one of our messages; if He likes them when we meet eye to eye at the judgment seat of Christ, He will say, "Your teaching was good."

If He says, "No, you missed the mark on so many things," we'll want to say, "Ah, can I have another chance?" The answer is no. One Bible, one lifetime on the earth, one shot at it. There you have it. My goal isn't to be positive or negative; my goal is to be accurate, to be faithful. That's the goal. The faithful message is positive and negative. It has both dimensions.

Top of page sixty-six. Paragraph three. God gives warnings of judgments. Ezekiel 33 tells us, "If the watchmen, if the prophetic preacher, sees trouble and doesn't tell the people that he sees it from the Word and in the Spirit"—meaning maybe the Lord even speaks to them; the preacher has dreams or visions or finds it in the Word. "If I show him this and he sees it and doesn't make it known and the people die, the blood is on the head of the preacher. I will require it at the preacher's hand" (Eze. 33:8). Because the watchman was a preacher, a prophet, a messenger.

A DAY OF DARKNESS, GLOOM, CLOUDS, AND THICK DARKNESS

Roman numeral V. It's a day of darkness, gloom, clouds, thick darkness. Paragraph A, Joel describes this day in frightening language. He uses four different words: darkness, gloom, clouds, and thick darkness. Paragraph B. The ultimate expression of this darkness is the Antichrist's invasion of Israel. The Antichrist doesn't only invade Israel. Daniel in Daniel 11:40-45 describes the Antichrist's military attacks on the Gentile nations. Six verses give us insight into what the Antichrist will do militarily against other nations, not just Israel. Though Joel is talking about Jerusalem in Babylon prophetically, we see what happened in Jerusalem back in 586 B.C. We look at what will happen to Jerusalem in the future, and not only Jerusalem, but to other Gentile cities and nations as well. The story line is the same; meaning we respond to God in a certain way. The Devil has a certain agenda, God has a certain agenda; but the story line of what's happening in the Spirit is the same.

“LIKE THE MORNING CLOUDS SPREAD OVER THE MOUNTAINS”

Roman numeral VI. This army is coming like the morning clouds spreading over a mountain (Joel 2:2). It's a people coming great and strong. Joel compares this army to the morning clouds over a mountain. You wake up early in the morning and see the clouds, the morning, the sun rising over the horizon there; the clouds rising with the light of dawn of a new day. Joel says this army is coming like the morning clouds. They are sure to come. They will come progressively, just as the day gets brighter and brighter. It's five in the morning, then six and it's a little lighter, then seven. Sooner or later it's midday; it's noon. There is brightness. He says, "This army will start slowly, but it will be like the dawning of a new day. It's sure to come and no one will escape it." In other words, when the sun shines, it affects everyone. This army is coming like a rising sun. This isn't good for the rebellious.

A VISION OF AN ARMY THAT REACHES EVEN UNTO THE END OF THE AGE

Page sixty-seven. I talk more about that phrase. Roman numeral VII. "Like the morning clouds... a people come"—this Babylonian army. "A people come, great and strong, the like of whom has never been seen" (Joel 2:2). He says, "like the morning clouds, this army is great and strong. The like of this army has never been, nor will there ever be an army like this, even for many successive generations." Right here, even here, Joel is talking about more than the Babylonian army. There have been stronger armies than Babylon. What happened when Rome came in 70 A.D. was actually more severe than Babylon. In other words, Joel is already reaching to the final conflict at the end of the age. He already has end-time overtones in this verse. We know, even from this verse alone, that there's a bigger storyline than just the Babylonian invasion.

AN ARMY UNSURPASSED IN SIZE, AND STRENGTH, AND MIGHT

Paragraph A. Joel continues to describe the army. Its men will be unsurpassed in size; they will be great and strong. They will be unsurpassed in might, in fierceness. Paragraph B. The army will be great. It will comprise vast numbers. It will have a geographic reach that will be unprecedented. Again, the great army isn't the Babylonian army. That was the great army of that day, the most powerful army in the earth at that time. There was no army more powerful in that day. It's a prototype of the greatest evil army in all of human history which is the Antichrist's army. It will be a great army, meaning this isn't the sort of crisis where we can say, "It'll take care of itself and go away."

Joel says, "It won't go away." This is a great army in the negative sense.

ONLY ONE MAN AND HIS ARMY WILL BE ABLE TO DEFEAT THE EVIL END-TIME ARMY

This is a terrifying reality, that we need the favor of God to stand strong in that day. Because some people in Jerusalem said, "Maybe we can negotiate with them. Maybe they won't really be so strong. Maybe we'll beat them. Maybe we'll get in alliance with Egypt or Syria. Together we can fight them off!" That's what they tried, in fact.

Joel says, "Don't try it. This army is great. It's bigger than all your political maneuverings and all of your coalitions. It's a great army. It's a strong army." In the end, the army of the Antichrist will not be overcome by any army of man. No army will defeat it. There will be nations that resist him. It's important to know that though he will have a stronghold, a presence in every nation, he will not dominate every nation. A number of nations will resist him to the end. But no army will be able to overthrow him. There's only one Man and His army who will be able to beat this end-time army. He is coming back as the Captain of the hosts of the armies of heaven. He's coming back literally as a military commander, the greater David, the greater Joshua. He's coming

back as the greater Joshua, the greater David in the military sense. He's coming back as the greater Moses. He's coming back as the fullness of all the types and shadows.

A BRUTAL, DESTRUCTIVE ARMY, AN ARMY PITILESS AND WITHOUT MERCY

Top of page sixty-eight. Roman numeral VIII. A fire will devour before them. A fire goes before the army, and behind them burns a fire. So they'll send fire ahead of time and then they'll send fire on the way out. In World War II, the Nazis would bomb an area before they actually invaded it. They would send fire on the front end. Then they went in to invade; then, when they were retreating, they burned the land. They called it a "scorched-earth policy," and they did this so that no one could use the resources of the land against them. The point of this description in Joel 2:3 is that it will be a destructive, brutal army. It will have no mercy. It will destroy everything it touches that doesn't serve it; it will burn it beforehand. Before they attack, they will send fire by means of bombs. After they retreat, they will burn cities and the surrounding areas so none of the resources can be used and marshaled against them. Very brutal, very destructive is the idea.

THE APPEARANCE OF THE SOLDIERS IS LIKE SWIFT STEEDS RUNNING

Page sixty-nine. Roman numeral X. It's a terrifying scene. The appearance of this army, the appearance of these soldiers, is like horses running, swift like steeds. They are running with speed and efficiency and boldness. They are running into battle, is the idea. In other words, this army won't cower; it will not draw back for anything. It will have a noise like chariots over mountaintops when they leap. It's just a terrifying scene here. All the military and machinery of the sounds of war will be like the noise of a flaming fire; like the noise of a city on fire. Again, in World War II, there are several examples of cities that were firebombed. Imagine the horrific sounds that took place when an entire city was firebombed. Massive areas were burning all at the same time. It's a horrific description.

Then he goes on in verse 6 and says, "Before them the people"—the victims in the city of Jerusalem; Joel is describing the faces of the victims in the city of Jerusalem—"writhe in pain" (Joel 2:6). Just looking at them, they will writhe in pain. When the army is coming, they will have no color. They'll be drained of color; they'll be fear-stricken in the face of this army. It's a brutal army. When you read the whole story of what the Bible says about the Antichrist's armies, it's coming against Jerusalem as its main target, but it's also coming against other nations of the earth. What happens in the midst of this? What do we do? Joel tells us how we're to interpret it and what we're to do in responding to the Lord in the midst of it.

AN ARMY THAT DOES NOT BREAK RANKS IN THE MIDST OF ASSAULT

Roman numeral XI. This is a total assault. This Babylonian army will come fearlessly, aggressively. It says in Joel 2:7, "This army will run like mighty men; they will climb the walls, the protective barriers, like men of war" (paraphrased). No obstacle will keep them out. Everyone in this army marches in formation. They are a disciplined army. They won't break ranks. Typically many armies break rank in the heat of battle because of fear or disorganization. But if they keep ranks, a disciplined army is a very terrifying army. They won't push each other. Everyone marches in his own column. That means in the heat of battle, they're disciplined; they have good communication. They are trained and aggressive. That's a terrible description of an enemy army. If you're the one being attacked, you want the army to be fearful, in chaos, and running around without any direction.

AN ARMY THAT LUNGES IN THE HEAT OF BATTLE

Top of page seventy. Paragraph C. They are disciplined; they march in formation. They are trained; they are seasoned. Paragraph D, they are courageous. They lunge in the heat of battle; instead of retreating in fear, they lunge, they go forward, they attack.

Paragraph E. It's an invincible, an aggressive army. They run to and fro through the city. They have a mission; they are focused. They are aggressive. They won't be denied. No obstacle, no resistance, will stop them. Joel is describing the Babylonian army, which is a prophetic picture of the end-time demonic army of Satan, which is the Antichrist's army. This is a real army; it will really attack nations. It will be real.

AN AGGRESSION TO INFLICT PERSONAL CRUELTY ON THOSE IN THEIR HOUSES

Paragraph F. More terrifying than anything, they climb into the houses. People are hiding in their houses. These evil men break through the windows. They have this aggression to inflict personal violence and cruelty on the people in the houses. It's not enough to win the city, and the neighborhood, and put the flag on it. They want to break in house by house and plunder the houses and show cruelty to the individuals. That's a terrifying image.

“Maybe we can hide away until the Babylonian army passes and sneak away late in the night.”

No, they break in house by house to get everyone. They are comprehensive in their desire to bring destruction to Jerusalem, which is their enemy.

A SUDDEN REVERSION TO A VERY DIFFERENT KIND OF ARMY

Then suddenly, in Roman numeral XII, Joel changes the subject. He goes right into verse 10: “The earth quakes before them” (Joel 2:10). It does? The earth didn't quake before the Babylonian army. “The heavens tremble; the sun and moon grow dark, and the stars diminish their brightness. The Lord gives voice before His army, for His camp is very great; for strong is the One who executes His word. For the day of the Lord is great and very terrible; who can endure it?” Although in the midst of this description of the Babylonian army in verses 1-9 there are some hints of an army that's bigger and stronger than the Babylonians, an end-time army, now at the end Joel makes it very clear. He sets this military attack in the context of the end-time events. It's more than Babylon; there's an eschatological dimension. *Eschatological* is a fancy word which means “end times.” There's an end-time dimension to this battle. A lot of commentators will read this and make it all poetic. They'll see it as only Babylon and they'll say, “Well, you know, here Joel kicked out of the literal and moved into the poetry.” Beloved, verse 10 isn't poetry. There are many passages of Scripture by the prophets, by Jesus Himself, describing the solar system, the cosmic disturbances related to the end-time drama.

SIGNS AND TERRORS ON THE SEA AND EARTH BELOW AND IN THE SKY ABOVE

Paragraph A. There will be supernatural demonstrations. The overall context of the whole planet will be dramatic end-time eschatological events. There will be dramatic things happening in the cosmos, in the sky, dramatic things in the sea and on the land, with the armies of the earth. The whole earth will be in a drama so intense, along with the greatest revival in history, far beyond the book of Acts, happening simultaneously. Joel is saying that not only are Jerusalem and the cities of the earth shaken by this evil army, the earth itself will be shaken. Of course the verse you want to add to the notes here is Haggai 2:6-7. It says God will shake the land and the sea and the sky; He will shake everything that can be shaken. The Antichrist's army is shaking cities, the outpouring of the Spirit is shaking cities, the solar system is shaking, the sea is shaking. Everything is shaking in context. It will be the most dramatic time in human history to be alive.

Paragraph B. Why does God suddenly talk about cosmic signs while describing an evil, Babylonian army? For two reasons. Number one, He wants to tell us that when He describes the Babylonian army, there's more than meets the eye. It's an end-time army that's here being represented by Babylon. Babylon is the near fulfillment; the Antichrist's army is the far fulfillment. Secondly, God wants to say, not just that there's a bigger storyline than Babylon in 586 B.C.; He's also saying, "I am in total control; I said it all in advance. Look at this: I'm shaking the heavens, the earth, the ocean, I'm shaking everything and I can shake this evil empire, the empire of the Antichrist, as I shook Babylon. I will shake it and break it. I have power over everything; I have total control." That's what Joel is saying through this. God gives a heavenly power display. In the hour this wicked army is aggressively moving into Israel and across the nations, God flexes His muscle and gives a power demonstration in the sky. He says to the saints, "Have no fear; that little man is nothing compared to Me. Trust Me." We have this backdrop, this heavenly display of power in the sky, while this evil army thinks they are unstoppable. There's none who is unstoppable except the Lord Himself.

Paragraph C. He's saying, "I have power over all the armies of the earth. I have power over the sun, I have power over the stars; I have power over heaven and earth. I have power over everything in heaven and earth" (c. f. Mt. 28:20). That's what God is saying here.

ASSYRIA AND BABYLON, THE STAFF IN WHOSE HAND IS HIS INDIGNATION

Top of page seventy-one. Paragraph D. Interesting: He says, "This is My army." He's talking about the Babylonian army. We've given these verses earlier where He called Babylon and Nebuchadnezzar, "My servant." "He's My servant. I will deal with him severely when I'm done using him. He is the rod in My hand." That's what He says in Isaiah 10 about the wicked Assyrian king, Sennacherib. "He is the rod in My hand. When I'm done with him, I will break him" (Is. 10:5). The Babylonian army and the army of the Antichrist are under God's control. Yes, they are motivated by demons and their own evil decisions, but they are playing into God's bigger picture. When God is done with them, He will deal with them and discard them. They are His instrument to discipline rebellious Israel, and even to wake up the nations of the earth. The Lord Himself will bring this vile army into power. In other words, He will allow them to come to prominence; He will even provide the overall direction for what He wants the Antichrist to do. In other words, the Antichrist is moved by his own evil, but he plays into a bigger story line that he doesn't even recognize. They will fulfill God's purpose. That's one of the most majestic things about God: God can use evil to discipline evil. Or He can use evil to discipline even His people who are in compromise. He can wake up nations without ever violating the free will of the evil armies He uses. They are choosing evil each step of the way, but falling into His overall purposes.

"THE LORD GIVES VOICE BEFORE HIS ARMY, FOR HIS CAMP IS VERY GREAT"

Top of page seventy-two. "The Lord gives voice before His army, for His camp is very great" (Joel 2:11). Roman numeral XIII. Again, He's talking about Babylon right now. In a minute He'll say, "I will fulfill My purpose, wait and see. No one is powerful like Me. I will execute the prophecies I gave ahead of time. I'll bring them to pass precisely. Who can endure this terrible hour unless they are walking with Me in a right way?"

Of course you know Joel 2:12, what the next verse is: "Turn to [the Lord] with all your heart, with fasting, and weeping, and with mourning" (Joel 2:12). He says, "Call a solemn assembly, fast and pray." That's the only way to endure the day of the Lord, to be in right relationship with God.

PREACHING THAT CREATES AN ALARM IN THE PEOPLE OF GOD

Session notes eight. It's the necessity of the day of the Lord preachers. Joel 2:1, the key verse on this topic, says, "Blow the trumpet in Zion, sound an alarm. Let the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of the Lord is coming."

Paragraph A. I call it "Day of the Lord preaching," and the purpose of this preaching is to create an alarm in God's people. They are to blow the trumpet in Zion, amongst the covenant community, the people who have relationship with God. "Tell them; sound an alarm." Yes, there are many verses where we talk about the revival; there are plenty of verses. That's not what He's saying right here. It's not either/or, it's both/and. Most people are inclined towards the positive, which is good. Positive is important; positive is a very important part of God's end-time message. But positive isn't the only part of the message. He said, "Sound an alarm. Create alarm in the people of God; cause their hearts to tremble."

Number one, to create an alarm, unsettle them with the reality of the coming events. Unsettle them. Don't leave them in business as usual; alarm them.

One man told me once, "What you're saying seems like something so dramatic and so intense."

I said, "You're listening; that's good. I made it clear."

He said, "That's ridiculous. If I thought that way, I would just be a mess between now and then."

I said, "No, that's a wrong response, just to live as a mess. You press into God, which is Joel 2:12"—the next verse after the great "Who can endure?" "Turn to God with all your heart, walk with Him, have clarity of what's happening, have the favor of God in your life and walk fearlessly with boldness and clarity in your life." That's what you do; you don't give way to fear.

God is raising up preachers who will cause an alarm. Number two, they will cause the people to tremble. Hearts engaged in the fear of God will be alarmed and tremble in the fear of God.

WHEN IS THE LAST TIME YOU DELIVERED A MESSAGE THAT MADE PEOPLE TREMBLE?

Paragraph B. I've said this through the years: When is the last time you heard a message that made your spirit tremble? When is the last time you heard a message that alarmed you, where you thought, "Whoa, that is intense"? Let's not pick on all the preachers you've heard; when was the last time *you* preached a message that made people tremble? When was the last time you had a conversation in the coffee shop that made someone tremble from the Scriptures? Don't pick on the preachers who aren't moving you. Who are *you* moving?

IF THERE'S A MURDERER IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD, YOU REJOICE AT HIS CAPTURE

Number one, paragraph B, many messages today just make people rejoice. That's good; our primary message is the good news of rejoicing. But part of the good news is that God is going to deal with the evil and the oppressors of the earth who are using their free will to come against the kingdom of God. Part of the good news is that God is going to confront the misuse of their free will to resist God. That's part of the good news, actually. If God didn't resist that which was against His kingdom, the good news couldn't come to its fullness, without the confrontation of those who use their free will to say no to His goodness. Because when someone says no to God, they don't just evaporate; they don't disappear. They have an eternal spirit; they live forever.

They are made in the image of God. Evil people don't just go away; they live forever. That's part of the dilemma, that God created man in His own image with an eternal spirit, and He will not violate their free will. He has to create a situation where He confronts those who misuse their free will and won't repent. My point is, that's part of the good news. If there's a murder in the neighborhood and the police catch the murderer, that's good news for the neighborhood. Some people, in a very shallow way, will see the negative of God confronting evil as bad. No, if there's a murderer in your neighborhood, you want them to be stopped. You really do! Some only declare the positive, and I don't even mean they just declare the good news; they only declare the positive part of the good news. Both dimensions are part of the good news.

“CONSIDER THE GOODNESS AND SEVERITY OF GOD”

The policeman stopping the murderer is good news. In Romans 11:22, Paul said, “Behold both the goodness and severity of God” (Rom. 11:22, paraphrased). He said, “Understand the goodness and the severity. Don't choose between them; understand that there's no contradiction between them.”

“I HAVE NOT SHUNNED TO DECLARE TO YOU THE FULL COUNSEL OF GOD”

There are a few more verses I want to give you. In Acts 20:27, Paul said he preached the full council of God. In the verse directly before that, Acts 20:26, he essentially said, “I am innocent of the blood of everyone, because I told the whole message. I didn't just deliver part of the message” (Acts 20:26, paraphrased). He was quoting or referencing the passage I mentioned a moment ago in Ezekiel 33, where if you don't tell the whole message, the blood is on your hands. He said, “I am innocent of the blood of everyone. I told you the positive and the negative. I'm innocent of anyone who doesn't receive my message.” Then in verse 27, he said, “I told you the whole council. I didn't draw back from saying anything. I said the hard stuff as well as the pleasing stuff. I didn't draw back on any point.” Many draw back today because they want the applause and they don't want the hassle of the bad. Beloved, we cannot draw back on anything.

YOU DON'T HAVE TO PREACH CALAMITY ALWAYS IN ORDER TO BE FAITHFUL

That doesn't mean you say everything you know in every conversation. Some people, because they get hold of the bad, think that to show forth their faithfulness and courage, they have to work it into every conversation. No, you want to be led by the Spirit. You don't need to tell everyone everything you know every time you talk to them. I'm actually saying that to be nice to you so that you don't feel this wrong pressure to be faithful, so that you therefore somehow have to sneak in the bad stuff every time you get a chance, just to prove that you're faithful. God says, “Well, I see that you're faithful. I would rather you be obedient. Flow with My heart; agree with Me.”

THE POWER OF THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD TO DECLARE INIQUITY AND SIN

Page seventy-three. Day of the Lord preachers. I've said all this stuff; I like it. One of my main gifts is repetition. I love repetition. I'll give you a verse, Micah 3:8. Micah said this: “I am full of the power of God by the Holy Spirit to declare the truth about Israel's sin” (Mic. 3:8, paraphrased). What a statement! “I am full of the power of God, by the Spirit, to make known Israel's sin.” Meaning, to make it clear to them so that they can find a way out of it. He didn't make known their sin to say, “Bah humbug, there you have it,” but so that they could get rescued from it.

According to Micah 3:8, it takes the power of God to declare sin in a right way. It takes revelation and it takes power. As a matter of fact, Micah says more than that in Micah 3:8, after he declares, “I am full of the power of God.” He adds two more qualities: “I am full of the justice and the might of God by making known Israel's sin”

(Mic. 3:8, paraphrased). You want to be a justice preacher; you have to tell the patient who has cancer that they have cancer. We cannot tell the cancer patient they're doing well; we have to tell them they have cancer, but there *is* a solution. You have to admit you have cancer to get the solution. It's part of the good news by getting people to line up with the truth. Micah said, "I am full of the power of God to tell cancer patients they have to deal with their cancer; to tell Israel their sin so that they can repent of it and come into the covenant relationship and receive the blessings and goodness of salvation." It takes the power of God, is my point.

IT TAKES THE POWER OF GOD TO CAUSE MEN TO TREMBLE

Paragraph D. It takes the power of God to cause men to tremble. It takes the revelation of the Spirit. It's much more than just communication skills; it takes the power of God to operate in this.

JEREMIAH HAD ANGUISH, BUT HE PREACHED WITH TEARS

Roman numeral III. Preaching that produces trembling. We'll just end with this. Three dimensions of trembling. Paragraph A. The Day of the Lord preachers cause the heart to tremble in three different ways. Paragraph B. They tremble with anguish. The preacher trembles and the people tremble with anguish over the trouble that's coming. We make clear to the cancer patient how serious the cancer is so that they deal with it. They go to the physician to get it healed, using the natural, physical analogy here. Jeremiah had anguish; he had compassion and anguish; he had anguish, but he preached with tears. He was known as the "weeping prophet." We don't preach on judgment apart from tears. It doesn't mean you cry every time, but your heart is sad over this. You aren't just venting; you aren't just getting something off your chest. Like the old preacher said, "You aren't shaking them over hell on a rotten stick hoping the stick breaks." Some people preach on the negative, hoping someone gets a taste of it. No, no; it's with anguish, with a trembling heart, and it causes the people to tremble with anguish over it. That's a part of trembling, though it's not the only part.

JEREMIAH PREACHED WITH THE REALITY OF THE PERSECUTION HE WOULD BEAR

Paragraph C. Jeremiah preached trembling with the reality of the persecution he would bear. You read Jeremiah; there are several different biographical discussions where he talked about what was happening in his heart, and the persecution is real. Jeremiah said, "I won't preach this anymore." He trembled in another sense. He said, "This is intense." Meaning it wasn't just bravado; it's not just proving you're courageous, spiritual oneness. It's real; this is real stuff. Out there, it's real. When you say it, the negative is real.

OUR SPIRITS TREMBLE BEFORE THE MAJESTY AND AWESOMENESS OF GOD

Number three, paragraph D. We tremble in the sense that we're awestruck. Our spirit trembles in the fear of God. There's a trembling at the majesty and the awesomeness and the bigness, the terrifying beauty and glory of the whole reality. It's terrifying in the good sense.

TREMBLING FROM THE WEIGHTINESS OF THE REALITY OF THE PROPHETIC MESSAGE

Paragraph E. Trembling that comes from prophetic preaching. When people's spirits tremble a little, they feel the weightiness of the message. That's what I mean by *trembling*. I'm not talking about physically trembling; I'm saying the weightiness hits them in their spirit. I mean they are preoccupied with it. The message preoccupies them in periods of time; they take it seriously and weigh it seriously.

AN URGENCY BIRTHED IN THE HEARTS OF THE PEOPLE TO FAST AND PRAY

Paragraph E. Trembling that comes from this Day of the Lord preaching produces a desire in the people to walk out the fasted lifestyle. When people hear this kind of preaching, it creates urgency in them to fast and pray. It's

this kind of preaching that's necessary if you're going to call the inhabitants of the land to a solemn assembly. If the inhabitants of the land know nothing about this, they won't gather to the prayer gatherings, the solemn assembly. It takes this kind of sowing of the Word for people to respond in regions of the earth. Whatever region God sends you to, make sure you're part of the solution; make sure you're somewhere contributing to this. You don't have to have a public preaching gift, but somewhere you're contributing to the message becoming clear. So when the call comes to fast and pray, it makes sense to the people to do it. It's a great gift to the Body of Christ. This Day of the Lord preaching, though it's not popular and many won't like it, creates urgency. It actually creates the situation where there's a reversal of spiritual passivity, a reversal of the spirit of fear that's in so many of us today. It's the opposite of the spirit of selfishness and living in the flesh, even while claiming the name of Jesus.

It's an offensive message, just know that. The Lord has called us to it. Amen.

