

How to Respond to Global Crisis

I. GOD'S GOVERNMENT THROUGH CORPORATE INTERCESSORY WORSHIP

- A. God governs (releases power) the universe in partnership with His people through intercession. The majesty and mystery of intercession is seen first and most in Jesus' relationship the Father.
²⁵ ***He (Jesus) always lives to make intercession for them. (Heb. 7:25)***

⁸ ***(The Father said to Jesus)...Ask of Me, and I will give You the nations for Your inheritance, and the ends of the earth for Your possession. (Ps. 2:8)***
- B. God has already determined the primary events in His eternal plan (Second Coming of Jesus, Jesus reigning over the whole earth as King, Satan being cast into the Lake of Fire, the establishing of the New Heavens and Earth, etc.). He will surely accomplish such things regardless of what people or demons do.
- C. However, He has chosen to give His people a dynamic role in determining some of the measure of the "quality of life" that we experience in the natural and in the Spirit (in time and eternity). We make significant contributions in the quality of life. We determine this based on our response to the grace of God in our partnership with Him (particularity in prayer and meekness).
- D. The Prayer Room is the governmental center of the universe or the way in which God chooses to release His power. Prayer is transcendent in that it is not limited by time and distance. Paul could change the Church in Ephesus by his prayers while he was far away in a prison in Rome.
- E. God opens doors of blessing and closes doors of oppression in response to our prayers. There are blessings that God has chosen to give, but only if His people rise up in the intimate partnership of prayer to ask for them. Jesus continues to run the world this way even after His return.
² ***You do not have because you do not ask. (Jas 4:2)***

²¹ ***This kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting. (Mt. 17:21)***

¹⁸ ***The LORD longs to be gracious to you, and therefore He waits on High to have compassion on you....¹⁹ He will surely be gracious to you at the sound of your cry; when He hears it, He will answer you. (Isa 30:18-19; NAS)***

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

⁹ ***The LORD said to Moses, "...indeed it is a stiff-necked people! ¹⁰ Now therefore, let Me alone, that My wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them..." ¹¹ Then Moses pleaded with the LORD his God, and said: "...turn from Your fierce wrath, and relent from this harm to Your people..." ¹⁴ So the LORD relented from the harm which He said He would do to His people. (Ex. 32:9-14)***

- F. God has given the human race great dignity. This is seen in us having a free will. We have been given the ability to make real choices and we can use this for good or for evil. If we choose righteousness, then we have the power to open doors of blessings on others. However, if we choose evil, we have the power to express evil towards others. ***Man's free will provides the legal entry point for both angels and demons to be much more active in the natural realm.*** When we live in righteousness, we open up legal access for angelic activity into the natural realm. When people live in rebellion, they open up legal entry points for demonic activity to be heightened in the earthly area. We affect the quality of life in time and eternity by what we do with our free will. Some of our choices now will affect us forever. This life is not a practice game.
- G. Corporate intercessory worship is the ***primary means*** that God has chosen to release His government (power) in His relationship with Jesus and His redeemed. It is the highest expression of government in time and eternity. It is the most power weapon that exists. It is far stronger than the combined strength of all the nuclear weapons that exist.
- H. We do not earn God's blessings by our prayers. It is God's chosen way that enables us to more fully cooperate with Him in releasing more blessing.
- I. Many who love prayer in context to their communion with God do not yet have a revelation of the ***authority of intercession.*** Many worship leaders love Jesus and music, yet they do not have a revelation of the ***authority of corporate intercessory worship.***
- J. God's primary call to a nation in crisis is to gather in solemn assemblies (Joel 2:12-17). In other words, corporate intercessory worship is what we need most in this hour of history.
1. ***Corporate*** – requires humility to embrace all that is necessary in gathering corporately. The difference of styles, doctrine, personalities, etc. makes humility necessary. In Mt. 6, Jesus warns of praying in public to make a show of our dedication. In this, the Lord was rebuking a wrong spirit while praying, not the location of our prayers in a Prayer Room.
 2. ***Intercessory*** – to stand in the gap and declare back to God Biblical prayers and promises.
 3. ***Worship*** – prophetic music and singing unifies God's people in a unique way in providing the way in which thousands can feel the same thing for sustained periods.
- K. Corporate intercessory worship releases God's judgment (Ps. 149:6-9). Corporate intercessory worship stops destruction as when the nations of Moab and Ammon came to battle against Jerusalem under King Jehoshaphat's leadership (2 Chr. 20).

- L. Some “trust” the sovereignty of God in a non-biblical way by “trusting” God to do the role that He has assigned to us. This is not truly trusting God, but rather it is presumption before Him. **We cannot do God’s part and He will not do our part.** Some misapply the truth that if God wants something that He will do it. This is true in some of the broad strokes of how He leads history. However, there are many things that God will not give us until we walk it out practically with faith and obedience. Significantly, God wants all to be saved, but it does not happen because God will not violate our free will in our salvation (2 Pet. 3:8-9)

II. UNDERSTANDING GOD’S ROLE IN THE COMING GLOBAL CRISIS

- A. God’s enemy is sin. His role is to oppose every operation of sin. Israel made herself God’s enemy by living in sin (Isa. 63:10). The nations of the earth make war against God through lives of sin. They set themselves in an adversarial relationship with God.
⁴ Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. (Jas 4:4)
- B. God’s role in judgment is very controversial, even in the Church. God’s purpose in judgment is to remove everything that hinders love. God has no pleasure in judgment (Ezek. 33:11).
- C. **God’s principle in judgment:** God uses the least severe means to reach the greatest number of people at the deepest level of love without violating anyone’s free will or His justice, in training the future rulers of the earth.

III. FOUR CONTRIBUTING FACTORS TO CRISIS EVENTS IN THE EARTH

- A. There are four key factors in crisis events that come to the earth. They are God’s zeal to release judgment that removes what hinders love, Satan’s rage, man’s sin, and creation’s groan. These factors work together under God’s sovereignty and wisdom.
- B. **God’s zeal** and passion (energy) is to remove all that hinders love to bring forth a pure, prepared Bride. God’s role in causing a crisis is often ignored. He is actively involved in the crisis events that affect the nations. The Church is quick to talk about Satan’s role, and even sinful man’s role, yet we are hesitant and uncertain about God’s role in crisis. Sometimes He causes the crisis in a direct way. At other times, God works indirectly as He allows other forces to work.
- C. **Satan’s rage** is permitted by God to be expressed yet is within the boundaries that God sets. When the events of the End-Times culminate, his boundaries will be enlarged (Rev. 12:12).
- D. **Man’s sin** can bring death and destruction to others. Our free will gives us the ability to make real choices that affect real life. We can use this for good or for evil. If we choose evil, we have the power to express evil towards others. **Man’s free will provides the legal entry point for both angels and demons to be much more active in the natural realm.** When people live in rebellion, they open up legal entry points for demonic activity to be heightened in the earthly area. We affect the quality of life in time and eternity by what we do with our free will.

- E. **Creation groans and travails** as seen in earthquakes, violent weather patterns, etc (Rom. 8:22-23). There is a mysterious yet glorious connection between the action of the human race and the condition of the natural creation (land, vegetation, weather patterns, etc.). When Adam sinned, a curse came upon the land (Gen. 3). That curse has been escalating as man's sin escalates. The earth's convulsions will increase as sin is ripening in the earth (Isa. 24:5-6, 20).

²² ***The whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now... (Rom. 8:22).***

IV. THE MOST TERRIFYING PROBLEM FOR A NATION IN SIN IS GOD

- A. The biggest problem for a nation in sin is not Satan, nor the violent acts of sinful men, nor "natural disasters," but God's zeal is for that nation to live in purity so she can walk in her destiny. God proved in New Orleans (Aug. 28-29, 2005) that He can take out a major city in one day. We cannot use the name of Jesus to rebuke and dismiss God's zeal for us. The great need in a crisis is for God's favor. The reason solemn assemblies are so important is because they have God's favor. Money cannot buy God's favor and nothing can substitute for it.

- B. God's judgment has many levels to it. God plays 10 dimensional chess. We cannot fully comprehend His ways. He works on many levels to achieve many different objectives. For example, the judgment of God that was seen in the hurricane Katrina released God's judgment first, on the Church in America, on the nation as a whole, and then on the city of New Orleans.

⁵ ***As you do not know what is the way of the wind, or how the bones grow in the womb of her who is with child, so you do not know the works of God who makes everything. (Ecc. 11:5)***

- C. The Church as the covenant people in the land are the first line of defense and are the ones most responsible before heaven to cry out and raise the standard against sin in the land. The group that is highest on God's heart to wake up, is the compromising Church in America that God loves with great passion.

¹⁴ ***If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land. (2 Chr. 7:14)***

- D. God is secure and does not apologize for taking responsibility for His judgments. He is not pleased when His servants yield to a political, man pleasing spirit in refusing to speak clearly about God's judgments. We are too committed to maintain our personal profile to take a stand.

¹⁵ ***The day of the LORD is at hand; it shall come as destruction from the Almighty. (Joel 1:15)***

- E. For three days after Sept. 11, 2001, the prayer rooms were full. This proved God's wisdom by showing that disasters cause the people to go to the houses of prayer.

- F. God's zeal to rid the earth of sin and rebellion causes great and terrible things to occur. Therefore, the solemn assembly is very practical because it releases God's favor and protection.

³¹ ***It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. (Heb. 10:31)***

¹¹ For strong is the One who executes His Word. For the day of the LORD is great and very terrible; who can endure it? (Joel 2:11)

¹⁷ For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand? (Rev. 6:17)

V. THE RESPONSE THAT GOD REQUIRES: SOLEMN ASSEMBLIES

¹² "Now, therefore," says the LORD, "Turn to Me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning." ¹³ So rend your heart, and not your garments; return to the LORD your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness; and He relents from doing harm. ¹⁴ Who knows if He will turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind Him...? ¹⁵ Blow the trumpet in Zion, consecrate a fast, call a sacred assembly; ¹⁶ gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children and nursing babes...¹⁷ Let the priests...weep between the porch and the altar; let them say, "spare Your people, O LORD..." (Joel 2:12-17)

- A. In Joel 2:12-17, God tells us exactly what we are to do to receive His mercy and deliverance. God gave His answer for crisis in Joel's generation in the context of warnings of a Babylonian invasion. The response that God requires is not limited to Israel, but is for all. God is asking His people for a specific response. He does not leave us guessing as to what He desires from us.
- B. This is the clearest passage in the Word that describes what God wants us to do in times of local or national crisis. It is a clear roadmap for the Body of Christ, as this global drama unfolds at the end of the age. He wants us to have holy confidence so that we act in certainty in times of crisis. God wants to remove all false hopes so that we hope only in Him. God will shake all that can be shaken so as to back the whole world in a corner of desperation, where they cannot find any solution except in Him.
- C. Earlier Joel called the people to "Come, lie all night in sackcloth as they fast in calling a solemn assembly. They were to gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land into the house of the Lord to cry out in prayer (Joel 1:13-14). This was in light of the continuation of the devastating effects of a locust plague and drought. In Joel 2, he calls them to the same response of fasting and prayer in light of a coming military invasion by the Babylonians. This passage also doubles to call Israel in the time of the Antichrist's reign of terror to victory and deliverance (Joel 3).

VI. TURN TO GOD WITH WHOLEHEARTEDNESS

¹² Now therefore, says the Lord, 'Turn to Me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping and with mourning. ¹³ Rend your heart, and not your garments; return to the LORD... (Joel 2:12-13).

- A. God requires that we turn to Him with wholeheartedness, with all of our love (Matt. 22:37). He requires that we respond to His love for us with love back to Him. God wants our heart more than anything else. This is powerful in itself. The fact that He desires our love more than anything reveals His heart. It is in giving our hearts to Him as an offering of love that He delivers us. When His people turn from sin and darkness, we flee from all that is adversarial against God.

- B. God gives us insight into what turning to Him with all our heart looks like. It involves turning to God in repenting, fasting, and prayer. This is part of God's definition of wholeheartedness. This is resisted by many in the Western Church today.

VII. REND YOUR HEART

¹³ **So rend your heart and not your garments; return to the Lord your God... (Joel 2:13)**

- A. Rending our hearts before God is a non-optional part of wholeheartedness. To rend means to tear something violently or forcibly. ***When we violently tear our heart away from areas of sin, we line up with what God requires.***
- B. Traditionally, the people would tear their garment to show their grief and desperation. What God desires is the tearing of the heart, which speaks of spiritual violence and dealing radically with the matters of the heart (Mt. 11:12). Joel cried out, "Tear your heart open! Spare not! ***If there is an issue in the way that is quenching the Holy Spirit, get rid of it!*** Speaking symbolically of this radical tearing, Jesus said, "If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out...and if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off..." (Matt. 5:29). He was talking about a radical pursuit of righteousness that painfully tears the heart in the process. In other words, radically forsake all compromise!" Some people pursue wholeheartedness in such a casual way which is an oxymoron. Some want a wholeheartedness that is gentle, easy, and tame.
- C. There is often pain when we cooperate with the Lord to pull out the whole root system of bondage in our lives. Sometimes it hurts to press through until we get a break-through, yet it is the only way to freedom. Some would rather not change their lifestyle in their quest for freedom. We want the Lord to cause our problems to evaporate without any cost or struggle or without the pain of tearing our hearts. ***The pain of tearing the heart is often overlooked.*** We do not mind fasting a few meals or giving a few hours to cry out in the prayer room. Yet the tearing of the heart is so intensely personal. The Lord will empower us in our efforts, as we cooperate by rending our hearts.
- D. God the Father tore His heart in sending Jesus and in His patient long suffering with His people. He sees His people refuse to repent; this causes Him to suffer as He waits for them to respond. Jesus tore His heart when He went to the cross. God wants us to tear our heart in love for Him. God does not love us in a detached distant way, but He tears His heart in His pursuit after us.
- E. Our hearts must be torn. This is a foreign concept to the Western Church.
- F. ***God is against much of what the Church labels as having our 'liberty in God's grace.'*** Many of the 'liberties' that the Church fights for are the very thing that God is fighting against. The way we spend time and money; the way we seek honor; speak, relate, and show our bitterness gives evidence of not having torn away from that which we were, even before we were saved.

VIII. CONFIDENCE IN GOD'S KINDNESS AND MERCY

¹³ *Return to the Lord...for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness; He relents from doing harm. Who knows if He will turn and relent...? (Joel 2:13-14)*

A. Joel summons the people to return to the Lord, giving five reasons why this is doable and wise. God is ***gracious, merciful, slow to anger, of great kindness and relents from doing harm***. He desires to make a way of deliverance. The knowledge of God's heart for us gives us courage to tear our hearts in repentance. If we take one step toward Him, He will take ten steps toward us.

B. The Lord is gracious in that He evaluates us differently than anyone else does. He remembers our frailty and that we are but dust (Ps. 103:14). He is not like a harsh military leader or the angry coach that rejects any form of weakness. God is human-friendly in His style of relating to us. His requirements are within the reach of the weak by the grace of God (1 Jn. 5:4; Mat. 11:30).

¹⁰ *He has not dealt with...nor punished us according to our iniquities. (Ps. 103:10)*

C. The Lord delights in mercy. One of God's favorite dimensions of leading the universe is watching the expressions and the heart responses of His people as they encounter His relentless mercy. He enjoys what happens in us when we understand we get a new start after many failures.

¹⁸ *Who is a God like You, pardoning iniquity...because He delights in mercy. (Mic. 7:18)*

D. The Lord is slow to anger and takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked (Ezek. 33:11). He looks for ways to forgive them without violating their free will nor His justice. God is not easily provoked with our weakness. Jesus spoke of His patience to the Church in Thyatira.

²⁰ *Because you allow...Jezebel...to teach...My servants to commit sexual immorality... 21 I gave her time to repent of her immorality... 22 indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent... (Rev. 2:20-22)*

E. The Lord has great kindness. When we believe in God's kindness, then we have confidence to press through the hindrances to our full repentance. We can ask Him to help us repent.

⁴ *Do you despise the riches of His goodness (kindness)...it leads to repentance... (Rom. 2:4)*

IX. THE LORD RELENTS FROM DOING HARM

¹³ *Return to the Lord...for He is gracious ...He relents from doing harm. (Joel 2:13)*

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

- A. God desires to relent so as to not release the deserved judgment that He prepared for a nation. When a city rises up and repents before the Lord, the Lord is able to send blessing to them without violating His justice or their free will. This does not mean that God randomly changes His mind, surprising even Himself in the process. Rather, it means that He honors the free will of man without violating His justice.
- B. There are two stages in God's decrees. First, the decree is established in the heavenly court. Second, it is issued as God releases angels to execute the judgment or the decree is canceled.
¹ Gather yourselves together...² before the decree is issued...before the LORD's fierce anger comes upon you...³ Seek the LORD, all you meek of the earth...it may be that you will be hidden (protected from judgment) in the day of the LORD's anger. (Zeph. 2:1-3)
- C. God is willing to relent or to cancel the decree instead of issuing it. Through prayer, God changes what He releases in our lives. The course of events or the end result can be changed (Gen. 18:22-32; Ex. 32: 9-14; 2 Sam. 12:15-23; 24:10-14; 2 Chr. 34:22-28; Jer. 18:7-10; 51:6-8; Ezek. 18:21, 22, 28; 33:10-14; Dan. 4:29 Amos 5:1-3,14-15; 7:1-6; Zeph. 2:1-3; Hab. 3:16-19; Jon. 3:4-10; Mal. 3:16-4:6).
- D. One of the great examples of God's willingness to relent is found in the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Upon learning of God's intentions to judge the city, Abraham asked the Lord if He would relent and save it if there were only fifty righteous people in it. The Lord told said that He would, so Abraham pressed the question. Abraham said, "If there were only ten righteous in the city, would You spare them?" The Lord told Abraham that He would (Gen. 18:22-33).
- E. *The place of immunity from the judgment of God is to live in His favor.* Jesus' work on the cross provides us with the gift of righteousness (2 Cor. 5:17-21). This is necessary to receive God's favor. Joel calls the people to corporate wholeheartedness, in context to national crisis. God will release His favor to geographic areas as a result of the people in that area coming to Him over the years in love through corporate intercessory worship. The greatest place of safety in the earth is in the midst of a company of people living in long-term, corporate wholeheartedness to God. *I am committed to be in the midst of a people who are developing a corporate, long-term history in wholeheartedness before God.*

X. THE MYSTERIOUS "PERHAPS OF GOD" RELEASING "POCKETS OF MERCY"

¹³ So rend your heart...for He is gracious...and He relents from doing harm. ¹⁴ Who knows if He will turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind Him...? (Joel 2:13-14)

³ Seek the LORD, all you meek of the earth...seek righteousness, seek humility. It may be (perhaps; NAS) that you will be hidden (protected) in the day of the LORD's anger. (Zeph. 2:3)

- A. God wants to turn from judgment and leave a blessing. In other words, God wants to transform a would be 'disaster zone' into a 'revival center.'

- B. There is mystery in the grace of God. The Lord is not trying to keep us guessing, as if it were a game. Rather, He knows the full implications of all that is involved in releasing His judgment in a specific geographic area. He has many facets behind His actions and His silence.
- C. He relents from judgment in specific geographic areas according to the response of His people. He invites us to trust His heart, press into Him in prayer and trust that He is merciful.
- D. There are three steps in our partnership with God. First, **God initiates** what He wants by declaring it in His Word and stirring our hearts. Second, **we respond** in obedience and prayer to God's initiative. Third, **God answers** our responses by releasing more blessing that He would have withheld until He heard our cry.
- E. In Joel's day, in light of the Babylonian invasion that Israel faced, God invited them to cry out to Him on the premise that perhaps He would provide pockets of mercy in the midst of the invasion. Perhaps He would give cities of refuge! "Perhaps He will leave a blessing behind Him" (Joel 2:14). In other words, maybe He will take the place that would be **a disaster zone and transform it into a revival center**, making it a place of sovereign blessing.

XI. GATHER THE PEOPLE AND SANCTIFY THE CONGREGATION

¹⁵ **Blow the trumpet in Zion, consecrate a fast, call a sacred assembly; 16 gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children and nursing babes... (Joel 2:15-16)**

- A. **Blow the trumpet in Zion** – boldly proclaim the coming judgment and the solemn assembly.
- B. **Gather the people and children and assemble the elders** – the children are to be part of this gathering. God's exhortation is that no one be exempt from crying out to Him, since none of these will be exempt from the coming crisis and judgment.
- C. **Consecrate a fast** – fasting positions our hearts to experience the grace of God in a greater way.
- D. **Call a sacred or solemn assembly** – gatherings that are **sacred** in their priority to our schedules. It is no time for business as usual in the way that the leaders conduct their ministries.
- E. **Sanctify the congregation** –when we sanctify people under our leadership, we lay aside ministry programs to make seeking God the top priority in terms of time, money and work force.

XII. GIVE YOURSELF TO EARNEST PRAYER

¹⁷ **"Let the priests who minister to the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar. Let them say, 'Spare Your people, O Lord, and do not give Your heritage to reproach, that the nations should rule over them. Why should they say among the peoples, 'Where is their God?'" (Joel 2:17)**

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- A. Joel calls the priests or the leadership to lead the people in earnest prayer. God does not want prayers out of duty or by rote. We cry out for His visitation and mercy in earnestness of heart.
 - B. This particular prayer was to stop a coming military invasion, so that the nations would not rule over Israel. In Joel's day, it was in light of the military invasion from Babylon.
 - C. Joel gives us two specific prayers that the priests were to pray in light of the coming crisis.
 - 1. First, "Spare Your people, O God!" This is the cry for God to release supernatural protection, provision and direction to His people.
 - 2. Second, "Do not give Your heritage to reproach, that the nations should rule over them. Why should they say among the peoples, 'Where is your God?'" We ask the Lord to not let the nations of the earth mock the people of God as though God were not real to us. We remind the Lord that His own reputation is at stake; we beseech Him to come to the vindication of His people for the sake of His name! He wants to bring glory to His Son's name by vindicating His prayerful saints, showing Himself to be the One who is present with those who fear Him.
 - D. The way that the harvest will come in from all nations is when the unbelievers recognize that believers have been given a dynamic love relationship with a God who acts on behalf of His people. They will recognize that those who obey Him experience His power.