

Why We Must Heed This Joel 2 Warning During Pandemic

This is not a time for simple, feel-good messages. These are serious times, and they call for serious action.

This is a pandemic like we have never experienced in our lifetime. In fact, not only in our lifetime, but I am not aware of any time in history where between 1 1/2 billion to 2 billion people have been quarantined in 150 countries.

My purpose is not to rehash the information that you hear from the media all day long. My natural inclination—and I know that it is the natural inclination of all Bible-believing Christians—is to ask the question, “Lord, what are you teaching us? What is God teaching us in the middle of this crisis? In the middle of this global panic, what is God saying to His people? What are the lessons that He wants His people to learn from this?”

It is important that we ask questions in times of crisis, whether a personal crisis, a family crisis, a national crisis or one like today’s global crisis. Wherever we are, whenever you get to a crisis, you must always ask the question, “God, what do you want to teach me?”

In these inexplicable times in which we live, there’s only one place where you can find an answer to these questions, and it is in the infallible Word of God.

In the book of Joel, Chapter 2, the first thing Joel warns us of is this: This crisis and whatever crisis we’re facing is a minuscule example of the crisis that’s going to be in the Day of judgment, the dreadful day that the Bible talks about. I’m sure some of you are probably thinking, “Well, wait a minute, Michael. This is not a time to talk about the coming judgment. Michael, this is not the time to speak of the future judgment

and doom and gloom.”

I don't want to do that, trust me, but I believe the prophet Joel would want to say to us, “Yes, but this is God's loving wake-up call. This is God's loving warning. This is God's gracious invitation to everyone at the sound of my voice. This is God's merciful alarm bell.” For if we are not prepared to deal with a small virus, what are we to do when we face the Day of judgment?

Joel 2:1-2 (NIV) reads, “Blow the trumpet in Zion; sound the alarm on my holy hill. Let all who live in the land tremble, for the day of the Lord is coming. It is close at hand—a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness. Like dawn spreading across the mountains a large and mighty army comes, such as never was in ancient times, nor ever will be in ages to come.”

Thank God that the Word of God does not just give us a warning, does not just send an alarm bell, but the Word of God tells us what to do in such a time. Thank God that the Word of God does not leave us high and dry. It tells us what to do in such a time. God's Word tells us what to do in times of global crisis, in times of global pandemic.

He wants us to view every crisis—not just this crisis, but every crisis—as a dress rehearsal. This is a dress rehearsal of the Day of judgment that is coming, of that big and dreadful day that's coming. He is reminding us that the big one is coming.

In chapter 2, Joel is saying, “Find out what God is saying during the hard times. Find out what God is teaching you during these difficult and challenging days. Let them be a reminder of the day that is coming when God will shake everything that is to be shaken. Prepare yourself for the big one.”

How would you prepare? Joel gives us two ways by which we

prepare. First of all—these are my own words, not the prophet Joel's—he is saying, “Tear away the idols out of your heart, but don't tear your hair out.” And second, he says, “Lead others to worship and bow down to the living God. Don't join in their panic. Don't fret like they are. But instead, let them see your confidence in your God.”

Joel 2:12-13a reads, “Even now, declares the Lord, it is never too late. Even now, declares the Lord, return to me with all of your heart, with fasting and with weeping and with mourning. Rend your hearts and not your garments. Return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love.”

So instead of looking at the current crisis and blissfully as some do say, “Where is God? Why doesn't He do something?” accept this as His loving warning to you and to me and to all of us so that we may repent and turn to Him before it's too late. {eoa}

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