



## **God's Church-Part 2**

### **The Prophetic Anticipation of His Church**

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I recently downloaded an app on my phone that I don't have much confidence in. It's an earthquake detection app. It's supposed to be an early warning system, so I know when the next earthquake is coming, but the problem is the app says right on it that detecting earthquakes is not possible. I mean, they may be scripts in movies, but we haven't figured out quite yet how to predict them. And yet the governor was there on Thursday telling us all in California you need to download this app. So looking at the app on the app page, it'll say, this is why you don't have much confidence in the app, it'll say you may get an alert seconds before the earth starts shaking, you may get an alert while the earth is shaking, or your alert may come after the shaking is over. That's not a warning, see, to get it after the fact. So I have that app on my phone. I don't have much confidence in it.

Another app on my phone I have a ton of confidence in. It's also an early warning detection system and all of its warnings are very accurate, very specific. Of course, I'm talking about my Bible app. It is a warning system because it's filled with warnings and sometimes they are very, very specific about when these seismic events are going to happen. Like when Jonah gets sent to the Assyrian capital in Nineveh, you know, he says in 40 days, this place is going to be overthrown. That's very specific and that gives you some time, it's not seconds before, during or after. That's like it's coming and, you know, you got a month and a half to get things together here. Or maybe it's Jeremiah who tells them as the shaking is going on, as Babylon had taken Israel by the throat and he says, listen, you want to know how long this earthquake is going to last? 70 years. It's going to be a long one, hang on tight and this will be over, but it's going to be a whole generation before this is done. Then sometimes, unlike the app, which, by the way, tells you also that we can't tell if this is a foreshock of a bigger earthquake, which would be helpful. It would be good to know. Hey, you're, you know, rumbling around there in your house, but just want to let you know, this is just a foreshock, and what's coming next is a whole lot worse.

Well, there's a book in the Bible that does that. It's the little prophet Joel. Joel is giving a warning in the middle of the shaking of a real seismic event that had come from God. It was a locust plague that was reminiscent of what God was doing against Egypt in Exodus, but now it's against Israel and they were really in bad shape. The crops were being just stripped bare by this plague of locusts and there was no food and the famine was in full swing. Here is what Joel comes on the scene and says, he says, "Look, guys, this earthquake we're in, it's not the real one. This is a foreshock. The big one's coming." And he kind of drops hints even early on in the book that it's not just like a few years off, it's way out there, but it's coming and it's going to make this earthquake look like nothing. It's huge.

I know the Old Testament has kind of fallen out of favor among modern evangelicals. But I want you to look at this little Old Testament book. It is so fascinating and ominous in many ways. So grab your Bibles and find this little three-chapter book, the book of Joel. Get some help. If you've got the old-fashioned Bible, just about 60% of the way through it, you'll find the big books like



Isaiah and Jeremiah, a little book of Lamentations, Ezekiel, Daniel. Then you get into what's called The Minor Prophets, the small books, and then it's Hosea and Joel. So it's right there. Hosea and Joel after Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea then Joel. That little book of Joel, I want you to turn to the last chapter because now we've totally ramped up into talking about... we're right in the heart of talking about the big seismic quake that's coming, which is obviously more than an earthquake. It's God shaking the world. It's the ominous judgment that's coming on the world.

It was on the horizon and it was all precipitated by the fact that you are suffering now, you've seen God come in response to your sin upon our land and it's bad, but you want to talk about the ultimate response to sin on the planet? It's coming in a future generation and it looks like this. Let's start in verse 2. God says, "I will gather..." this is Joel Chapter 3 verse 2. Are you with me on this? "I will gather all the nations." How many? All of them. This is big. It's a big group here. "And I will bring them down to the valley of Jehoshaphat. Jehoshaphat. Now, if you know Hebrew, that should send a chill up your spine. "Jeho," it's always the handle, the brief for Yahweh. Maybe you pronounce it or heard it pronounced Jehovah. "Jeho" and then "shaphat," Shaphat. Shaphat in Hebrew is the word "to judge." Right? Yahweh judges.

I mean, we want him to be our savior. We want him to be our friend, we want him to be our father, our counselor. But here, they're bringing to the valley of the Lord judges. And I guess you don't need to know Hebrew because it's translated here in the next phrase, "I will enter into judgment with them there, on behalf of my people, my heritage Israel, because they," the nations, "have scattered them among the nations and have divided up my land." So you got all the nations apparently mad at God's people here, and they're all being judged now by God, at least they're called into the valley of Jehoshaphat and there's going to be a time of reckoning. Matter of fact, the bottom of verse 4 makes it as clear as it can be. And that is there's a time for God in his justice to repay people for their sins, which are often against other people, and in this case, against God's people. "I will return," it says at the bottom verse 4, "your payment on your own head," and it's not going to come slowly and it's not like a, you know, a storm that kind of comes on the horizon, it's like a big seismic earthquake that comes out of nowhere. It's going to happen "on your own heads swiftly and speedily."

And he goes into kind of detail some of the things in verses 5, 6, 7, 8 of things that they're doing and kind of talks about the details of that. And then it says in verse 9, drop down to verse 9, "Proclaim this among the nations." OK? It's time for you, you can picture now God being the judge, bringing them into the valley of judgment and he says, "Consecrate for war;" consecrate, set yourselves apart for war, "stir up the mighty men," bring the best of your nations out there. "Let all the men of war draw near; and let them come up." It's time to face me.

Oh, by the way, you might have read and heard some great little sermons from people about this coming time of tranquility where the lion lays down with the lamb. And there are these great pictures of this in the Scripture about people who are going to be extreme, such wonderful peace that they're going to take their swords that they no longer need for defense or warfare and he says you can just beat those into plowshares and kind of do your gardening with your swords. And you can take those spears that you used to bring into war and you can take those spears and

you might as well just twist those, put them in the fire, rework them, and use them as pruning hooks when you go out fishing. So that'll be good.

Read verse 10. Hey, you need to "Beat your plowshares into swords." Beat them into swords. You can take "your pruning hooks and turn them into spears; and let the weak," I mean the people who are afraid of war, that think I could never pick up any arms and hurt anybody, hey, "let them say, 'I'm a warrior,'" cause you're going to have to fight right now. You have to face this God. It's kind of like in a huge way the microcosm of Paul coming to Job going, hey, stand up straight, gird yourself like a man. You got some problems? You're going to come after me? You're going to accuse me of wrong. It's time to answer me, man up. God's saying this to the whole world now. I mean, you have done wrong, you've done bad, you've taken my rules and thrown them behind you. Time for warfare.

Verse 11, "Hasten and come," hurry, "all you surrounding nations, and gather yourselves there. Bring down your warriors O Lord, O Yahweh. Let the nations stir themselves up and come up to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; for there I will sit to judge the surrounding nations." I got my people and now I got all these surrounding nations and time to judge them. Look at these images that we know throughout the Bible. "Put in the sickle." You know what that is, right? That big blade on a stick. "For the harvest is right." Time to cut down these plants. "Go in and tread, the winepress is full." Remember that picture in Revelation? The winepress with the fury of God's wrath, his just anger. I mean, those are parts of the Bible we don't like to read. They don't end up on, you know, greeting cards in a Christian bookstore. But I mean, there's this picture of a coming day when God's fury, his wrath against sin, is like a winepress and it's ready to be treaded out. Time to go do that. "The vats overflowing, for their evil is great." There's been a lot of sin here in this world.

"Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision!" What does that mean? Like a judge. Sometimes they say it in the court programs or maybe you're in law. You know, it's like the decision has been handed down. Right? You've come to the Valley of Judgment and God, he's cast his decision, he's got a verdict and now it's time to face this God that you've been raging against. "Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of Yahweh..." Talk about God coming to war against you, "for the day of Yahweh is near in the valley of decision." And what's going to happen to the created world, verse 15? "The sun and the moon are darkened and the stars withdraw their shining and Yahweh roars from Zion, and utters his voice from Jerusalem, and the heavens and the earth, here it is, "they quake." Talked about a seismic event. It's actually a literal earthquake.

But, I mean, you got a really, really dark cloud here, a forecast that is really bad. "But, Yahweh is a refuge to his people, he's a stronghold to the people of Israel." Wow! What an interesting little caveat in the middle of all this. But you know what? All the sinners, which I thought everyone was, yeah, but there's a little enclave here. In this little enclave, wow, those people find refuge in God. God is not their judge, he's their friend. God is not their condemner. He's not the one who condemns, he's the one who delivers them. "But you shall know," verse 17, "that I am Yahweh, your God, who dwells in Zion, my holy mountain. And Jerusalem shall be holy, and strangers shall never pass through it." He goes on to talk about all of the things that he's going to do and it's all going to be good. But the nations, verse 19, "Egypt, desolation." "Edom." Right? Enemies of Israel,



"desolate wilderness, for the violence done to the people of Judah, because they shed innocent blood in their land."

But, just like verse 16. "But Judah, Judah is going to be inhabited forever, and Jerusalem to all generations. I will avenge their blood. Blood I have not avenged." Just like today, Psalm 50, people think, "Well, I didn't get judged for that. I can have anything. I can do anything I want. Didn't get judged." They look at us saying, "your God, where's your God? Come on." Well, God stands by in his patience and people think, "no big deal." God says, "There's a lot of blood I have not avenged, for the Lord dwells in Zion" and he will avenge them. Hey, that locust plague where you're sitting there going, "I don't have any food. Prices are astronomical. I don't know if I can feed my family." That is nothing compared to the valley of decision when God rules on his throne and brings judgment on the world. The New Testament phrase for that: the Great White Throne Judgment. Ultimately that's the judgment of God as God arrives and judges people.

Of course, all the forecasts in the Bible are there, much like the forecasts on your phone if we could ever really forecast the disasters. Certainly earthquakes are hard ones to forecast, but if we could, the whole point is even if you get one second before the earthquake, it's going to say what you should do. Right? Duck and cover and get under..., find shelter, stay there. The whole point of the warning system is not to scare you, it's to prepare you. That's the point.

Scroll back up to Chapter 2 and look at the heart of the message of all of this ominous forecast of God's coming judgment. It's all about this. It's about you getting it right with God. Verse 12 of Chapter 2 of Joel, "'Even now,' declares the Lord," even now returned to me, "returned to me with all your heart." In the middle of this earthquake that's going on, which is the locust famine "returned to me with fasting and weeping and mourning." Why would you do that? Well, because you see that you've got sin in your life. You recognize that the earthquake right now among God's people is because God is judging the sins of the people. But, you know, just repent "and rend..." I don't know why they translated it that way. You haven't used that word this week, have you? "Rend?" Rend means to rip, to tear, "tear your hearts and not your garments." The ancient near-eastern sign of being, you know, like they did in Nineveh, as they tore their clothes and put ashes on their head. They put on sackcloth, this dull clothing of burlap and things that would show that they're mourning, the clothes of mourning, because they realize they were sinners. They deserve God's punishment.

What I need to do is to "rend your heart, not your garments." I don't care about the external expressions of your repentance. What I care about is your heart is repentant. Feel the pain of the sin, "Return to Yahweh, your God." The whole point of the warning is this: "He is gracious and merciful, he is slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love." And, you know, "he even relents over disaster," which, by the way, I keep quoting Jonah here, "40 days and Nineveh will be overthrown." Was it? Not in 40 days. It came later because they didn't get it right, but it came a long time later. Because in that generation, God looked at that repentant group of people Nineveh, those Assyrians and said, "Yeah, I'm relenting. Earthquake was coming, but I've stopped it."



God is that kind of God, merciful, gracious, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love. Hey, by the way, all the singing you do about God being loving and gracious and kind and merciful and all the stuff that we do celebrating the New Testament love and grace of God, it means nothing. Or it's just degenerated into sentimental nonsense if you don't understand the backdrop. When you look at a book that's so dark like this, you start to cling to the precious nature of what is said right there in verse 13 of Joel Chapter 2, when you realize the problem. See, when you offer to your neighbors, "Hey, God loves you," they don't have any context for that. The context is this: that all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. The context is that you're storing up wrath for the day of God's wrath in the stubborn, unrepentant heart that you carry around, of you saying it's OK for me to say what I say, to do what I do, to think what I think, to go where I go, to hold the values I hold, to get out there and in God's face say, "You told me not to eat the fruit off that tree. I'm eating it anyway. And you know what? We're going to have parades about? It doesn't matter. We don't care what God says."

You need to understand the judgment that should be due people like that. They'll never celebrate the love and grace of God until they recognize that that's the whole point of the message of the Bible is that God will be glorified when his people recognize their sin, God fixes the problem, we have forgiveness that he atones for the problem of sin, and we celebrate the things right there in verse 13. Because of repentant hearts, we can say to God he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, abounding in steadfast love and he can take judgment that we deserve and he can turn and say, "Nope, not going to do it." He relents over disaster.

And in their case, as the shaking is going on in the midst of this locust plague, he says in verse 14, "Who knows whether or not he will turn and relent" in this case. Right? Right now, maybe this shaking will stop right now and "leave a blessing behind," and maybe all this grain that's been stripped from the locust, maybe we'll have an abundance and we'll bring a huge offering to God in the worship service and drink offerings because, you know, even the vine is completely withered away. Maybe in this famine, God will turn this thing around and we'll have plenty of food and we'll bring it as an "offering to Yahweh, your God."

That's the call when we recognize the problem of sin and we see the coming judgment. What we need is that message to go out. We need God to have people recognizing that great gospel of grace. I can say that even in an Old Testament context because here are people who can't earn their way back into God's favor. All they can do is see their sin for what it is and repent of that sin. And God, in his grace and mercy, relents from the judgment they deserve.

God draws near to those people and God wants more people like Joel who are going to go around saying that, "Returned to the Lord. He's gracious. He's mercifully slow to anger, he is abounding in steadfast love. He relents over disaster. You can be saved from the judgment that you've earned."

After all the stuff that was going on in the current seismic event of the locust plague, drop down in Joel Chapter 2 to verse 28. He says there's going to be an outpouring of a kind of message that goes out and people turning. All that's going to happen before the day of decision, before the Valley of Jehoshaphat, before there's a judgment, before people are going to incur the penalty for





their sins. There's going to be people calling people to repentance. There's going to be a work of my Spirit within people. You're going to see it everywhere. "It shall come to pass afterward." And not about now, I'm not talking about the current seismic event, this is a foreshock, we're going to see this down the road that God says, "I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh."

All kinds of people, not just the priest or the prophet when the Spirit came upon them and they prophesied, and the leaders of the nation, the kings, had this great empowerment by God. No, "I'm going to pour my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters, they're going to prophesy, you're old men, they're going to dream dreams," like we had those dreams of God's revelatory truth coming to generations who then we read about in the Old Testament, we're going to see that. You're going to see "old men dreaming, you going to see young men seeing visions," just like we saw with Daniel. We're going to have that truth revealed, even on... And we're not just talking about guys like Daniel. "Even on male and female servants," all the way down to the lowest strata of the pecking order of the social structure of Israel, all the way down to that, "I'm going to pour out my Spirit."

And you know what? I will show, it's coming. He unpacks it. We just read it in Chapter 3. We're going to have a time of judgment in the Valley of Jehoshaphat, there's going to be a time of judgment. "I'll show wonders in the heavens and on earth, there's going to be blood and fire and columns of smoke." Does that sound negative or positive? Negative. It's going to be bad. "The sun's going to be turned to darkness." I don't vote for that. Right? "Moon to blood, before the great and awesome day the Lord comes." What did we just learn about? He's going to come and he's going to come in vengeance. That's what it says in Chapter 3 verse 21. There's going to be a day of reckoning and before that day, matter of fact, you can add Jesus said right before that day, you're are going to have these cataclysmic events in the heavens.

"And it shall come to pass..." in that interim between God's work to call people to bring this message and that day of judgment, "it will come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of Yahweh will be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be," this is beautiful, "there shall be those who escape, as Yahweh has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom Yahweh calls." It's a beautiful statement of God's providence. I'm going to call people. They're going to call to me. They're not going to be judged. They're going to be shielded and protected. They're going to find refuge in the God who is judging the world's sin. They will not be judged. They will be the object of his favor. It's amazing.

We've been studying the book of Acts. Just getting started, really, in Chapter 2. As we move sequentially through the book of Acts, we've reached Chapter 2 verse 14 today. We've just seen last time we were together the Spirit of God indwelling 120 people in the upper room. They're out there speaking in languages they didn't learn because all these people, this varied ethnic group from all over the place had come for the feast of Pentecost. And here they are doing this miraculous thing where people can understand in their own languages the wonderful, amazing, mighty works of God. And people, of course, were saying, "This is amazing. How is this happening? This is a miracle." And some started to mock.



Peter, the former fisherman, is going to stand up here and he's going to explain it. Explain it as guided by the Spirit, he draws on what everyone in that crowd should have known, if they knew enough and were devout enough to come to Jerusalem for one of the pilgrimage feasts, they certainly knew the book of Joel. They knew the story of that tremor that took place in Israel's history and it looked forward to a time of God's coming judgment. But in the interim was an opportunity for you to be saved and sheltered and take refuge in the God who should be your judge, but instead will be your deliverer, and he says, "Let's talk about that."

Because you know, the feature of that in the middle of God's prophetic word in Joel Chapter 2 was something about his Spirit coming on all people. All people? He has only 120 of you, not all people. Well, it certainly starts with all kinds of people. Now one day will it be fully fulfilled where all people in Jerusalem? That's the whole point of Chapter 3. He is going to sort it out, just like in our Daily Bible Reading this week. Did you read our Daily Bible Reading this week? In Isaiah 66, same picture. I'm going to come and solve the problem. I'm going to favor these people, I'm going to judge these people, then we're going to have our enemies vanquished and God's unrepentant, rebellious creations will be cast aside and we're going to have my people and I'll favor them because I've forgiven them, because I'm merciful and kind and patient and just, all at the same time.

And everyone then... no one's going to have to say to their neighbor, "know the Lord." They're all going to know the Lord, as Jeremiah said, "from least to the greatest." But right now, it's going to start with this really oddball group, most of them Galileans, some from Jerusalem, from Judea and they're there showing that the Spirit of God has miraculously empowered them to do things that they were not able to do on their own.

And so he said that was the birth of the Church, because the promised Spirit was something about something changed in terms of how God was going to relate to his people, no longer WITH him, but IN them. So now we have a sign of that and they say, what's going on? Are you guys drunk? And Peter stands up. Look at it with me now. He's about to quote Joel Chapter 2. But it starts with these two verses and it sets us up, as he says in Acts Chapter 2 verse 14. "But Peter," Galilean fishermen, "standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice," are you following? Acts 2:14, "and he addressed them." Lifted up his voice because they didn't have these hanging off their cheek. They didn't have microphones. In the olden days when I started preaching, I didn't have one of these clipped to my lapel, didn't have that.

Matter of fact, we know later in the passage there's going to be 3,000 people who respond positively to this message. So what kind of voice are you going to have to have to address all of them? We'll ask any of the preachers from the ancient times, particularly the ones that had megachurches. Right? John Chrysostom, you know, Spurgeon, any of these guys, Moody. These guys would preach to giant crowds. And you know what they needed? They needed entire sessions in their CBI as to how to get your lungs developed so you could cast your voice out.

By the way, this is coming out of a guy who's about to say this: "Men of Judea," middle of verse 14, "who dwell in Jerusalem, let it be known to you, and give ear to my words." Listen to me you guys, in a crowd of thousands who gathered to hear the 120 saying these things, miraculously



mind-blown, "How can you do this?" And he's going to say, "HEY EVERYBODY, YOU LISTEN TO ME." This is the guy that was cowering in the shadows of Caiaphas' courtyard when confronted by 16-year-old, 12-year-old, who knows how old the young servant girl, he's willing to curse, to say, "I'm not from here. Galilean accent? Not me. I don't know him."

What's the difference? Again, I've made this emphasis throughout the first part of Acts, the Spirit of God, the primary thing that we're going to see as it's lived out in evangelism in the book of Acts is they have boldness. The Spirit comes upon them and they have boldness. These are words here, very specific words in verse 14, of lifting up your voice and addressing. This is a kind of a formal way to set up something. Here's some preaching going on. I even love the word in Greek, "Kerusso." Kerusso is the word to pronounce and proclaim the king's message with boldness. The Galilean countryman, the hicks, and he steps up, just like Jesus said he would. He had to go chase him down in John 21 and say, "Hey, you're running away because you failed in Caiaphas' courtyard. Get out there and feed my sheep. You're not a fisherman, you're a shepherd, a shepherd of people. Feed the sheep. Tend my lambs, preach my message."

He says, "First of all, you guys, what are you talking about?" Verse 15? "These people are not drunk." These 120 aren't drunk, "as you suppose." I don't even know if he believed, he's just mocking, dismissively saying, "Hey, it's only the third hour of the day." They start the reckoning of time at 6:00 in the morning, so this means 9:00 in the morning. It's like, come on, don't be stupid. Right? There's nobody drunk here. We're not drunk. "But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel, and he quotes it, verse 17. "In the last days. It shall be..." Now, all of this is an expression of the prophetic work of Peter. God is guiding him clearly through the Spirit to say this. Well, he just changed some words here of holy Scripture. Right? Well, he has the right to do that. We don't. As God is going to work through Peter, he's going to be writing New Testament books that I'm going to quote, I can't help but quote, almost every sermon, something from Peter that God has used him as a voice, as God breathes out his words through Peter.

He takes the words "and afterward." Remember, that's what he had. It said "It shall come to pass afterward." That's what Joel says. Peter says, "In the last days." Joel looked forward to it. Peter's saying, "Now we're here. We got here, in the last days." God is starting to work the final phase before the consummation of the ages. "In the last days, it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh. And your sons and daughters shall prophesy." Right? You saw a lot of people here. You saw women in this crowd, as was carefully delineated in Chapter 1. People that, I mean, you wouldn't think they were prophets and they're out there speaking and declaring the mighty works of God to foreigners in their own language. Sons and daughters. You saw some old guys among us. You saw a "young man seeing visions," at least the depiction of it in Joel Chapter 2, revelatory information coming into their mind. And "old men shall dream dreams; even on my male and female servants." I can only imagine what they thought of these Galileans.

He's quoting a passage that would clearly fit what their minds were thinking about. "Who are you guys? You're not priests, you're not prophets. Do you think your Elijah?" No. "Even on my male and female servants in those days, I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy. They're going to speak. That's what the word means. "Prophetes" is to speak forth God's word and "Nabi" in Hebrew, the word nabi, to be the mouthpiece of God. And the passage, as you know, it's setting





us up for Joel Chapter 3 in its original context in Joel, Chapter 2, which is, "There's a time in the Valley of Jehoshaphat. I'll show wonders in the heavens and the signs above." Remember? It said all that stuff is going to happen. Earthquake. Everything's going to be shaken.

And he says it here. Quoting the passage, Joel 2, "Show wonders in the heavens above, the signs on the earth below, blood and fire and vapor of smoke, and the sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood before..." and you can add this, this is how Jesus put it "is just before." Matter of fact, he said, when you see the sun and the moon and stars and all these things happen, the cosmic signs in heaven, know this, he says you're going to see "the Son of Man coming on a cloud in glory." Jesus kept saying that. When these cataclysmic events take place, lift up your eyes, it's coming. Christ is coming back. Well, it's not how he came in his first coming, but that's how he's coming in his the second coming. And he's going to come in judgment. If you read the book of Revelation, it's called The Battle of Armageddon. And he says, come on, "Beat your plowshares into swords, take your pruning hooks and make them spears." "You want to fight? Let's fight. You think you can disregard God? You can snub your nose at God? You can eat any fruit off any tree you want?" We're coming into battle now.

Before and just before the day the Lord comes, that great and magnificent day, you're going to see all those cataclysmic signs, all of the signs in nature. But right now, the message you're hearing and it's going to be unpacked through the rest of the 27 chapters of the book. It shall come to pass that, "Everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord will be saved."

Yahweh, calling on Yahweh? Well now it's very specific because the whole focus of the book of Acts is the Lord Jesus Christ. We know no one's going to have the Father except through him. Jesus is Yahweh. The Father's Yahweh. The Spirit is Yahweh, the God of the Bible, the "Great I Am." Now you want to be saved? Focus on Christ. He is the mechanism of salvation, as it says in Daniel 9, the whole point of God's decreed plan. And it's a great list, by the way. It's going to finish transgression. It's going to put to sin. It's going to atone for iniquity. It's going to bring in an everlasting righteousness. It's going to seal up vision and prophecy. It's going to vindicate it all. It's going to complete it all. Christ is the mechanism of that, and he said, you call on him, you can be saved.

The world's longest introduction to the sermon (audience laughter). But I'd like you to write down the whole gist of this passage. If nothing else, I can say this in the 21st century to modern churchgoers, when you look at everything in God's plan, you ought to be able to rest in it, you ought to be confident in it, you ought to know his forecasts, as I said at the opening, are accurate. They're spot on. They're 100%. You ought to know God's got everything in his purview. He's got everything working after the counsel of his own desire, his will, his plan. You ought to, number one, you ought to "Trust in God's Kingdom Plan," because he said, I'm going to create a kingdom and every other kingdom is going to be supplanted by my kingdom, and my kingdom will be led by my King, my Messiah, my Christ.

And just to piece that together, as long as I'm quoting Daniel, the idea of the kingdom, that big rock that's not cut from human hands. It comes and smashes that big, speaking of dreams, that big statue in the dream of Nebuchadnezzar with a head of gold and the silver and the bronze and



the iron legs and the toes of iron and clay. This big rock comes and smashes it all. I just got to read it for you. Here's what it says, when it comes to that, the God of heaven is going to set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed. Here are the superlatives, even that we find in Joel. Something that is going to be "Set up forever, a kingdom that will never be destroyed, a kingdom that will not be left to another people." They'll never be desolate. It will never be overthrown. They'll never be a coup. "It shall break into pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end and it," that kingdom, the new kingdom, "will stand forever."

Any of you hear Thursday night preaching on... I was preaching on the resurrection, trying to teach about that, but I said, you can't understand the bodily resurrection of Christ unless you understand God's plan. And God's plan is we're going to set up a kingdom which fixes the problem of the rebellious kingdom of this planet. You're not going to understand the fact that there's a need for this changing of people's bodies until you understand that sin and its consequences have to be atoned for. I mean, the whole point of the Bible, at least in God's glorifying himself, is to fix the problem of sin. And we need to realize that he's working that out. It's marching toward that end. History is not cyclical. It's not chaotic as the naturalist and the atheist would say. It is moving in God's plan toward the final consummation of the ages when we have a king ruling over a kingdom.

The Son of Man in Daniel 7. "To him all dominion and power, to all the people are to serve him." Well, he shows up on the scene, to put it lightly here, simply, he presents himself as king and he dies. Why? Because part of the decree was for him to atone for sin. And then he leaves and he says, "You guys, now I'm going to send the Spirit upon you as my Father promised, and you shall be my witnesses. The Spirit will come upon you. Be bold and you'll speak." Why? Because you're calling people to be saved. Saved from what? The Valley of Decision. When the verdict is handed down and the judge judges people for their sin, you'll be saved. And that day is coming but you can be saved. And if you're saved then when Christ comes back and he sits on his glorious throne and he judges the nations, that's how Jesus put it, he's the judge. "All judgement has been given to the Son." Then here's the thing. He'll be your refuge. He'll be your savior. He'll be your deliverer.

That's the good news of the gospel. It's the element of the kingdom that we've been spending 2,000 years involved in collecting and building. You've got a King and you got a kingdom. God's got the kingdom on his calendar. God's got the King who's already presented himself as king, took care of the sin problem in space and time and then he says, get out there and collect a citizenry for me. We need subjects of the kingdom. And I'm going to empower you by my Spirit to take people like fishermen from Galilee and turn them into bold proclaimers of the message that if you'd rend your heart and not your garments, if you'd worry about mourning and weeping over your sin and seeing sin for what it is and just know that I'm gracious and merciful and slow to anger and abounding in loving kindness.

If you'd stop being a rebellious, hostile person against God and his laws, if you'd see your sin for what it is and recognize you can't earn it but God can be your refuge because of his grace, then you can be in the kingdom. You can be a subject. Then when Christ comes back, you're not there to be judged. He's not going to call you to fight. He's going to put his arm around you and say, "You're my kids, you're my citizens."



To empower that, he sends the Spirit on all flesh. All flesh? Right now it's 120. By the end of Acts 2, it'll be over 3,000+. But people from all strata, people from every tongue, tribe, and nation is the plan. Be my witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. The point was to get this message out as far as possible because we're going to collect a citizenry to be a part of that kingdom. That's the goal.

The Spirit of God is going to empower these people, in particular these people in many ways in the early part of the church, to proclaim this message. And the Spirit's work in them has provided everything that we need to understand this offer of salvation. You and I should look at the gift of the Spirit, not just for all of its present benefits. Maybe I'll have time to talk about a few of those. But let's talk about the fundamental thing that's happening when God starts to, in their minds, give them new revelation of how Christ is the answer to all this and that all of the people, not just people of Jerusalem and Israel, because that's the problem, isn't it, with what I just read in Joel? I mean, you start reading that thinking that and you say, "Yeah, he's going to save Israel. Israel. My people, Israel. Israel. Those are my people." But I'm talking to you about being saved from that time of judgment and you're not from Israel. You're Gentiles. So, can I be a part of that?

He's going to give revelation and they're going to understand it and then they're going to proclaim it. Then they're going to call people to repent and they're going to call on the Lord and they're going to be saved. We're going to collect the kingdom. As I said last time, the Times of the Gentiles will be fulfilled and everyone will be in place and then the judgment comes. All the pre-tremors and foreshocks of wars and rumors of wars, don't be alarmed, don't worry. It's got to happen. But the end is not yet. The end you'll know when it comes because as it says so clearly in Scripture, "There'll be signs in the sun and the moon." I'm quoting now Christ's words from Luke 21, the first volume of Luke's history. Luke 21:25. "There will be signs in the sun and the moon and the stars and on earth, distress, and nations will be in perplexity because of the roaring of the sea and the waves. People will faint with fear and foreboding at what's coming upon the world, for the powers of the heavens will be shaken," talk about the ultimate seismic event, "and then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with great power and glory," as he says in the Gospel of Luke.

It's a tribulation on the planet that the world has never seen and will never see again. We're in this period, though, now, before that comes with a Spirit who has been given so this message can go out so that people can call on the name of the Lord and be saved. We should cherish the work of the Spirit, not only the present benefits of including me in that, but the initial work of the Spirit to make a bunch of Galileans prophesy about what this was, and to prove their prophecy by the miraculous signs that they performed.

Jot that down, and then look with me, if you would, at Ephesians. Number two on your outline, we need to cherish the work of God's Spirit, is what I was saying. "Cherish the Work of God's Spirit." And then once you jot that down, please go with me to the book of Ephesians. And I warn you ahead of time, we're going to bounce around at a few passages as though I had all day to preach to you. I want to show you a few things in Ephesians that will be helpful in this regard. To tie this all together if I can.



Go to Ephesians Chapter 3. Ephesians Chapter 3, Paul's in prison, you know this, he's in prison in Rome. He's been preaching the gospel and he's been moving out west and, of course, there are a bunch of Gentiles out west, and he says this, verse 1, Ephesians 3:1. "For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles." That doesn't sound very nice, "you Gentiles. And I'm in prison because of you Gentiles." "Assuming that you've heard," verse 2, "the stewardship," the responsibility, "of God's grace that was given to me," and it was given to me, "for you." I have a responsibility that God has entrusted to me, and it's been for your benefit. What is that? "How the mystery was made known to me by revelation," like dreams and vision, which, by the way, he had, both of which were described in the book of Acts. It starts with a vision of him on the road to Damascus seeing Christ. They're made known to me, God's revealed it to me, "as I've written briefly."

"When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not known to the sons of men in other generations," highlight this now, "as it has been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets," three big words here, "by the Spirit." One of the most precious thing for you to cherish is that this message that is clearly articulated to us, that seems blurry in Joel Chapter 3, because it looks like just Israel, "ah, I'm not a child of Abraham," is now for you and you can be saved. And the judgment for you, just like the foretaste we had when the Assyrians got, at least temporally saved from that foreshock, you can be saved eternally. And he made that clear. This is for all of us. Every tongue, tribe, and nation. "This mystery," verse 6, "that is the Gentiles now, are fellow heirs." "What? We're part of that favored group that takes refuge in the God of Israel?" Yes. "Members of the same body, partakers of the promise." What was the promise? "Well, trust in me. Trust in me. Even if you die, you're going to live. You're never going to die." You're going to have God's blessing and not his judgment. "You're members of the same body, partakers of the promise in the Messiah," Yeshua, think about that, "Christ Jesus through the good news."

You got to cherish the work of the Spirit primarily, at least as I see it in this passage, because of the prophetic work revealed to people as he poured out his Spirit on all kinds of people in Acts Chapter 2 and eventually everyone is going to inhabit the New Jerusalem. He's given that to us to make very clear that we are, jump back up to Chapter 2, Ephesians 2:19, that "We are no longer strangers and aliens." We're not outsiders. You, you in these Roman provinces of Macedonia and Achaia, you people in Asia Minor, "you're fellow citizens and saints," set apart, holy ones, "and members of God's household." Why? "Because you've been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets." Because God poured his spirit out on them and they, as he said down there in Chapter 3, as you read this, "you can perceive my insight into this mystery." "It was not made known before. It has now been revealed to his holy prophets and his apostles by the Spirit."

That truth, that's the foundation that the Bible says in Jude 3 is "once for all delivered to the saints." That foundation for you, Christ Jesus himself, of course, he's the whole purpose of this "being the cornerstone in whom the whole structure," which includes a bunch of Gentiles being joined together, "grows into a holy temple." Guess who can't come into the temple of the Old Testament? Gentiles, outsiders, aliens and strangers. Now we're part of God's dwelling place. "In



him you are being built together into a dwelling place for God." Talk about present benefits. Here's one. How did you even get in? "By the Spirit."

The Spirit allows you, God's Spirit himself, draws you, pulls you in, convicts you of sin, brings you into this thing. As long as we're talking about that, go to Chapter 1 of Ephesians. Chapter 1 of Ephesians. You want to get excited about what God has done through the Holy Spirit look at verse 13. "In him," Christ, "you also, when you heard the word of truth..." Think back to your testimony. Hopefully you're a Christian here today. "The gospel," the good news, "of your salvation," bunch of Gentiles, "and you believed in him, you were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit." We get to have that relationship with God that's different than it was in the Old Testament. "Who is the," I love this word, "guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it." And we will. And we'll thank him for it. We will do it "to the praise of" his greatness, "his glory."

Think that through. The work of God's Spirit giving this first generation here this gift: visions, dreams, prophesying, preaching New Testament truths to people on the Temple Mount. Think about it. Fifty days after Christ was crucified. No New Testament to refer to. All they can quote are passages like this from Joel. New Testament hadn't been written yet. Prophesying, even fishermen from Galilee, giving you authoritative truth from heaven, improving it with their authenticating miracles. We are built on that foundation. We have that faith, that body of truth that makes all of this clear to us. And then the Spirit reaches out and grabs us. All those who are called the Lord, they are calling on the Lord and they're being saved.

Equal inclusion. Look at Chapter 2. I started in verse 19. Look at verse 17, Ephesians 2:17. "And he came and he preached peace to you who were far off." Certainly they who were in Ephesus. "And then peace to those who were near." You might have been Peter, a Jewish kid. "For through him we both have access," both of us, "through one Spirit to the Father."

We are both in the same way priests before God. We don't have a mediator anymore. We can even enter into the "temple of God." We can be in God's presence, as dim as it is, "though we see through a glass dimly." I know we'd like it a lot better, and it will be one day, face-to-face. So you're no longer strangers. "You're no longer strangers or aliens, your fellow citizens with the saints and members of God's household." And on it goes, "a dwelling place," verse 22, "by the Spirit."

Want some more present benefits? Look at Ephesians Chapter 1 verse 16. He starts praying for them. "I do not cease to give thanks for you, remembering you in all my prayers, that God, the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give you the Spirit..." In our English translations that's capitalized, because the context should lead us to understand that's not like the "spirit of the concert," the "spirit of the age." No, it's God's Spirit. Capital "S." They're right in capitalizing it, though there's no capitalization in the early manuscripts of the New Testament. We're talking about God's Spirit. A "Spirit of wisdom and of revelation." How do we understand that? How do we get it? How do we grasp it? As Paul said, those spiritual truths that are spiritually appraised. Well, that's how we do it. In the knowledge of him, the Spirit of God helps us to apprehend the truth, not just when we first repent, but throughout our Christian life. We





call it the doctrine of illumination. Our minds get to understand stuff that for non-Christians, it's like bullets off of Superman. They don't get it.

God helps us get it "in the knowledge of Christ having the eyes of your heart," here's what he's praying for, "enlightened, that you may know what is the hope to which you were called, what are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints." You're in that group, refuge in the Lord. You should be punished in the Valley of Jehoshaphat, but instead you're favored, dwelling in God's land. All of that built on the product of what was given by the Spirit to enable these to put it down, not just in their speaking, but in their writing to where you hold in your hand a New Testament that has these truths that make it crystal clear.

In your Christian life, the Holy Spirit convicting you every day of what's prohibited in his book. Holy Spirit of God, Chapter 4 of Ephesians verse 30, maybe you know this, the "Holy Spirit is not to be grieved, and the context is you say corrupting things come out of your mouth, and when you're a non-Christian, it didn't even affect you or if it did it was your conscience, kind of thing, "I don't know if that's the right thing to say. I'm hoping no one heard it." Now it doesn't matter who hears it. If it comes out of your mouth, the conviction of God's Spirit.

Then in Chapter 5, you ought to understand what the will of the Lord is. We need to know what God would prompt us to do. Well, here's the thing. "Be filled with the Spirit. Don't be drunk with wine." Don't let that lead you. Be filled with the Spirit. The Spirit who wrote this book, who move those apostles to dream dreams, have visions and write these things down and authenticate them with miraculous signs. Read the book that the Spirit wrote. The Spirit is pushing you, prompting you, convicting you, motivating you to do what's prescribed. "Don't be drunk with wine, that's debauchery, be filled with the Spirit."

And then in Chapter 6, remember that armor outfit that was symbolizing...? There was one thing in there. It's not some flimsy, movable, amorphous thing. It was a sword, "a sword of the Spirit," and he makes it clear so we're not just guessing at this, "which is the Word of God." We have forged now in the New Testament, 27 books in the New Testament, we've got this picture of God's mind on paper and we wield it.

The writer of Hebrews says, "this is a sharp sword, a two-edged sword. It pierces through to the thoughts and intentions of the heart." And you could pick it up. You could be a fisherman from Galilee who's afraid one day to stand up for Christ and the next preaching to thousands and being clear and bold because the Holy Spirit is going to give you courage and you wield that sword. In that sermon as we're going to see they're cut to the heart because he's wielding the truth, which he'll end up being part of writing it. And we pick it up now, the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God.

Well, there's a lot in the Word of God that we're to wield. But there's one thing I just want to end on, verse 21, is there's a message here. "It shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." There's a kingdom that's planned, there's a King who has been revealed, that King has gone to go up to be with God in that dimension, whatever it is, and he's there until he's going to get to receive the kingdom. And it's at the end when the citizenry is all



collected. It's still ongoing now. He will come and take his great power and begin to reign. The kingdom will come to earth. In the meantime, we're out there doing this. "Hey, you know what? Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." You got to know what saved means. You got to know some context. You got to know a little bit about judgment. That's the backdrop of the quote from Joel, Chapter 2. Well, we got a message for our lost world. We ought to get it out there.

Number three, we ought to "Amplify the Grace of Forgiveness," because it is grace. Right? Didn't you see that clearly in Joel Chapter 2? Loving kindness, patience. God is so gracious, full of mercy. That's a great thing and you can give that to your neighbors and your co-workers and your friends. You got to amplify that. I love that word.

Speaking of apps, if you have an Apple Watch, you got the new update on that. There's an app on it that was updated, depending, I suppose, on the hardware and the model that you have, that's called the "noise app," which I hate. It tells you when things are too loud, it turns the mike on and it's always listening and if it gets too loud, it goes "turn it down, it's too loud."

I've got enough of that in my life. I don't need my watch telling me to turn it down. Because here's the thing about me and maybe you're in my camp. I think music in particular was designed to be listened at a lot higher level than most people want to listen to it. To me, it's not background, right? Ask anyone on the wing of my office. They know Pastor Mike likes to listen to his music loud. I like it loud because that's how it's designed. I've been in enough bands and musical groups to know that it doesn't sound that way when you're producing the music, like really, really soft and mellow. It's supposed to be loud. I certainly don't want my watch telling me to turn it down. I hear enough of that at home and in the office. So, I'm going to listen to it loud. Because you know what I get to hear when it's loud? I get to hear all the detail of it. I get to hear how it was designed. It starts to be clarity. You get to make some distinguishing features. It gets my attention. Hear something, you hear some soul. It's like, wow!

The Bible has great clarity. The reformers called it the perspicuity of Scripture. It is clear. That is like a high fidelity encoded message on a thumb drive. It's there. But guess what? Your neighbor and co-worker this week are not going to read Joel Chapter 3, I'm guessing. I got a pretty good chance they're not going to read that. But the message of Joel 3 and the grace of Joel 2 and even the echo of what might be going on in their lives in Joel 1, we need to amplify the message that God is a gracious God and willing to forgive. If we would rend our hearts, rip our hearts, tear our hearts and not our garments, we don't care about that, we want you to repent. And everyone who calls out to God as the only hope of their salvation and forgiveness will be saved from the judgment of God. We've got to amplify that.

Some of you are whispering that. I'm not talking about being belligerent, about you being rude. I'm talking about turning up the volume. Some of you are in this room right now, your co-workers don't even know that you are a professing Christian. They don't even know that. Turn up the volume. Make it clear. Let them understand the distinction when we talk about the love of God what that means in the context of the Bible. Share the message of grace in the context of who



we are, in need of that grace. Amplify it. The world, like my pesky watch, can tell you to turn it down. How hard is the world right now trying to turn down the message of the Church?

Speaking of the Spirit, Paul tells them to pray in the Spirit after he says wielding the Word, that the sword of the Spirit is the Word of God, he says, "I'm praying at all times in the Spirit." The Spirit has given me direction, clarity, written out his instructions. I should be praying and keeping with the Spirit has said, what the Spirit prompts, what the Spirit convicts. I should pray in keeping with that.

And he stops, as soon as he says..., "And pray for me. Pray for me." And I've quoted this so often in the first series in Chapter 1. But here it is, it's worth repeating. "And pray for me," he says, "that words may be given to me in the opening of my mouth to boldly proclaim the mystery of the gospel." I love that in this sermon, Peter has to lift up his voice. He has to raise the volume. He has to make it clear to thousands of people "to boldly proclaim the mystery, the gospel for which I'm an ambassador in chains." Some people have heard it. They didn't like it. They mocked it. And they put me in prison. But pray "that I can declare it boldly as I ought to speak." Some music was designed to be played at a certain volume and right now some of us are humming a tune of grace and you need to belt it out. Make it clear. Amplify the grace of forgiveness.

The last fairly big earthquake we had here in SoCal, I don't know if I went searching for this or it showed up somehow, but I came across an earthquake bed that is supposed to protect you from earthquakes, and it's not what you might be envisioning. Some of you might have seen this. It's a bed that looks like a normal bed, kind of. What happens is when it detects an earthquake, it folds real quick, drops you into a trap door, a little compartment, slams shut and puts you in this in this case, this steel case (audience laughing). Look this up. We have free Wi-Fi here. Look this up. You get slammed into this compartment and in there, I guess when they sell this, there's a fire extinguisher, there's a gas mask, there's freeze-dried food, I guess you can order for it. There are bottles of water you're supposed to put in. So you're sleeping and you get thrown into this case that seals up over the top of you.

I don't recommend this if you're claustrophobic or if your husband moves a lot in his sleep. I'm thinking, well, that's the nature of earthquakes. We can't predict them. All we can do is respond. Start to shake. Right? Maybe they're going to send out an alert that hopefully at the speed of light is going to get to my phone before the shaking gets to my phone. I get that. Maybe I'll get a second or two depending on where the earthquake is. Maybe if I buy one of these beds, you're going to look it up and you're going to find that bed. Wow? Buy one of those beds, if I have a big earthquake here in Southern California, it's going to shield me from all the, you know, the drywall and rafters of my house falling down on me.

But the great thing about the warning that comes from God regarding the coming seismic event called the Judgment of God, is that there's nothing that you have to wait for. You don't get the alert when it happens, you don't get the alert when it's going on, you don't get the alert after it's over. You get the alert now. And all I can tell you is it's pending. I don't know when the earthquake is coming. I don't know when God's judgment in the Valley of Decision is going to be here. But he said you should always expect it. "Keep collecting a citizenry for the kingdom until I



come. But be ready." And here's the great thing. I love the way, Peter, speaking of Peter later, writes, First Peter Chapter 1, he says. "And then you will be protected by the power of God for a salvation that's ready to be revealed in the time to come." There's going to be the proof that right now, as we sit here, hopefully if you're a Christian like me, that we were on the right side of history. We put our trust in Christ. We have the protection from God for the day of the Valley of Jehoshaphat. We're ready. We don't have to wait for the tremor. We're protected now.

That's such a good thing. He goes on to say in that chapter, all the prophets who we're thinking about the coming of Christ, they were moved by the Spirit to prophesy in the Old Testament about it. They were looking into the inquiring and they're studying and looking into the sufferings of Christ and the glories that were to follow, they came to this conclusion. They weren't serving themselves. They were serving you. That's what Peter says to the first-century group. They're serving us in the new covenant.

What I love about that is then there's another layer of that, because Peter and the rest, as he's proving in the very first sermon of the Church, he talks about the fact that now in the revelation of the New Testament, it's kind of repeated itself. 2,000 years later we can say, not only are we benefited from the Old Testament prophets and they were serving us, those New Testament prophets were serving us. It goes on to say this. "It says it was revealed to them that they were serving not themselves, but you, in the things that have now been announced to you through those who preach the good news to you by the Holy Spirit, things that were sent from heaven, things in which angels long to look." Amazing.

Angels stand by and say, man, my buddies who sinned, there was no second chance for them. They look at us and go, look, Christ has died. The Son of Man who's the King, was the suffering servant. It's an amazing thing. They're serving us. The Spirit has fallen on the Church, and the Church has presented us with the truth of a message, calling all people everywhere to repent.

I know that message is not popular in our day when everyone wants to think things are cool with God, copacetic, no problem, God is love. He is love. He's loved. He abounds in love. And he's patient and he's merciful and gracious.

But that's just a demonstration of his kindness to offer forgiveness even to our generation on the other side of the planet 2,000 years later. Never fear the foreshocks. Cherish the work of the Spirit and what he's provided not only presently, but the foundation of it all in the past. And get out there this week and amplify that message, would you?