**How Do You Respond To Disaster?**

***Joel 1-3***

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Introduction: What has been the modern world’s greatest natural catastrophe? Consider the date, December 26, 2004. Several miles under the ocean off the north-western coast of Indonesia, the tectonic plates shifted apart, with the force estimated to be that of 1,000 atomic bombs. It triggered 36 earth-quakes, sending a series of tsunamis traveling 500 miles an hour, reaching the shores of 11 countries. Entire islands disappeared & whole towns were destroyed. In Sri Lanka, hundreds of miles from the epi-center, a train carrying 1,000 passengers was tossed into the trees, as if it were a toy model. The resulting death toll was estimated to be 288,000. What was the response in that day? An article in the *Daily Telegraph* (a UK publication) read, “Our brains are not designed to compute suffering on such a scale… The swallowing up of whole communities is literally unimaginable.” Someone also wrote, “On the abundant available evidence does it not seem that, if there is or was a God, it (He) is now malevolent, mad, or dead?”

 Consider now a scene some 2,800 years ago, a devastating disaster, which brought about a very differ-ent response. This is the record of the prophet Joel. What would be your response to either of these 2 catastrophes? Or, how do you respond to disaster (either natural or man-made)?

 I. The day of the **locusts** (1:1-14)

 A. God’s message (through Joel) to the descendants (:2-4) >

 1. Those who witnessed this plague of locusts:

 a. There was nothing like this before in their day.

 b. There was nothing like this before in their fathers’ day.

 Summary: Note the details of locusts plagues (Blanchard & Phillips).

 2. They are to tell the next generation about this plague:

 a. Each succeeding generation is to tell the next.

 b. Each succeeding generation is to learn the lesson.

 B. God’s message (through Joel) to the drunkards (:5) >

 1. The source of their drunkenness is destroyed.

 2. The sin of drunkenness described.

 C. God’s message (through Joel) to the nation (:6-14) >

 1. Destruction is described (:6-12). Locusts have been described as “the incarnation of hunger.”

 2. Confession is demanded (:13-14).

 II. The Day of the **Lord** (1:15-2:32)

 A. It will be a day of destruction (1:15-20).

 B. It will be a day of darkness (2:1-10).

 C. It will be a day of deliverance (2:11-32) >

 1. There is a call for repentance (:11-19):

 a. “True repentance involves a change of mind” (Blanchard) – different view of sin.

 b. “True repentance involves a change of heart” (Blanchard) – broken-hearted; different view

 of the Savior.

 c. “True repentance involves a change of life” (Blanchard) – demonstration of salvation.

 Summary: The nature of repentance is found in 2:12-13. It must be serious (*“…with all your*

 *heart, & with fasting, & with weeping, & with mourning.”*) It must be soul-searching (render the

 heart rather than one’s garments).

 2. There is a call for rejoicing (2:20-27).

 3. There is a call for revival (2:28-32) [Tonight’s message]

III. The **lessons** for us from the Day of the Lord

 A. Listen to the voice of God > He is “shouting”

 1. In sending the plague of locusts, God is “shouting.”

 2. “God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pains; it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world” (C.S. Lewis, in *The Problem of Pain*).

 Illustrations: Consider natural disasters (Covid-19? – see Wiersbe, pp. 335-336) or man-made

 disasters (World Wars; 9-11; potential Russia/Ukraine war?)

 B. Listen to the Word of God > He is Sovereign

 1. Not listening to the words of the world:

 a. Fear of the future; for us, or for our children &/or grandchildren.

 b. Fear of death – Hebrews 2:15 & 9:27.

 2. But listening to the words of God:

 a. Consider Psalm 2:1-12; 103:19-20; Daniel 4:34-35.

 b. Compare Romans 8:28; Philippians 1:6; I Peter 1:5.

 C. Listen to the warnings from God > He is Savior

 1. Decision time now – II Corinthians 6:1-2.

 2. Decision time later – Joel 3:14, *“Multitudes, multitudes, in the valley of decision: for the day*

 *of the LORD is near in the valley of decision.”* Ryrie notes, “…where God will decide about

 men, not where men decide about God.” [cf. The Great White Throne Judgment, Rev. 20.]

Conclusion: How do you respond to disaster – whether natural or man-made? What will be the discussion at your work place, in your school, or around your community? When the subject of Covid-19, or Russia/Ukraine, or the end-times, comes up, what will you say? Could you say: listen to the voice of God, because He is “shouting” or listen to the Word of God, because He is Sovereign, or listen to the warnings from God, because He is Savior? “The natural disasters God sends on the earth do not come because He enjoys man’s suffering, but because He desires for man to turn from sin to seek Him” (Jaeggli). Consider II Peter 3:9, *“The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."* Man-kind needs to bemoan (bewail, grieve for, express sorrow for, lament) his sin. Review the 5 commands in chapter one demanding men to grieve over their sin: verse 5, *“weep & howl”*; verse 8, *“lament”*; verse 9, *“mourn”*; verse 11, *“Be ye ashamed”*; verse 13, *“lament… howl… lie all night in sackcloth.”* “Joel’s plea was for his people to manifest intense anguish of soul on account of their sin. Here is a missing element in today’s preaching” (& Jaeggli continues…). And man needs to seek the Lord. Consider the word *“cry”* in 1:14. The word means “a cry from a disturbed heart, in need of some kind of help; an expression of the need felt.” Jaeggli suggests, “We would pray more if we felt our dependence on the Lord more acutely. God knocked the props out from under His people & awakened them from spiritual slumber during Joel’s day.” What will it take to awaken us from our spiritual slumber & cause us to see revival? Is our heart-cry that of the Psalmist, *“Wilt Thou not revive us again: that Thy people may rejoice in Thee?”* (Psalm 85:6).