

A Theological Interpretation of Disaster

Joel 1

April 14, 2024

Pain is an incredible blessing.

How do you respond to disaster?

Nothing happens randomly, or by chance in God's universe.

God brings disaster. Isaiah 45:6-9; Amos 3:6; Job 42:11

Why do we discipline our children?

God writes a newsletter with a calamity warning of the Day of the Lord.

Who was Joel? When did he write? v. 1

What was the Judgment? v. 2-4.

Joel's goal: fully feel and understand the disaster and return to God.

Grace comes to those who know they deserve judgement.

What was a locust plague? Exodus 10:14-15

Judgment Demands to be Heard v. 5-12

Joel starts to awaken the people to the seriousness of the disaster.

He starts with a groups of escapists.

But the path to peace is through the valley of tears.

The locusts have devoured vine and fig tree happiness. v. 7

Wedding joy is turned to a funeral dirge.

The service of the temple is suspended.

The staples of life for the temple, and for our very existence are gone.

This is serious. God is speaking; God is shouting!! Are you listening?

Directions for the Leaders v. 13-14

Lead as an example in mourning and seeking God.

There is an empty form of religion, but true religion does find a form.

Call for a solemn fast of repentance. v. 14

Judgement Hints of the Final Judgement v. 15-18

The Day of the Lord. It is here; and it is coming.

What is the Day of the Lord?

At the center of every culture is the cult.

If the judgment of God were upon our nation, would we notice?

Judgment Ends in Dependent Prayer v. 19-20

Message received. We have heeded. We understand.

Is God speaking to you through the hard now?

Meditation

When we call people to repent, we are not *opposing* God's grace; we are *expressing* it. The kindness of the Lord is behind His call to repentance.

When you read the Old Testament prophets, you see that their main message is *Repent or else!* But read a little closer. Their call is far from the comic strip with the long-haired prophet walking around casually with a sign, clear on the message but cold and distant to the reader. The striking aspect about the warnings we find in the prophets is how often God's anger is expressed in a context of grieving and weeping. The angry, fiery God of judgment is the spurned husband who wants to woo back His wayward people from the brink of destruction.

The call to repentance is the call to *return home*. It's the call to be refreshed by our tears. It's the call to be cleansed from all our guilty stains. We need the scalpel of the Spirit to do surgery on our diseased hearts, so that we can be restored to spiritual health.

Don't pit the call to repentance against the championing of grace. Jesus didn't. Paul didn't. We shouldn't either.

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