

STUDIES IN THE BOOK OF JOEL – MIKE BICKLE

THE NECESSITY OF DAY OF THE LORD PREACHERS

CHAPTER NINE

THE NECESSITY OF “DAY-OF-THE-LORD PREACHERS”

Blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; for the day of the LORD is coming, for it is at hand: (Joel 2:1)

I. PREACHING THAT CAUSES PEOPLE TO TREMBLE

- A. The Day of the Lord preaching is to create an alarm in God’s people and then to cause their hearts to tremble.
 - 1. To alarm – to agitate or disorientate people by the preaching of the end-times
 - 2. To tremble – to cause their hearts to be engaged with God in the fear of God
- B. I like to ask people, “When was the last time that you *heard* a sermon that caused your spirit to tremble in the presence of God?” Or, “When was the last time that you preached a message that made people tremble?”
 - 1. There are many messages today that make people rejoice—and that is wonderful. We never want to stop declaring the true message about God’s unrelenting kindness that produces rejoicing in the human heart.
 - 2. Yet in this hour of history, we need a new impact in prophetic preaching! We need the kind of trumpet sound that also causes trembling in the hearts of men. Just as Joel proclaimed the judgments of God and the great and terrible Day, the Lord wants to raise up prophetic messengers to trumpet the often offensive message of what is coming at the end of the age. He wants a trumpet sound to go forth, the kind of message that alarms the human heart, leading them to repentance and wholeheartedness.
- C. Joel was a “*day-of-the-Lord prophetic preacher*”, used by the Lord to prepare all who would hear the word about the Babylonian invasion. Joel’s generation was unique in Israel’s history. His message was more than declaring future things—he proclaimed the imminent day of the Lord. Our generation is similar to Joel’s; we are in a very unique time frame in history in which the day of the Lord is at hand. But this time, it will not be a small “d” day of the Lord, but the ultimate day of the Lord.

- D. Only one generation in history will witness the final Day of the Lord. I truly believe that is *this* generation and that many alive on the earth today will see this Day come within their lifespan. If this is true, the Lord is about to raise up a whole company of preachers like Joel, ***day-of-the-Lord prophetic preachers***, with the anointing that causes alarm and trembling in the hearts of men. These preachers will be both men and women, young and old. They will proclaim the message of God's *beauty* and the message of the *great* and the *terrible* in the Day of the Lord being at hand.

II. DAY-OF-THE-LORD PREACHERS

- A. God is commissioning men and women all over the earth to sound the prophetic alarm to others. Preaching that causes men to tremble comes from standing in the counsel of the Lord, hearing His Word and then proclaiming it (Jer. 23:18).
- B. What causes the alarm that drives men to tremble before God is the Spirit of the Lord upon the preaching. It is much more than eloquence or good communication skills!
1. Alarming preaching has never been popular preaching at the time of delivery. Even Joel's disturbing preaching only fully reached a radical core of believers in a significant way.
 2. Alarming preaching doesn't typically draw the multitudes, which is what most preachers really love. I once heard a man say, "Preachers love crowds, not people." And most preaching today, specifically in the western world, is reflective of this remark. Preachers go out of their way to become popular and create multitudes, keeping this drive for numbers as their unspoken goal.
 3. But there is an extremely rare kind of preacher, opposite to the common preacher of the day. Joel is the model and example of this type.
- C. Though this kind of preacher is not popular among the masses, he does change history. I'm reminded of the popular worship song called, "History Makers." The reality of making history is a pleasing one, yet true history-makers are not popular when they are actually making it. It is usually only after they die and after a hundred years go by that they become popular. The reason for this is that in order to make history, a standard must be raised, a line in the sand must be drawn; it involves cutting against the grain of what is popular, acceptable and dignified. Every prophet in the Bible, including Joel, lived across the grain with the culture of their day. Joel's message stung the people of his day with its weightiness and authority.

- D. The most challenging part of hearing about coming judgment is the idea that God has wrath. This is almost an unheard of concept today, though it is not foreign to the Old or New Testament—it is a very biblical idea. Some people assume that this “God of wrath” was only in the Old Testament and the New Testament only shows a “God of Mercy,” yet this negates the principle that God never changes. He was as merciful in the Old Testament as He was in the New and as strong against sin in the New Testament as He was in the Old.
- E. Another point of inevitable opposition to Day-of-the-Lord preaching lies around the fact that we are declaring the imminence of judgment, ***“The Day of the Lord is at hand!”***
1. People can usually accept the idea that the day of the Lord is out there somewhere. Yet when you declare it is ***now here***, that it is upon us, both believers and unbelievers will call you fanatical.
 2. To say that the Day of the Lord is at hand means that the unique activity of this kind of time frame is not for another generation, but it will be made manifest in the next ten to fifty years. To make such a claim in our day usually results in being classified as fanatical and even cultish. It is so politically incorrect and so offensive to the western mindset.
 3. It is generally acceptable to talk about the Day of the Lord being in the future, so long as we do not take it to the next level, saying we are now living in that generation. Then it becomes personal to those listening and is dismissed as too extreme and therefore wrong.
- F. History tells us that whenever this message is applied to the present-tense audience, people will respond with opposition and rejection. On the other hand, when the message of the Day of the Lord is applied to the *future*, the common response is affirmative reception.
1. People believe the Bible until the Bible is actually addressing their own generation. Resistance springs up within the heart of nearly all men when this trumpet sound is not future-oriented but present-tense oriented.
 2. Peter spoke of this common attitude when he said, “Scoffers will come in the last days, walking according to their own lusts, and saying, ‘Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of creation’” (2 Pet. 3:3, 4). This mocking spirit says, “You people have always said that the Day of the Lord is coming and all of the generations have been the same!” Within the house of God and outside the house of God, prophetic trumpeters will encounter this kind of mockery.
 3. If you give your heart to biblical preaching, becoming gripped with the message even as Joel was, brace yourself for resistance. You will not win a popularity contest in proclaiming the Day of the Lord, yet you *will* prepare people who will listen and hear, bringing life to many, many people.

III. PREACHING THAT PRODUCES TREMBLING

“Blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound the alarm in My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; for the day of the Lord is coming, for it is at hand: a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness...” (Joel 2:1- 2)

- A. The trembling that grips the heart and is evoked by this Day-of-the-Lord prophetic preaching emerges for three different reasons and manifests with three different faces.
- B. First, people tremble out of ***compassionate anguish over the coming suffering***. Their hearts will be gripped with the unprecedented amount of human agony looming on the horizon. Jeremiah experienced this kind of trembling as his heart was gripped with unutterable, compassionate anguish over the pain that people would endure (Jer. 8:18-9:2; 14:17-18; 23:9-10). Compassionate anguish is an appropriate response to what is coming. Judgment preaching is never to be done without tears. Those who preach on the judgment of God must do so with a tenderized heart.
- C. The second dimension of trembling in response to Day-of-the-Lord preaching has to do with the ***reality of coming persecution***. Jeremiah trembled over how he was treated by men in the wake of his preaching. He knew that to say “yes” to his prophetic calling meant persecution: “O Lord, You induced me and I was persuaded; You are stronger than I, and have prevailed” (Jer. 20:7). The Lord called him from his youth and Jeremiah said “Yes, anything!” Men resisted Jeremiah, throwing him into a pit and even torturing him.
- D. The final reason that people tremble from Day-of-the-Lord preaching, is because we become ***awestruck before the majesty of God’s power!*** When we see with the eyes of our hearts the coming revival and the coming judgment, an experience of supernatural conviction arises. We tremble at the severity of the times! We’re alarmed by the majesty of God’s manifest power in revival and in judgment. Throughout Church history, God has raised up men like Jonathan Edwards and Charles Finney, who preached with such unction and power that the very majesty and conviction of God struck people’s hearts like piercing arrows! Both the believers and unbelievers trembled under the power of the Word of God, astounded at His majesty. The people would shutter in alarm as they watched the power of God manifest upon others and as they experienced this explosive power themselves.
- E. Not all preaching should produce trembling, but Day-of-the-Lord preaching must not be absent in the Church. The trembling that comes from this kind of prophetic preaching by the anointing of the Spirit is what produces the response of the fasted lifestyle. ***Without an alarmed heart and a trembling spirit, we will never enter into the grace of wholeheartedness*** that Joel describes as required by God in crisis (Joel 2:12-17). It is difficult to motivate people to prayer without prophetic preaching that creates urgency. If we are not trembling in our own spirits with a sense of alarm, then we will usually minimize the grace of fasting and prayer. We must not yield to the pressures to only preach that which is popular and to withhold that which upsets people. We must tremble.

IV. THE OFFENSIVENESS OF DAY-OF-THE-LORD PREACHING

- A. In the generation of the Lord's return, both the positive and the negative are going to crescendo at warp speed—a year of favor and a day of vengeance. Forerunners must preach about the year of favor but also about the day of vengeance if we are to preach the full counsel of God.
- B. Many will be offended at the end-time message before being filled with rage against God.
You have taken Your great power and reigned. The nations were angry and Your wrath has come. (Rev. 11:17-18)
- C. The nations will be drunk in their rage against God because of His judgments.
I have trodden down the peoples in My anger made them drunk.... (Is. 63:6)

V. THE ROLE OF THE FORERUNNER

- A. God wants voluntary lovers, that is He wants the people to *choose* to say yes to Him. God raised up John the Baptist to prepare the way before Jesus' first coming. John was a forerunner or a voice crying in the wilderness to prepare the way of the Lord.
The voice of one crying in the wilderness: “Prepare the way of the LORD.” (Lk. 3:4)
- B. Today God is raising up men and women, old and young, who will have a forerunner ministry like John the Baptist. They will prepare the way of the Second Coming of the Lord by preparing the people to receive the things that God will release, including unprecedented dimensions of the Holy Spirit's activity and power.
- C. Notice that the Scripture emphasizes that John was a “**voice**” in the wilderness; His voice sprang forth from his encounter with God. John was a voice with authority, not just an echo who repeated the spiritual slogans of the day. John had deep personal revelation of God alive in his spirit.
- D. Radical new paradigms about God's heart and His purposes must be established! This is the purpose of the forerunner ministry: to “prepare the way for the people” so they are not confused nor offended at Him but rather understand and trust Him with confident love.
- E. A distinctive of forerunners today is their revelation of Jesus as the Bridegroom God. This characterized John the Baptist's life so much so that he said his joy was made complete by hearing the voice of Jesus as the Bridegroom (Jn. 3:29).
The friend (John the Baptist) of the Bridegroom (Jesus)...rejoices greatly because of the Bridegroom's voice. Therefore this joy of mine is fulfilled. (Jn. 3:29)

- F. John rejoiced greatly because he experienced Jesus as a Bridegroom. John's forerunner message and lifestyle was energized by encountering or hearing the Bridegroom God. God is raising up forerunners today, who like John experience Jesus as a Bridegroom God and are, therefore, filled with the same joy in their intimacy with God.
- G. Forerunners proclaim what the Holy Spirit is about to emphasize, that which God has determined to do in the near future. God will raise these men and woman up so that when the great and terrible Day actually comes to pass, the earth will have been warned and/or prepared! They will have already heard the trumpet sound and been given the choice to respond. When these prophesied dramatic events begin to unfold, instead of becoming angry and offended at God, people will have the ability to cooperate with Him in a voluntary way, just as He desires.

VI. THE GREAT SHAKING OF THE END-TIME DRAMA

"For thus says the LORD: "Once more...I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land; I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the Desire of All Nations (Jesus)... (Hag. 2:6-7)

He has promised, saying, "Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven." Now this ...indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken...that the things which cannot be shaken may remain... we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken. (Heb. 12:26-28)

- A. Haggai prophesied of the great end-time shaking, then the writer of Hebrews quoted him and added helpful interpretive insight to it. God will shake everything that can be shaken, which means that all that hinders the work of God's love in the human heart will be disrupted.
 - 1. He will shake the heavens, which speaks of the sky and the atmosphere. It is no small thing when drastic changes occur in the heavens, for example, atmospheric changes.
 - 2. He will disturb the earth's tectonic plates through earthquakes and volcanoes. He will churn up the sea and the oceans, distressing the coastlands of the earth. He will also shake the dry land by disrupting vegetation through droughts, famines and pestilence.
 - 3. He will shake every nation. No government, military, economy or society will remain untouched. There will be tremendous military crisis across the earth, as nation will arise against nation in an attempt to gain sovereignty (Matt. 24:7).
 - 4. All this is a massive glimpse into the desperate straits of the earth just before Christ's return. It is overwhelming for anyone taking God at His word.

- B. The result of the great shaking is that the nations will come to Jesus, who is called the Desire of all Nations by Haggai. The greatest revelation God ever revealed by the Holy Spirit: Jesus will be revealed in His beauty as the desire of all nations. In other words, the nations will desire Him because of His beauty. Jesus' beauty will be seen in His terrifying majesty, affectionate passion and tenderness for people. The heart of God will be revealed in an unprecedented measure. He will unlock mysteries of His heart at the same time that He is shaking the earth. The great and the terrible, the revelation of His heart and the devastation of His judgments are simultaneous; It will all come together in one grand swirl of astonishing and terrifying activity!

VII. THE OFFENSIVENESS OF JESUS

Jesus said... “Blessed is he who is not offended because of Me.” (Mt. 11:6)

“Then many will be offended...and will hate one another.” (Matt. 24:10)

- A. With all of these shakings on the earth in the generation that Lord returns, many will be offended at God's leadership and His divine decrees, which release the shakings or judgments (Matt. 24:10). Unless we become tenderized in our spirits by receiving revelation about God's heart and ways, we will naturally be offended at His leadership over the planet in the last generation.
- B. In Jesus' first coming, He did not shy away from provoking man's offense. ***He offended men's minds in order to reveal their hearts.***
- C. Jesus went into the temple in Jerusalem having yet to do a miracle. The first thing He did was to walk through the temple with a whip, striking people, money tables and animals and driving them out (Jn. 2:15-20)! He disrupted the temple in one demonstration of His zeal! This offended many! The people could not believe His audacity and they challenged Him saying, “What sign do You show to us, since You do these things?” They wanted Him to prove that He had the authority to do such a thing. Yet, Jesus responded, “Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up” (Jn. 2:18, 19). Though He was speaking of His own body, He left the people to think that He was talking about the temple that took forty-six years to build! He offended them on purpose.
- D. The disciples could have said something like, “Jesus, listen, if You would have gone in there and done a few miracles first, they would have listened to You!” Yet, Jesus was not after such a superficial response. And so, for those who wanted an excuse to reject Him, He gave it to them.

- E. He wanted to separate the ones who truly wanted Him from those who did not. This is still the way He leads. He comes in a way that offends natural thinking with the underlying premise that those who truly want Him will press in to hear His heart. For those who do not want Him, He gives them every opportunity to bail out. ***He offends the mind in order to reveal the heart.*** For those that truly desire Him, He makes a way by giving them living understanding of His heart. He helps them connect with the wisdom and lovingkindness behind the disturbing and even offensive things that He says and does. He causes the real desires and thoughts of the human heart to come to the surface in context of releasing by His “offensive” judgments. This creates a struggle and a tension in man that actually gives occasion for more mature love.
- F. Undoubtedly, even some of the disciples were offended at what Jesus did in the temple that day, seeing it as lack of wisdom. Yet in the midst of this, they had their own wrestling to do; they had to wrestle with the truth that He was God and He was good, and His wisdom was so far beyond their understanding. Their hearts responded to Him though their natural mindsets were offended, and through the struggle they came to see God’s wisdom and beauty. Through His offensive actions the Lord was inviting them to overcome their offense by love and to discern His heart in His ways.
- G. By taking Jesus’ words and actions to heart, the disciples swam against the current of their day. Many times Jesus’ message caused people to turn their backs on Him. The Apostle John records one such time when Jesus said, “Unless You eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you” (Jn. 6:53). ***His disciples called this is a “hard saying” because of how troubling and difficult it was to their minds.*** Jesus knew exactly what He was doing. Many of the disciples left Jesus that day, considering His doctrine wrong and His leadership too fanatical. Jesus turned to the others and said, in essence, “You guys can go too, you really, really can.” But Peter responded, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life” (Jn. 6:67). Though he found his own offenses surfacing, thinking Jesus’ doctrine and style was strange, he also knew that He was good and He was powerful, the only one with the words of life. Peter wrestled through all of these things and resolved that he had no other options but Jesus. He found God’s wisdom and love in that which troubled him at first.
- H. ***God’s strategy is to offend the mind in order to reveal the heart.*** He knows that conflict will not drive away those who have a genuine cry in their spirit to be His. Rather, it will bring them towards Him in desperation. And through the tensions and the wrestlings that the conflict instigates, they will be even more spiritually alive and in love with Him. Because He knows this, He is going to perform such a strategy across the entire globe, giving the whole planet great opportunity to renounce and reject Him if they do not truly want Him. God’s fierce judgments and fury will break forth across the land like a whirlwind that nothing can stop. He will execute the full intentions of His heart in judgment.

The anger of the LORD will not turn back until He has executed and performed the thoughts of His heart. In the latter days you will understand it perfectly. (Jer. 23:20)

- I. In the midst of this offensive divine set up, Satan will enter the scene with an onslaught of accusation against God. He will seek to convince human hearts everywhere that God is a liar, He is not in control, and He does not know what He is doing! He will challenge, “Why would a God of love orchestrate this?” People will fall away because they are offended at God.

The Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith (1 Tim 4:1)

- J. All over the earth, people with unrenewed minds will be greatly offended at God. We will be surprised by the offense that creeps up, even explodes, within our own hearts. In the wake of the great judgments in the earth, with all the tragedy and sorrow that will go with them, the Devil will press us to just curse God and die. He will say that God is not good; He is a liar. Only with a vibrant spirit and a renewed mind will we discern these accusations of the enemy against God.
- K. The Body of Christ today is not yet prepared for the “offensive leadership” that Jesus will manifest at the end of the age. We are not yet equipped to agree with His heart when He shows Himself as the mighty Judge in the earth. We need to feed our spirits on the Word of God and receive understanding of God’s end-time strategy.
1. We cannot afford to squander days and hours living the way that the western Church is living right now—numbed by a continual overdose of entertainment, made anemic by feeding upon lifeless food. It is the hour that we need to be the most vibrant and spiritually alive!
 2. Our ways are so carnal and our thought patterns so western. Rather than thinking like people born for eternity, or God’s kingdom, we often think the way our culture and society thinks. The opportunities for sin and so much recreation in our culture is lulling us to sleep, while there is a divine trumpet being sounded for anyone who will hear. We cannot be content to live with a dull spirit! Sooner or later, God’s people will rise up in the presence of all the ensnaring options of our culture and fight for a liberated spirit.

VIII. THE NECESSITY OF STUDYING THE END-TIMES

- A. Most of the Church in our day is substantially unfamiliar with what God has clearly spoken in His Word about what will happen at the end of the age. This is not okay. The reason that it is not okay is because a large amount of the Bible is end-time prophecy. Jesus taught at length on the subject of the end-times.
- B. End-time prophecy fills the pages of the Major and Minor Prophets and is addressed throughout the Book of Psalms, nearly all of the New Testament epistles and of course, the Book of Revelation. The Word of God is absolutely full of insight for this most dramatic time of natural history. The Lord devoted a significant amount of Scripture to the subject of this time frame in order to prepare people for it. This is the very heartbeat of the forerunner ministry—to understand what is coming and to prepare the earth for it. Every detail that the Lord has given us is of utmost importance!

- C. We need to know more than just the general trends of end-time prophecy; He has purposely given us some clear details in His Word. Granted, He has kept some of the details a bit nebulous. They give us ideas, but leave us without full clarity. When the Lord is not clear, we do not need to be dogmatic. But my guess is that He *will* give clarity supernaturally before He returns, giving revelation and insight to His servants on some of these nebulous ideas and confirming them in supernatural ways. Yet even if He doesn't do this, leaving the ambiguous parts the way they are, there are still many details He has given that are *very, very* clear. And we must go deep in these subjects. The very fact that God has put these specifications in His Word is evidence of their importance. He gave them to prepare His people to become a glorious Bride without spot or wrinkle.
- D. We cannot afford to neglect this God-given resource, end-time prophecy, because God has purposed it to train and stabilize the heart, to create urgency within us and to create the marvel and fascination that is so necessary to give ourselves wholeheartedly to God in the hour of trouble. The critical nature of end-time prophecy is a new idea for many people. They have thought it to be irrelevant and just for the curious. Yet this is an absolute lie of the enemy! For years, I have heard people say (and I have said it a few times myself), "Let's not worry about all of the details, let's just love Jesus." The truth is that Jesus gave us the details to help us love Him. Another myth about the end-times is that it is impossible to understand. How untrue. God has made it for the simple ones of the earth, and it truly is not that difficult to understand if you stay with it for awhile, becoming familiar with the terms and giving yourself to the study of it.
- E. Daniel prophesied that in the last days God would cause certain people, and I believe they will be many, to have a spirit of understanding, that they might instruct the multitudes of the earth.
The people who understand shall instruct many...for many days they shall fall by sword and flame, by captivity and plundering. Some of those of understanding shall fall (martyrdom), to refine them, purify them, and make them white, until the time of the end. (Dan. 11:33, 35)
Many shall be purified, made white, and refined, but the wicked shall do wickedly; and none of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand. (Dan. 12:10)
- F. Many will have understanding in that day. The wicked will continue to do wickedness and they will resist the ways of the Lord, but those with understanding will be refined and made bright, carrying the anointing of God upon their life. We must have understanding of what is happening around the globe from God's perspective, and He has given us the way into this understanding through the written (and verified) Word of God. The Lord also will give subjective revelations through open visions, dreams, as He gave to Daniel, to help us understand the Word. But even without subjective revelations, He has given us stunning details in the written Word of God with a wide-open door of invitation for us to go deep! We must become a people of understanding and this will not happen by casually or occasionally glancing over End-Time prophecy. We have to give ourselves to the actual study of it.

- G. God wants us ***to be witnesses of His heart***, bringing clarity to people in the earth. Why? So they can move forward courageously, without fear and full of confident love. There will be a people of understanding in that day, a people who will instruct many (Dan. 11:33). God told Jeremiah that there will be those in the latter days who will understand perfectly what God is doing through judgment (Jer. 23:20).
- H. The study of the end times, ***creates urgency in intercession***. When you take End-Time prophecy out of the heart of the intercessor, the fire of intercession is minimized! When we understand what is coming, we see the evil arising and we know from the Scripture that it will become worse and worse. But we also know that there is the possibility of our area becoming a pocket of mercy and this creates tremendous urgency within us for intercession. Some people see evil arising and think that it is just a trend that will subside in a few years. They imagine that something will happen for the better, everyone will settle down and everything will go back to “normal.” Knowing our victory in the end-times causes intercession to grip our hearts because we know victory is the inheritance for the Body of Christ before the Lord returns. We pray against the tide of evil in our geographic area, asking God to quickly loose the victory in greater measures and faster time frames.
- I. Studying eschatology (end times) causes us to ***grow in confidence in divine sovereignty***. We grow certain that God is in control in the midst of the crisis, and this causes us to be stable in love. Our hearts become rooted and grounded in love, instead of harried with fear (Eph. 3:17). So much of the Body of Christ in our day will be in a frenzied panic on the inside because they are not rooted and grounded in God’s sovereignty and the knowledge of the scriptures that give understanding of what is happening in the earth. God has absolutely lined everything up and nothing is a mistake or an accident! Nothing surprises God or sneaks up on Him at the last minute, causing Him to have to change His mind. When you are anchored in the reality of God’s sovereign control, your heart becomes established in love instead of panicked and fearful.
- J. The study of eschatology awakens ***marvel within us at the majesty of God***. What a stunning gift God has given us in allowing us to see and peer into the divine drama that He is orchestrating. He lets us peer into all the ingredients of the recipe—Satan’s rage, man’s free will, the judgments of God, the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, etc. One group of the human race will exercise their free will and they will end up in severe depravity and sin. Others will enter into extraordinary, bright righteousness. God will work through both groups to accomplish His plan.

- K. There are a number of different approaches to end-time prophecy that spiritualize it away as being all symbolic. Most of the schools of thought of our day regard end-time theology as symbolic. Israel does not mean Israel; the land of the north does not mean the land of the north; almost everything is figurative. ***I believe this to be a significant error that is detrimental to the Body of Christ.*** Such theology causes end-time prophecy to be so confusing because all of the symbols mean something different to every scholar and there are thousands of scholars who each hold varying views. This causes the people in the Body of Christ who seek to study out these things to throw up their hands and say, “Who can figure out what this symbolism means?” The ***net result is a significant neglect of eschatology*** by both the scholars and the people who read their books. Even the scholars who symbolize it all are so overwhelmed by it all that after they write their book, they are so done with it, they never go any further with it. Even worse, the prayer movement is robbed of a very necessary fuel to obtain the fullness God has for us. This is exactly what the enemy wants.
- L. ***We must take End-Time prophecy at face value (literally)***—a common sense literal interpretation, knowing that it means what it says and says what it means. The Lord gave the Word of God for the majority of the human race, which is not the rich, educated westerners. Most of the human race throughout all of human history was illiterate and poor, and God wrote the Bible with them in mind. He wrote the Bible so that they could have a living faith. ***It truly is within our reach to go deep in these subjects.*** It was the Lord who gave us the Word, and He did not write it for a few elite men in seminaries. He wrote it for the common people of the earth, the poor and uneducated.
- M. It is a growing trend, even in high-level scholarship, to symbolize away end-time passages. There is much intellectual pride related to this, and we do not want to yield to it. We just want to ask the Lord with simple faith, prayer and fasting, and a heart of devotion, “Give me instruction.
- N. If we want to sustain intercession and fiery preaching over years, the two necessities are intimacy and eschatology. We must constantly feed our spirits on these subjects. When intimacy and eschatology burn in the hearts of believers, they are significantly more engaged and alive. When these realities die out, the fire of intercession and preaching and urgency dwindles also.
- O. Even now God is raising up proclaimers who carry intimacy and the end times in their hearts. Some will have a platform from which to preach but many will impact those around them through one-on-one conversations or small groups. God is going to anoint those in the marketplace, in the home with their children, in the schools and more. He is simply looking for hearts that are turned toward Him that He might set them ablaze with His word as He did Joel.