

**THRU THE BIBLE SYNTHESIS**  
**"Part XXV: Joel - Handling A Lack Of STRONG Spiritual Leadership"**

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

We live in an era of weak spiritual oversight:

(1) On the March 5, 1996 Sally Jessy Raphael talk show, a man was interviewed as to WHY he refused to marry a woman who was carrying his child. He responded that after he learned of her pregnancy, he found out that he had caused **another** woman to become pregnant with **twins**. Due to the **numbers**, he felt **ETHICALLY** obliged to marry **her** rather than the woman carrying just **one** of his offspring! **Question: Where is his responsibility to parent ALL he sires?!**

(2) On February 29th, President Bill Clinton met with 30 media industry executives with a request to put ratings on television shows. The executives agreed to have ratings beginning in **1997**, a year **later!** **Question: If CURRENT programs are bad enough that executives know they must rate them, WHY WAIT UNTIL NEXT YEAR?!**

(3) Cokie Roberts, ABC's White House correspondent, reported on the ABC evening news March 5, 1996 that nationwide, Americans are concerned about the current political candidates for the presidency not being **STRONG** enough leaders! **Question: Where can we get a strong candidate to elect in November as President?!**

(4) On the March 4th, 1996 television show, "A Current Affair," a former lobbyist for the tobacco industry was interviewed regarding his imminent death by **lung cancer!** He had decided to come out and warn others of the dangers of smoking **although** he **himself** had notoriously lobbied for years in favor of tobacco! When asked if he ever intentionally lied about tobacco's effects while a lobbyist, he answered, "Yes!" **Question: If a tobacco lobbyist covers up known dangers of smoking and even contracts terminal cancer by smoking BEFORE exposing the truth, where is STRONG moral leadership today?!**

(5) In the last ten weeks, I have had conversations with four religious leaders in our area who have wondered where I stand on participating in a certain national religious movement. After sharing my abstinence from the movement on a **doctrinal** basis, these men have told me that President, Chuck Swindoll, and Professors Howard Hendricks and Tony Evans from the **doctrinally sound** seminary where I attended all actively **lead** in this ministry. **Question: Where is strong DOCTRINAL leadership in Evangelicalism today?!**

(We turn to the "Need" section in the message . . .)

***Need: Though God made marriage, family, church and government institutions for man's benefit, the lack of strong spiritual leadership in such institutions creates problems all around! Any solutions?!***

- I. **When Judah failed in her divine world mission, going apostate before national captivity, her LEADERS became spiritually weak:**
  - A. Though God created the world and set man up as His deputy, sin deposed him, and Satan became ruler on earth, Gen. 1-5; 2 Cor. 4:4.
  - B. The Lord renewed history through the Noahic flood, Gen. 6:1-9:7.
  - C. Yet, Noah's descendant, Nimrod, began an apostasy opposing God's rule on the earth, Gn. 10:8-10; 11:1-9; Rev. 12:1-3.
  - D. God thus chose Abraham to start a nation to check this sin, Gn. 12:1-3
  - E. Yet, after many challenges en route, that nation, Israel failed to curb Nimrodian error, itself becoming so seduced by it that judgment fell:
    1. Because of Solomon's apostasy, God divided Israel's kingdom, giving most of the tribes to his servant, Jeroboam, 1 Kings 11:1-13.
    2. But Jeroboam started and idol worship to keep people from turning to Solomon's side. That led later kings to sin, so God sent Jeroboam's nation into Assyrian captivity, 1 K. 12:25-2 K. 17:41!
  - F. Though Israel's fall should have motivated Judah to repent, the nation went ever deeper into wickedness. One very **frustrating** problem individual godly Jews faced was the **weakness** of even "**good**" leaders:
    1. Queen Athaliah nearly killed off David's line, but a nurse rescued David's **infant**, royal descendant, Joash, from her, 2 Chr. 22:10-12.
    2. The godly but **elderly** High Priest, Jehoiada, saw to it that in time, young Joash was enthroned and Athaliah slain, 2 Ch. 23:1-3,20-21.
    3. However, when **elderly** Jehoiada **died**, the **impressionable boy-king**, Joash was **LED** by evil courtiers to abandon his good temple restoration project and let idolatry rule the day, 2 Ch. 24:17f
    4. So with the passing of **elderly** Jehoiada, Judah was left with a "**good**" but **spiritually** impressionable, **WEAK boy-king!**
- II. **God had Joel address the lack of STRONG leadership in Judah:**
  - A. Mixed with a call to repent due to God's judgment by a locust plague, Joel's prophecy addresses the vacuum of strong leadership in Judah:

1. In accord with cultural beliefs of his era, Joel wrote that a current locust plague prefigured a **judgment** invasion by soldiers, 2:1-9;1:4 with **B.K.C., O.T.**, p. 1411 (*Jour. of N.E. Studies*, 14, 1955:52-55).
  2. At this time, there would be catastrophic changes in the solar and galactic systems, the era of the Great Tribulation, Joel 2:10-11.
  3. When the invading Russians would arrive, **God** would **forcibly** destroy them, Joel 2:18-21 (*Ry. St. Bib., KJV* fn., 2:20; Ez. 38:2)
  4. God even predicted bringing the **WORLD'S** armies into the Kidron Valley and there **defeating** all who afflict Judah, Joel 3:14-17.
- B. This news of Judah's future deliverance by her **GREAT GOD** focused on Judah's God as her technical "**WARRIOR-KING**"!
1. A constant theme throughout these predictions of the distant future is the phrase, "The Day of the Lord," Joel 1:15; 2:1,2a,b; 3:1.
  2. Archaeological discoveries teach us that the phrase was used in the Ancient Near East of "a mighty warrior-king" who could conclude "an entire military campaign in a **single day**," Gerhard von Rad, "The Origin of the Concept of the Day of Yahweh," *Jour. of Sem. Studies*, 4, (1959:97-108), *Bib. Kno. Com., O. T.*, p. 1412.
  3. Thus, Joel's prophecy pictures **God HIMSELF** taking up the **slack** of strong spiritual leadership in Judah!
- III. **The "thread of redemption" in Joel's prophecy is God's promise to equip WEAK humans with HIS SPIRIT for EFFECTIVE service.**
- A. In the victory of Israel's "Warrior-King," God's **powerful Spirit** would be poured out on **weak elderly AND young** folk, equipping Israel to have **strong** spiritual leaders, 2:28-32; 3:18-21! This event for Israel will occur during the Messianic Kingdom yet to come!
  - B. Since Christ, God's Warrior-King (Rev. 19:11-16) would overcome Satan at the cross, He would send the **Holy Spirit** with **spiritual gifts** for **powerful** service to combat impotence in the **Church**, an event that Joel did not then see, Co. 2:13-15; Ep. 4:7-16; Acts 1:8; 2:14-21!

**Application:** *Handling weakness in leadership starts by (1) believing in Christ for salvation from sin, Jn. 3:16. (2) As believers, (a) we STAY positioned for solutions by confession of sin (1 Jn. 1:9) and (b) depending on God's enabling Holy Spirit (Gal. 5:16-23) for righteous living. (3) Since the Spirit equips the believer for service via a supernatural gift (Ep. 4:7-16), we overcome human weakness in leading by (a) sticking to the divine assignment that employs that enabling (b) and using that gift to the maximum for headway against our weaknesses, 2 T. 1:6-7; 1 T. 4:14-16. (c) In the vulnerable subordinate position under weak leadership, trust our Warrior-King, Jesus Christ, for intervention to preserve us so we can do His will!*

**Lesson:** *All that we need for stable, powerful leadership is found in the Person and equipping of Israel's Hero Warrior-King, Jesus Christ!*

**Conclusion:** (To illustrate the sermon lesson . . . )

(1) My former professor of Church History at Dallas Seminary, Dr. John Hanna, loved to tell how Charles Wesley, the great eighteenth century revivalist, got his start in his powerful preaching ministry.

George Whitfield, himself a mighty preacher, decided it was time for Charles Wesley to preach to the masses. However, Charles had never preached in the open air, and felt, as an Anglican himself, that leading people to Christ **outside** a Church was nearly **sinful**!

Whitfield decided then to call for an open air meeting in the fields adjoining a coal mine outside of Bristol, England, and invited Charles to come to the meeting. Charles came expecting Whitfield to do the preaching. However, Whitfield stayed home! With large, restless crowds gathering and no one to bring the message, Charles himself finally got up and began giving the Gospel!

Records say that as the word of God went forth from Charles Wesley, streaks of white running downward from many eyes were seen on the blackened faces of coal miners as they came under conviction of sin. **The spiritual gifting of this Oxford University man moved the hearts of common English coal miners to repent and be saved!**

(2) A number of weeks ago, Dan Sonstrom went into a room of prisoners in a Prison Fellowship gathering to give the Gospel. Being from his Lutheran background, Dan was not familiar with having people come forward to receive Christ. However, he knew how to share the Gospel from what we share in our opening services every Sunday at Nepaug, and he had seen others ask for people to make decisions by coming forward. At first he felt reluctant about preaching there, and almost didn't do it. Yet, he abruptly entered, and started the meeting. When he gave the Gospel and asked the men to come forward in making a decision for Christ, much to Dan's surprise, **nine** men stepped forward! He told me later that he wasn't sure what to do with them after that other than to affirm that they needed to live godly lives!

**The equipping of the saints with spiritual gifts to do the work of the ministry is God's way of giving power to us to cause His people to influence the world aright. Like Charles Wesley and Dan Sonstrom, we need to trust in Christ and use those gifts for His Kingdom!**