

**A Sign of the Times  
An Introduction to Joel  
Apocalypse Now and in the Future Too!  
Joel 1:1 – 3**

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Joel 1:1

“The word of the LORD that came to Joel, the son of Pethuel:” (NASB 2020)

And with that very short introduction, we are thrust into the 3 chapters made up of 73 verses total that is the book of Joel. This is a book that you can sit down and read rather quickly.

When you do, the theme of this book hits you right between the eyes. This is a book about the last days. It is a revelation of God’s plan for His people Israel and their future. It is the beginning of the outline of a doctrine called the Day of the Lord.

Ok, so let’s look at the technical gee whiz stuff of this book. “In the early thirteenth century (c. 1205) Stephen Langton divided the Vulgate text of Joel into three chapters, and in the next century the Greek text was similarly divided. The first Rabbinic Bible, edited by Felix Pratensis in 1517, adopted this practice of a tripartite division. Most subsequent editions of the Bible, including English translations, have continued to do so. The second Rabbinic Bible, edited by Jacob ben Hayyim in 1526, and most later Hebrew editions have divided the book into four chapters. Two notable English translations, those by the Jewish Publication Society and the New American Bible, follow this tradition.” (Crenshaw 2008, 11)

The Tanakh uses four chapters, but the Septuagint and the Targums use three.

When you sit down and read, you realize this short book is all about the theme of Joel, which is “the Day of Yahweh. No other Old Testament witness gives it as detailed and systematic a treatment as he does.” (Wolff 1977, 12)

The idea of the day of YAHWEH, also called the Day of the Lord, is a topic first broached in Obadiah 15, predating Joel, but Joel is the one who develops it.

The phrase, the day of the Lord, has reference to the direct intervention of God in the affairs of man. The theme has a twofold meaning. First, the phrase, day of the Lord, refers to God’s judgment which came upon Judah after Joel penned the prophecy. Second, it has reference to the Tribulation period which will culminate in Christ’s coming in glory and the establishment of His Millennial Kingdom. (Levy 1987)

What do we mean when we say the Day of the Lord? First of all, it is not a single day.

*“The Day of the Lord is a technical expression in Scripture which is fraught with meaning. It includes the millennial kingdom which will come at the second coming of Christ, but Joel is going to make it very clear to us that it begins with the Great Tribulation Period, the time of great trouble. If you want to set a boundary or parenthesis at the end of the Day of the Lord, it would be the end of the Millennium when the Lord Jesus puts down all unrighteousness and establishes His eternal kingdom here upon the earth.*

*The Day of the Lord is also an expression that is peculiar to the prophets of the Old Testament. It does not include the period when the church is in the world, because none of the prophets spoke about a group of people who would be called out from among the Gentiles, the nation Israel, and all the tribes of the earth, to be brought into one great body called the church which would be raptured out of this world. The prophets neither spoke nor wrote about the church.” (McGee 1997, 657)*

As we study Joel, we will learn tons about this major Old Testament Doctrine of the Day of the Lord. The origins of this day can be found in Genesis. “One of the most meaningful statements ever written, and one of the most terrifying, is found in Genesis 6:3. There the Lord God declares, “My Spirit shall not always strive with man.” The Book of Joel, in my opinion, drives that fact home and hammers it out more forcefully than any of the other prophetic books.

The theme of this prophecy is “the Day of the Lord.” Joel speaks of “the Day of the Lord” five times in these three short chapters. Joel tells us that history is moving constantly to an appointed end called “the Day of the Lord” (1:15; 2:1, 11, 31; 3:14).” (Fortner 2007, 325-326)

Yes, “the day of the Lord is a major doctrine of the Old Testament and an extremely important teaching in all Scripture. It describes an unparalleled time when the Lord Himself will directly bring about defined judgments and desolations on the entire planet. Nothing and no one will be spared in all His creation including the heavens and the angelic world during the day of the Lord. The day of the Lord is so central that a thorough understanding is essential for any proper interpretation of eschatology. While Scripture clearly teaches the premillennial pretribulational rapture of the church, the terminology pretribulational rapture might be better phrased and more biblical using the term ‘pre-day-of-the-Lord rapture.’” (Olander 2008, 269)

We are living in the church age at this present moment. The church was founded with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost. Jesus warned of this.

Acts 1:6–8

“So when they had gathered together, they began to ask him, “Lord, is this the time when you are restoring the kingdom to Israel?” He told them, “You are not permitted to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the farthest parts of the earth.”” (NET 2nd ed.)

Acts 2 gives us the events that took place on the day the church was founded, a day that we will also touch on in our study in Joel. Jesus also said He would come back.

John 14:2–3

“There are many dwelling places in my Father’s house. Otherwise, I would have told you, because I am going away to make ready a place for you. And if I go and make ready a place for you, I will come again and take you to be with me, so that where I am you may be too.” (NET 2nd ed.)

There is a day coming, and very soon, that the church age will end. Jesus will come back, as He promised, to take us to be with Him. That is what John 14 is telling us.

Paul also talks about this upcoming event.

1 Thessalonians 4:13–18

“But we do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve as others do who have no hope. For since we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so, through Jesus, God will bring with him those who have fallen asleep. For this we declare to you by a word from the Lord, that we who are alive, who are left until the coming of the Lord, will not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive, who are left, will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we will always be with the Lord. Therefore encourage one another with these words.” (ESV)

This event we are looking forward to is called “the caught up together,” or in the Greek the harpazo (raptura - Latin) of the Church.

We tend to simply call this the rapture of the church, also referenced in Revelation 4:1 when John is told to “come up here.”

This event must take place before the Day of the Lord can begin. Why?

We must take note of this teaching from the scriptures, “it is critical to understand that the day of the Lord cannot possibly begin until the church has been removed from the earth. Paul consistently taught the rapture of the church must take place first, and only then can the day of the Lord begin.” (Olander 2008, 271)

1 Thessalonians 5:9

“For God has not destined us for wrath, but to obtain salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ,” (ESV)

Are there any signs or prophecies that need to happen before Jesus can come and “snatch” the church away to be with Him? No. The rapture is imminent, Paul believed it could happen in his lifetime.

The only difference between then and now is the massive convergence of other fulfilled prophecies related to what Jesus said would be characteristic of the end of the age (Matthew 24) as well as other prophecies regarding Israel.

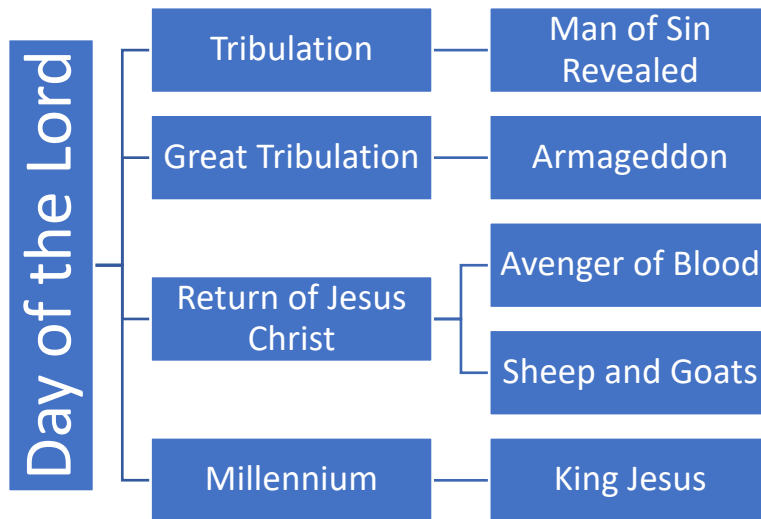
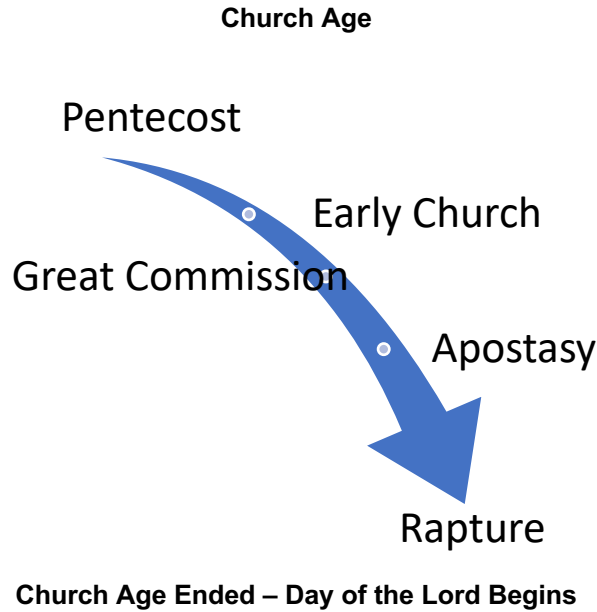
The term imminent means “ready to take place” or “impending.” The New Testament teaches that the rapture is imminent—that is, there is nothing that must be prophetically fulfilled before the rapture occurs. It could happen at any moment. (Rhodes 2022, 43)

We are currently waiting for His return for us and in the interim, being busy about the mission He has given us. Already, but not yet.

1 Thessalonians 1:8–10

“For from you the message of the Lord has echoed forth not just in Macedonia and Achaia, but in every place reports of your faith in God have spread, so that we do not need to say anything. For people everywhere report how you welcomed us and how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead, Jesus our deliverer from the coming wrath.” (NET 2nd ed.)

Once the rapture of the church has taken place, then all who are left on the earth will go into the Day of the Lord once the man of sin has been revealed (2 Thess 2:1-12).



As we study Joel, we will see that Joel develops this whole idea of the Day of the Lord. He is the first prophet to do so. That is the theme of this book. This book is, at times, referred as also being apocalyptic. In other words, what he says brings to mind what John says in Revelation. The message is not only for his generation, but all future ones as well.

What else do we know about the Prophet Joel? Again, all we have specific to him is in verse 1 and there are some internal references that we will rely on to help us determine the when as to the writing of this book.

Other prophetic books have editorial headings which specify to a greater or lesser degree the period of a prophet's ministry, but the heading to Joel is silent in this respect. Nor is the prophet Joel mentioned in the OT outside his book. (Allen 1976, 19)

Joel simply identifies who he is and then goes right into the message. It is not about him; it is about YAHWEH and His plan for His people.

Joel was a popular name in Israel. If you search through the Old Testament, you find there are 14 men named who have the name of Joel, this is one of the 14. There is no other reference to him in the scriptures by name, but it does appear he was quoted by others.

Amos appears to be using selections from Joel, as 1:2 draws on Joel 3:1 and 9:13 alludes to Joel 3:18. (Rosscup 2008, 1313)

Isaiah also appears to quote Joel in Isaiah 13:6 quoting Joel 1:5. Because he is quoted by others, and because there are no references to any King, this makes dating this book daunting.

When was this book written?

I hold to an early dating for the book of Joel, not a late dating which some scholars have opted for. "It is the opinion of most conservatives that Amos and Isaiah borrowed from Joel, making him one of the very earliest of the minor prophets." Not the other way around. (Hayford 1997, Joel 1:1)

There is no mention in the book of Assyria or Babylon. The enemies that are mentioned though are Tyre, Sidon and the Philistines (Joel 3:4). The message is to the Southern Kingdom of Judah and to Jerusalem.

We understand who Joel is writing to from Joel 3:1.

Back to when the book was written. The dating of this book is based on internal references and inferences that we see in it.

No King is referenced in the book yet there is a clear understanding that the Temple is in operation and Priests are busy doing service in it. There was a short period of time in Judah when there was no King, but Temple operations continued as if there were. We are talking about the time of Athaliah.

2 Kings 11:1–3

"Now when Athaliah, Ahaziah's mother, saw that her son was dead, she set about to destroy all the royal family. But Jehosheba, King Joram's daughter, Ahaziah's sister, took Joash son of Ahaziah, and stole him away from among the king's children who were about to be killed; she put him and his nurse in a bedroom. Thus she hid him from Athaliah, so that he was not killed; he remained with her six years, hidden in the house of the LORD, while Athaliah reigned over the land." (NRSV)

This was Satan's attempt to cut off the line of David and prevent the Messiah from coming. Joel appears to be written at the end of this time.

This would coincide with the time Queen Athaliah had the royal seed of Judah murdered. After the death of King Ahaziah, Queen Athaliah had all her grandchildren put to death, but the baby Joash was spared (the only surviving royal seed). He was hidden by his aunt Jehosheba and Jehoiada, the high priest, in the Temple complex. Seven years later Joash was crowned king of Judah (2 Ki. 11:12), and Queen

Athaliah was slain by her own people (2 Ki. 11:16). The book could have been written just prior to Joash's coronation in 835 B.C. (Levy 1987)

2 Kings 11:12–16

“Then he brought out the king's son, put the crown on him, and gave him the covenant; they proclaimed him king, and anointed him; they clapped their hands and shouted, “Long live the king!” When Athaliah heard the noise of the guard and of the people, she went into the house of the LORD to the people; when she looked, there was the king standing by the pillar, according to custom, with the captains and the trumpeters beside the king, and all the people of the land rejoicing and blowing trumpets. Athaliah tore her clothes and cried, “Treason! Treason!” Then the priest Jehoiada commanded the captains who were set over the army, “Bring her out between the ranks, and kill with the sword anyone who follows her.” For the priest said, “Let her not be killed in the house of the LORD.” So they laid hands on her; she went through the horses' entrance to the king's house, and there she was put to death.” (NRSV)

These events took place in 835 BC.

We neither meet with any allusion to the sins which Hosea and Amos condemn on the part of Judah, and which brought about the Assyrian judgment; nor is idolatry, as it prevailed under Joram, Ahaziah, and Athaliah, ever mentioned at all; but, on the contrary, the Jehovah-worship, which Jehoiada the high priest restored when Joash ascended the throne (2 Kings 11:17ff.; 2 Chron. 23:16ff.), is presupposed with all its well-regulated and priestly ceremonial. These circumstances speak very decidedly in favour of the conclusion that the first thirty years of the reign of Joash, during which the king had Jehoiada the high priest for his adviser, are to be regarded as the period of Joel's ministry. (Keil and Delitzsch 1996, 111-112)

There are two distinct sections to this book. The first is reaction to a natural disaster that has just taken place.

We will see that God chose to speak to His people through what we would consider a natural disaster. The message is “The word of the LORD that came to Joel, the son of Pethuel:” (Joel 1:1, NASB 2020) God spoke to the people of Joel's time and Joel's nation, and God spoke effectively: the people responded to the prophet's message—that much is clear within the text itself as it proceeds. (Prior 1988, 19)

Joel had the typical Jewish view of the reality of the unseen realm and very real operation of the supernatural in day-to-day life. He sees the hand of God in all that is going on in Judah. Do we see God's hand in all that is going on in our nation and culture today?

He will bluntly say God sent the locusts. “If we find it hard to accept Joel's explanation of his particular set of circumstances, what is the alternative? Put bluntly: if God did not send the locusts, who did?” (Prior 1988, 20)

That discussion then takes us into the unseen realm and our modern culture rebels at that thought. “The believing church is bending under the weight of its own rationalism, a modern worldview that would be foreign to the biblical writers. Traditional Christian teaching has for centuries kept the unseen world at arm's length. We believe in the Godhead because there's no point to Christianity without it. The rest of the unseen world is handled with a whisper or a chuckle.” (Heiser 2015, 17)

We are living in the age of grace. Because of that fact, we tend to believe, as believers in the 21st century, that God currently is “winking” at evil and the wickedness taking place all around us. And the unseen realm...are you kidding me? Joel had a very different view.

We will talk more in depth about what Habakkuk's issues were with his culture when we get there, but his statement holds for today.

This sounds like many believers today lamenting the culture we find around us.

#### Habakkuk 1:2–4

“O LORD, how long must I call for help before you listen, before you save us from violence? Why do you make me see such trouble? How can you endure to look on such wrongdoing? Destruction and violence are all round me, and there is fighting and quarrelling everywhere. The law is weak and useless, and justice is never done. Evil people get the better of the righteous, and so justice is perverted.” (GNB)

Here is the thing, we forget that Jude is still in the Bible and to top it off, part of the New Testament no less.

Jude is a short book, much shorter than Joel with a message that “is alien to many in today’s world because Jude emphasized that the Lord will judge evil intruders who are attempting to corrupt the church. The message of judgment strikes many people today as intolerant, unloving, and contrary to the message of love proclaimed elsewhere in the NT...The message of judgment is especially relevant to people today. Jude’s letter reminds us that errant teaching and promiscuous living have dire consequences. (Spurgeon 2017, 1690)

The bottom line, yes, Joel is applicable today as the Lord has not stopped using natural disasters to get the attention of those who love Him but are not as serious as they should be about their faith, in order to have them repent and return as well as a means of reaching the lost. Why isn’t He dropping the hammer on wickedness today just as He did with Israel? Again, we live in the age of grace. Jesus died on the cross and rose again to save those who would listen to His message and come to Him in faith.

Not all natural disasters by the way are from God. We live in a fallen world which is reeling from the consequences even today of the events in Genesis 3.

#### Romans 8:19–22

“For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God. For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to corruption and obtain the freedom of the glory of the children of God. For we know that the whole creation has been groaning together in the pains of childbirth until now.” (ESV)

Many factors are at work in the scope of a disaster, but one of them is surely the work of God drawing our attention to Himself. In truth, we are surrounded by unrecognized tragedies and disasters: a dark, sex-obsessed, violent culture; the rapid decline of morality; the deterioration of Christian influence in our world. How many more are victims to these man-made poisons than to the forces of wind and weather? Sometimes it requires the dramatic power of a hurricane or some other force in nature to capture our attention and turn our minds to matters of eternity. (Jeremiah 2013, 23)

#### 2 Peter 3:8–9

“But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.” (ESV)

The goal is repentance. God, through the Holy Spirit, is calling out those who would hear Him today and follow Him basing their faith on the accomplished work of Jesus Christ. Yes, disaster will do that. Yes, living in a corrupted world will do that. Yes, living in our culture will do that.

Anytime something bad happens, like a natural disaster, “it raises all sorts of theological questions. Joel addresses these and asks some of his own. This bundle of questions is timeless and relevant to people of any country at any time in the face of any such disaster, ‘natural’ or brought about by human cruelty or folly. They include such questions as: Why is this happening to us? What has caused it? What is God doing about it? What is God saying to us? Is there anything we can do to stop it now and prevent it happening again?” (Prior 1988, 19)



We will discover in Joel that the Lord used a natural disaster to bring His people back to Himself. But as we take a step back and look at the overall structure of the book, we learn that there are two discussions taking place.

Joel had the courage to talk of God's direct and personal involvement in current affairs and to assert that he and he alone had the answers to the national crisis: that would have been as contrary to contemporary worldviews and received wisdom as it would be today. (Prior 1988, 20)

### Outline

1. The current invasion of locusts is a type of the Day of the Lord – Joel 1
2. There is another invasion coming, actually there will be two – Joel 2:1 – 11
3. Judgement can be mitigated by repentance and prayer – Joel 2:12 – 17
4. There is a future coming day of global judgement when YAHWEH will show up and intervene – Joel 2:18 – 27
5. As He does, He begins by pouring out His Holy Spirit – Joel 2:28 – 29
6. Final global fulfillment is coming with signs – Joel 2:30 – 32.
7. Payback is coming to the nations who oppressed His people in the Great Tribulation – Joel 3:1 – 17.
8. The Millennial Kingdom – Joel 3:18 – 21.

Joel 1:1–4

“The word of the LORD that came to Joel, the son of Pethuel: Hear this, you elders, And listen, all inhabitants of the land. Has anything like this happened in your days, Or in your fathers’ days? Tell your sons about it, And have your sons tell their sons, And their sons the next generation. What the gnawing locust has left, the swarming locust has eaten; And what the swarming locust has left, the creeping locust has eaten; And what the creeping locust has left, the stripping locust has eaten.” (NASB 2020)

As we begin, Joel makes crystal clear the source of what he is communicating.

We are going to discover that Judah will listen to what Joel has to say and they will repent. “He is the prophet of the great repentance, of the Pentecostal gift, and of the final conflict of great principles.” (Exell n.d., 1)

Ultimately, he is a successful prophet. Judah will repent and become reunited with the Lord. But he also speaks about the future and another time when YAHWEH's people will again repent and return.

Here in verse 1, we see that Joel's name and the name of his father are part of this message being given to us.

Joel - LORD of God; the LORD is God; Jehovah is might; Jehovah is God. (Smith and Cornwall 1998, 147)

Pethuel - Ingenuousness of God; i.e., great simplicity of mind; God delivers; the noble-mindedness of God; (root = to be open; to be ingenuous; to persuade; to deceive). God's opening. Persuaded by God. (Smith and Cornwall 1998, 194)

Or with our understanding of the name meanings in the text, we would read it as “the word of the Lord that came, YAHWEH is God, the son of God delivers.”

About the word of the Lord, what or who is that? In the Old Testament we see the phrase “the Word of the Lord came to” over and over. We tend to skim over that, but it might just be an encounter with the pre-incarnate Christ. John nails it for us.



John 1:1–4

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him not even one thing came into being that has come into being. In Him was life, and the life was the Light of mankind.” (NASB 2020)

Before it was anything else, the Word was an invisible, eternal Person, co-existent, and co-equal in the Trinity He eternally existed before the beginning. The Word has never been less than such a Person! (Taylor 1993, 33)

When Joel says the word of the Lord came to him, does that mean the preincarnate Christ? Does it mean the very words of God spoken to him to communicate to others? Yes, to both.

For Joel, the word of God is the spoken word of God, it is a person, it is the written word of God, and it is the means used by God to hold the entire universe together (Hebrews 1:1-3).

This is who came to the prophet and also how the prophet heard what it was he was commissioned to communicate.

To be clear, “this Word of God is the means of our birth in the Spirit and the power that resides in us in the Person of Jesus, the Word. It is in Him, yet it is not He. It is an extension of the dynamic that spoke the worlds into being, yet it is distinctly ours today.

It is in accord with the written Word of God, the Bible, yet is distinct from the Bible as a document (distinct from but included). It may be a quote from the written Word, but it is alive by the Spirit and is more than reading or quoting from a document. The Bible is a record of God’s speaking voice. This powerful entity, the present-tense Word of God, is a repeating of God’s speaking voice. It is the believer saying what he hears.” Just like Joel will do. (Taylor 1993, 41-42)

Joel 1:2

“Hear this, you elders, And listen, all inhabitants of the land. Has anything like this happened in your days, Or in your fathers’ days?” (NASB 2020)

The message begins with the command for the elders, the civil leadership, to hear what is going to be said; implying understanding and obedience to that as well, and for all the people living in the land to listen; also, in the imperative. This message is for everyone, but the leadership is tasked to hear, to understand the content and what it all means.

He begins with a rhetorical question. The question is to be answered with a firm “No.” The event which has taken place is unprecedented. The event is so unique, that it is required to be remembered and told to future generations. It is a historical event. Unprecedented in history.

Joel 1:3

“Tell your sons about it, And have your sons tell their sons, And their sons the next generation.” (NASB 2020)

This is not a message to be limited solely to the time of Joel, but this is a message for today as well.

Something unprecedented has happened, something beyond the experience of the people’s lifetime or of their ancestors (v. 2). This is so important that Joel instructs them to tell of it to subsequent generations. In fact, he mentions four generations specifically, although he surely intends the progression to indicate a telling of this event for all ongoing generations of the community (v. 3). (Birch 1997, 133)

This stresses the importance of telling others.

This stresses the importance of multigenerational communication of historic facts that impact on our faith in the Lord.

It is this generations responsibility to tell the next generation.

This was important then and is still important today.

We are one generation away from faith in Christ disappearing. That is not a new statement. For the people of Judah, they were one generation away from ceasing to be faithful to YAHWEH and turning to idolatry. In their culture, there was an emphasis on the spoken word as a means to communicate the history of the nation and the faith of the people. This was not passed off to some group, it was the responsibility of the current generation to tell the future generations and on and on. This fell on the parents and grandparents.

Moses made a point of this.

Deuteronomy 4:9–11

“Only guard yourselves carefully so you won’t forget the things that you saw and let them slip from your mind for the rest of your life. Tell them to your children and to your grandchildren. The day you stood in the presence of the LORD your God in Horeb, the Lord told me, ‘Gather the people before me so they may hear my words, learn to revere me the whole time that they live in the land, and teach them to their children.’” “When you approached and stood at the foot of the mountain—a mountain that was blazing with fire at its core while the sky was covered with thick, dark clouds—” (ISV)

This is a duty that can not be delegated to someone else, it is a responsibility for each parent. The only way they and we could be absolutely certain that the next generation would be one of faith was if they and we took the time to tell the next generation what the Lord had done for us.

As 21st century believers, we have the same duty as the parents of Joel’s Judah. Today though, many have delegated this to the state believing that public schools can do an adequate job. And spiritual training is left to the church, believing that in 1 or 2 hours a week, the job can be done.

### From Recent Research

*Contemporary American Christianity is characterized by Syncretism—the worldview that merges otherwise incompatible philosophies of life into a made-to-order worldview that incorporates enough biblical elements to be minimally Christian in nature. The American Church has lowered the entry bar so much that it is difficult to identify any beliefs that disqualify one from claiming to be Christian. The parents of children under the age of 13 are a stellar example of this Christian nominalism that is widely accepted as spiritually normal and healthy.*

*One hallmark of contemporary Christianity is heresy, for that is essentially what the prevailing worldview in America—Syncretism—represents. The blending of elements from numerous, unbiblical worldviews along with a few biblical views is now embraced as the popular, accepted expression of Christian faith. (Barna 2022)*

How bad is it, Dr Barna continues to reflect how serious the need for revival is as he outlines the results seen with 67% of parents of preteens who say they are Christians.

1. *One of the foundational views of Christians is belief in the God of the Bible. However, only half of all parents of preteens believe in that God—an all-knowing, all-powerful, perfect, and just creator of the universe who still rules that world today.*
2. *Another inarguable factor in being Christian is accepting the Bible as the true and trustworthy words of God, yet just one-half of the self-described Christian parents do so.*

3. *A fundamental distinctive of the Christian faith is reliance upon Jesus Christ alone as our means to eternal salvation. Only one out of every three parents of preteens, however, believe their eternal destiny is dependent upon Jesus Christ.*
4. *Fewer than one in five parents believes that success is best defined as consistently obeying God's laws and commands.*
5. *Merely one out of every three parents of preteens relies upon the Bible as their primary source of moral guidance.*
6. *Three-quarters of these parents dismiss the existence of God's change agent, the Holy Spirit.*
7. *A shockingly small minority of self-identified Christians who are raising children under 13—only 31%—believes that life is sacred.*
8. *A small portion (24%) refuses to embrace the idea that absolute moral truth does not exist, that moral truth is completely personal and circumstantial. (Barna 2022)*

And we wonder why the next generation is one of unbelief.

We are accountable to the Lord for how we raise our kids and grandkids. We reflect Jesus to them. Joel is aware of what the Proverbs teach and the responsibility on each parent.

Proverbs 22:6

“Train a child in the way that he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.” (NET 2nd ed.)

To be sure dedication entails continual training, but the almost ubiquitous translation “train up” misses the lexeme’s emphasis on inauguration and possibly consecration. In the Book of Proverbs, Israel’s moral primer (see Proverbs 1:2–6), this initiative refers to religious and moral direction, not professional activity. (Waltke 2005, 204)

My Grandpa Ike did that for me.

When I was young, my parents did not know the Lord, but Grandpa Ike did, and whenever I was at his house, I heard God’s word on the radio, I heard His word read at the breakfast table and I heard Him being talked to on a regular basis. I could hear when my Grandpa sang at church, how much he loved the Lord. He was rather loud.

I did not understand this at the time, but I do now, I was having modeled for me a life of faith. What it looked like to be a believer. He was modeling Proverbs 22:6 for me.

In most churches here in the US, those who are Youth Pastors are usually those who are new to ministry and have just left school. It is rare to find Youth Pastors who have been doing that ministry for a longtime. Our culture has turned it into an apprenticeship position.

I was privileged to serve at a church where the youth pastor had been there for 20 plus years. It was his calling. You could tell with the high percentage of graduates who were in the mission field and in ministry elsewhere.

According to Dr. George Barna’s latest research, there is also another issue. Worldview.

### Percentage of Christian Pastors with a Biblical Worldview

Pastoral Position	Percent with a Biblical Worldview
All Christian Pastors	37%
Senior/ Lead Pastor	41%
Associate/Assistant Pastor	28%
Teaching Pastor	13%
Children's/Youth Pastor	12%
Executive Pastor	4%

(Barna, American Worldview Inventory 2022, Release #5: Shocking Results Concerning the Worldview of Christian Pastors 2022)

### Screen Time and Attention

The American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry had this to say in 2020. "Children and adolescents spend a lot of time watching screens, including smartphones, tablets, gaming consoles, TVs, and computers. On average, children ages 8-12 in the United States spend 4-6 hours a day watching or using screens, and teens spend up to 9 hours. While screens can entertain, teach, and keep children occupied, too much use may lead to problems." (American Academy of Child & Adolescent Psychiatry 2020)

If we think the church, in just an hour or two each week, can turn our kids into spiritual giants, we are seriously misleading ourselves. Being conservative, at 4 hours a day of screen time, that is 28 hours per week, or 1,456 hours per year.

Not all churches have youth programs that teach the word. We do so here, but not all do. Again, the issue is attention, what is grabbing it?

Based on our culture today, we are living in exile in Babylon, just like Judah was. Our Babylon is more digital than analog. Answers are available at a query.

In digital Babylon, on the other hand, the Bible is one of many voices that interpret human experience; it is no longer viewed as the central authority over people and society. Today, if someone unironically drops "the Bible says" in a media interview, they sound as if they have just disembarked from a time machine. (Kinnaman, Matlock and Hawkins 2019, 21)

In order to engage our culture, we must also engage in the forum that our children and young adults are being attracted to.

There are numerous ministries, such as this one, The UnSafe Bible, that are oriented to providing training and ending Biblical illiteracy. But the problem is providing a winsome picture to the young in as an attractive manner online as is being fed to them by those who would take them captive.

Then the problem is being high enough up on the algorithm pecking order that the ministry is an option being presented in a query. Add to that the overall attention span of many today, and if you are unable to get your message across in 25 minutes or less, you may be ignored.

Joel though does not tell Judah to be the best at marketing in order to tell the next generation nor did he advocate using the latest tools to improve search functionality and improved hits. He simply said to tell implying that we are faithful to what it is He has called us to do.

Jeremiah is a great example for us. God was pleased with Jeremiah, because he was faithful to what it was he was tasked to tell Judah prior to going into captivity in Babylon.

The God who calls is the God who provides. God gave Jeremiah all the gifts and strength he needed to face the opposition of his culture, and our heavenly Father does the same for us. Young or old, married, single, or widowed, God has equipped us to live for Him in this hour. As we shall see, we are to live without fear and with joy at the privilege of representing Christ even at great personal cost. (Lutzer 2018, 41)

Jeremiah 1:19

“They will attack you but they will not be able to overcome you, for I will be with you to rescue you,” says the LORD.” (NET 2nd ed.)

Joel will see his people repent and return to the Lord, he was successful, but so was Jeremiah because he was faithful.

We too need to simply be faithful and about the business that we have been called to be doing. To be impacting those around us positively for the kingdom by showing them Jesus everyday as we do life.

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