

Locusts! Locusts Everywhere, and Not a Drop to Drink

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[0 : 00] Now we come to our Bible reading, and today we're going to be reading from Joel chapter one, one of the minor prophets in the Old Testament. And David Ely will be preaching to us this Sunday and next from Joel.

David ministers to our Farsi congregation, but we've got him on loan for a couple of Sundays, which is a real joy for us. And I believe he's going to be preaching in English rather than Farsi. So we'll understand.

Ideal. So Joel chapter one, and let's read the whole chapter together. The word of the Lord that came to Joel, the son of Pethuel.

Hear this, you elders. Give ear all inhabitants of the land. Has such a thing happened in your days or in the days of your fathers? Tell your children of it and let your children tell their children and their children to another generation.

What the cutting locust left, the swarming locust has eaten. What the swarming locust left, the hopping locust has eaten.

[1 : 05] And what the hopping locust left, the destroying locust has eaten. Awake, you drunkards, and weep and wail, all you drinkers of wine, because of the sweet wine, for it is cut off from your mouth.

For a nation has come up against my land, powerful and beyond number. Its teeth are lion's teeth, and it has the fangs of a lioness. It has laid waste my vine and splintered my fig tree.

It has stripped off their bark and thrown it down. Their branches are made white. Lament like a virgin wearing sackcloth for the bridegroom of her youth.

The grain offering and the drink offering are cut off from the house of the Lord. The priests mourn the ministers of the Lord. The fields are destroyed.

The ground mourns because the grain is destroyed. The wine dries up. The oil languishes. Be ashamed, O tillers of the soil.

[2 : 11] Wail, O vinedressers, for the wheat and the barley. Because the harvest of the field has perished. The vine dries up.

The fig tree languishes. Pomegranate, palm, and apple. All the trees of the field are dried up. And gladness dries up from the children of man.

Put on sackcloth and lament, O priests. Wail, O ministers of the altar. Go in. Pass the night in sackcloth, O ministers of my God. Because grain offering and drink offering are withheld from the house of your God.

Consecrate a fast. Call a solemn assembly. Gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land to the house of the Lord your God. And cry out to the Lord.

Alas for the day. For the day of the Lord is near. And as destruction from the Almighty, it comes. Is not the food cut off before our eyes?

- [3 : 17] Joy and gladness from the house of our God? The seed shrivels under the clods. The storehouses are desolate. The granaries are torn apart because the grain has dried up.
- How the beasts groan. The herds of cattle are perplexed because there's no pasture for them. Even the flocks of sheep suffer. To you, O Lord, I call.
- For fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness. And flame has burned all the trees of the field. Even the beasts of the field pant for you.
- Because the water brooks are dried up. And fire has devoured the pastures of the wilderness. Amen. The grass withers and the flower fades.
- But the word of the Lord endures forever. Well, good morning. It's really good to be with you all again today.
- [4 : 21] Let's return to this passage from the book of Joel. Chapter 1. Hear this, you elders. Give ear all inhabitants of the land.
- What has such a thing happened in your days? Or in the days of your fathers? Tell your children of it. And let your children tell their children.
- And their children. To another generation. I'm sure many of us have quite a collection of books for Christian children at home.
- If you don't now, you will have done when you were a child. Children's Bibles, allegories, etc. Well, I doubt that many of us have ever had a book, a message for the children of the people of God.
- Like the book of Joel. And yet that is what it is. A message for every generation of God's people. What did the first children of Israel hear?
- [5 : 28] What filled the children's section of the book room in the days of Moses? Well, they heard about the mighty salvation of God. How he had gone to Egypt. How he had gone to war against Pharaoh.
- And against Pharaoh's gods. And led them out victorious. They learned how their parents had been spared. Death. Execution. How the hand of the angel of death passed over them through the blood of a spotless lamb.
- That was the message for the first generation of the children of Israel. God is mighty. He has saved you. And that was a message of joy. Of challenge. Of comfort.
- And of hope. This prophecy of Joel is like that. Another message for the generations of the children of Israel.
- Like the story of Exodus. And yet. Unlike it. This is a message. For all Christians to know.
- [6 : 29] And yet some of what it says. Will be unfamiliar to us. How many of us have heard the message of the book of Joel? And if it is unfamiliar to us.
- It will be unfamiliar to our children. To those we seek to teach the word of God. This is the opening salvo. This is where Joel starts.
- He says. God judges. And his judgment sometimes begins. With those who bear his name. Have any of us.
- Ever found a children's book. For the people of God like that. I doubt it. This morning we're going to look at this first passage of the book of Joel in two parts.
- Firstly. What might it look like. If God moved in judgment. And secondly. If things look like that. Then what is the first step.
- [7 : 29] That we need to take. Now before we go any further. Just a few words generally. About this book of Joel. One of the minor prophets.

That's minor in length. Not minor in importance. Much ink has been spilled. About when this book was written. Often when trying to understand Old Testament prophecies like this.

That kind of information is. Is very. Very helpful. It gives usually an insight into what has gone wrong. Amongst the people of God. Insight about what particular sins were.

Wrapping their tendrils around the legs of the children of Israel. As they sought to walk with God. These are very useful questions to ask. But with Joel. We simply don't have.

Any of that. It is remarkably silent. About the time it was written. About what was happening. Amongst the people of God. We have no way to know conclusively. The prophecy does seem to be addressed to the people of Judah.

[8 : 29] That's those with the temple. Those who have the king of David's line. Those who have the city of Jerusalem. In their midst. In other words.

It seems to be addressed to those who have everything. That ought to make them. The faithful. The worshipping. The flourishing people of God. On earth.

That is who it is addressed to. Those who have all the privilege. Who have it all. And yet. Despite that. Judah has just faced. A catastrophic.

Disaster. Locusts. Locusts. Everywhere. So that leads us neatly. On to the first. Of our two points this morning.

What might it look like. If God moved. In judgment. I'm going to focus on just a couple of things. Here. Firstly. When God moved against Judah.

[9 : 22] In Joel's day. Bad things happened. Unprecedented things happened. The beginning of Joel here. Is concerned with one particular. Catastrophe.

It's concerned with a swarm of locusts. That had swept. Over the land. I'm sure that you. You all know. What a locust is. It's a sort of large.

Grasshopper. About that big. We know what they are. We know they're bad news. We occasionally hear of them. In the news. But I doubt that many of us. Really get. What a catastrophe.

This is. There aren't many days. In our lives. As modern people. In the West. Where insects. Threaten our livelihood. Let alone. Our lives. I think the closest.

We get to that particular peril. Is probably too many caterpillars. In the salad leaves. We just don't get it. But locusts. Are seriously bad news. At their largest.

[10 : 18] A swarm. Of desert locusts. Can cover about. 460 square miles. And for a bit of context. Glasgow City. Is about. 68 square miles.

And there can be. 80. To 160. Million. Locusts. Per square mile. So at the lower end. Of that estimate. That's about. 34.4.

Billion. Locusts. And each one of those. Will eat their own. Body weight. Of vegetation. A day. And for those of us. Who struggle to think.

Of large numbers. And how much that might be. And who. Think in the. Sort of frame of reference. Of sugary treats. That's about the equivalent. Of 6.9 billion. Jelly beans. Being eaten a day. By a large swarm.

Of desert locusts. If you rely. On your field. Of wheat. On your field. Of olive trees. Your vineyard. And a locust swarm.

[11 : 13] Rolls in from the desert. Well good luck. Your trees. Will be stripped bare. Very quickly. And as we read.

Through this passage. That's exactly. The scene. That is described to us. Look at verse 4. What the cutting locust left. The swarming locust. Has eaten.

What the swarming locust left. The hopping locust. Has eaten. What the hopping locust left. The destroying locust. Has eaten. The point. Being here.

That there is nothing left. Everything has been eaten. By locusts. Of one kind. Or another. And verse 6. These locusts.

Are described. Like a. Like a powerful army. Beyond number. With teeth. Like lions teeth. Devouring. As they go. The trees.

[12 : 09] In the land. Are splintered. Perhaps just. Under the sheer weight. Of the number of locusts. Roosting. In their branches. And the bark of the trees. Is stripped.

Even the tough. Outer layer of the trees. Does not escape. And so the branches. Are left white. Bleached. And it looks like the land. Is littered with bones.

Verse 10. The fields are destroyed. The ground itself. Mourns. Verse 11. The harvest.

Of the field. Has perished. Verse 12. The fig tree. Languishes. The pomegranate. The palm. The apple.

All dried up. And on. And on. Through the passage. This is. Complete devastation. Ask yourself this question.

[13 : 06] When you see the people around us. When do they most feel the pull. To cry out. To the Lord. Ask it yourself. As well.

When do you feel the greatest need. The greatest automatic. Desire. To cry out. To God. To God. I imagine it's when. Awful stuff. Like this happens.

Awful stuff. On a large scale. Destruction. Calamity. And how do we expect. God to respond. When we call out to him. Especially as Christians.

Especially. As the people of God. We expect him to respond. With words of comfort. Immediately. Of peace. And we expect that. With good reason.

After all. God is our comforter. He is. Our father. He is. Our close friend. Or perhaps. Judah expected that as well. When they looked out.

[14 : 00] At their fields. When they looked out. At the bones of the trees. When they looked out. At the pathetic. Stumps of wheat. That are left. And the shriveled figs. On the trees. Perhaps they expected.

Comfort. Or if so. Joel's news. Will have hit them. Like a freight train. This is the news.

From God. By the mouth of Joel. Listen up. I see the devastation. I see the damage. And more terrifyingly.

For you Judah. I see your hearts. And so let it be known. That I am the one who sent it. This army of locusts. I was marching at its head.

And I was marching. Against you. Beware Judah. If you think that this was a natural. Event. A chance. Encounter. With millions of locusts.

[15 : 01] This was personal. And perhaps some of us. Are uncomfortable with that. With the idea. That the things that happen. Might have a source.

Other than the mere natural course of events. That there is a person. In charge of this universe. Or perhaps. We are fine. With reading about it. In the pages of the Old Testament.

But we're really uncomfortable. With any hint of the idea. That it might happen now. Why? Why are we so uncomfortable.

With that thought? Well one reason is. It is a very uncomfortable thought. And another reason. Is that we have been all trained. To think.

That the only respectable. Explanation. For any of the things. That we see around us. Is a natural one. That idea. Has filled our education.

[15 : 56] Filled our entertainment. We are fish. And this is the water. That fills. Our fish tank. Only natural explanations. Are allowed. Leave God out of it.

And so if a locust swarm. Comes today. How are we allowed. To explain it? Well we can talk about. The weather conditions. We can say. That there was a strong breeze. That blew the locusts in. From a certain direction.

We can talk about. Crop diversification. And its impact. On the natural life cycles. Of the desert locust. And how that's made everything worse. We can talk about. All of these things. And people do. And in many ways.

They're helpful. People chew up paper. Talking about this kind of thing. But the one thing. That we are not allowed to say. Is what Joel has said. Here. God sent it.

God did it. It is personal. And so for many of us. We've decided to move. Our Lord. Upstairs. And out of sight.

[16 : 52] We've decided to move. The Lordship of God. Inwards. Jesus is Lord. We say. But not of anything. We could possibly see. He's Lord. Of my heart.

Perhaps. Or he's Lord. Of the spiritual things. And so often. We operate. With a baseline assumption. That we live in a sort of. Clockwork universe. Something that has been.

Wound up. And set off. And now simply. Runs. By itself. Perhaps we believe. That God intervenes. That God acts. But the way he acts. Is sort of like.

Giving us. Inner. Invisible. Plasters. To stick over the cuts. When we get our fingers. Jammed in the mechanism. Of this clockwork universe. But that is not the way. That things are.

All things. Are in the hands. Of God. And sometimes. He wields them. Against particular. Groups of people. At particular times.

[17 : 49] For particular reasons. And this is not just. An Old Testament thing. There are plenty of examples. In the New Testament. Of the risen Lord Jesus. Who is on the throne.

Of the universe. Acting. Moving things around. On the stage. I just read. Read through. Again. The book of Acts. That we've been studying. Or think of.

The apostle Paul. Telling the Corinthian church. To sort out. Their approach. To the Lord's supper. Because they were. Messing around with it. And their messing around. Meant that Christ himself. Had sent illness.

And death amongst them. In Joel's day. The people of God. Needed to know. That this locust plague. Was not merely natural. It was personal.

And it was miserable. This is what it might look like. If God moved in judgment. This is closely linked. To the second symptom. Of judgment.

[18 : 46] In Joel's day. Which is this. All. Of the joy. Has dried up. Now to understand this properly.

We need to back up. We need to make sure. We understand. What life was supposed to be like. In Judah. What life was supposed to be like. In the land of God. What life is.

Meant to be like. If we love. And follow God. The picture. That the Bible gives us. Is a life. Of truth. Of joy. Of beauty. Of blessing. The God of the Bible.

Is no miser. He is not stingy. He doesn't keep his. Storehouse of gifts. Welded shut. And only give sparingly. Occasionally.

And so as we read the Bible. We see that he poured out. The promise of blessing. Upon blessing. Of good gifts. Of children. Of safety. Of abundance. Of glory. For his people.

[19 : 42] He promised. That the fields. The homes. The vineyards. Of Israel. Would bear fruit. Good fruit. That their labor. Would be blessed. And would never be.

A futile. Waste of time. That was God's promise. To Israel. When God took Israel. To be his own. This is what he said to them.

He said to them. Follow me. Choose life. So that you. And your children. May live. Abundance.

And joy. Beauty. And blessing. Truth. A life lived. In the presence of God. Abundance. And joy. Like that. Is often. Spoken about.

In the. Spoken about. In the Old Testament. Poetically. And a common image. For that. Is flowing things. Think of a land. Flowing with milk. And honey.

[20 : 37] Flowing wine. Mountains dripping. With sweet wine. Oil. And also. Fruiting trees. Things bursting. Into life. Branches.

That sag. Under the weight. Of the abundant. Fruit. Sweet fruit. Think of someone. Someone. Talks about. The blessed.

And happy man. The one who follows God. Who lives with God. As his king. And this is what he says. It says. He is like a tree. Planted by streams. Of water.

A tree that yields. Its fruit. In its season. The life. Lived with God. Was meant to be a life of joy. Of blessing by God.

And acting as both. The foundation. Of the blessing. And also the crown. Of joy. On top. Of all blessings. Was this. Worship.

[21 : 32] Whole hearted. Joyful praise. Of the living God. And so we see. In the Old Testament. The greatest. Flowing thing. Is a picture. Of flowing water.

Flowing. From the temple. That sits. In the heart. Of the land. Living water. Water. That brings life. To the people. Who live. Close to God. Life. Flourishing.

Blessing. Is down to one thing. That God is there. And that he is for his people. This is the Bible's picture. Of what life being ruled.

By God. Is like. Being one of God's people. Is about more than mere. Existence. Is about joy. Abundant joy. And so.

With all of that in mind. Skim your eyes over this passage. Again. Because all of that. Has dried up.

[22 : 30] Firstly. The necessities are gone. In verse 17. The seed shrivels. In the soil. The storehouses. Are empty.

The granaries. Have nothing in them. In fact. They're going to be torn down. They're useless. What's the point. In having a grain store. If there is no grain. The animals.

In the land. They're bewildered. They have no idea. Where all their food. Has gone. And they know. That something. Has gone wrong. But they have no idea. What. Whilst this passage.

Has those necessities. The bare necessities. Of life in view. It has more. Than that in view. Everything. That elevates. Human life. Everything that makes it.

More than mere survival. Has gone. Dried up. Verse five. The flowing wine. Has stopped flowing. Verse 10.

[23 : 27] Again. The wine. Dries up. The oil. Languishes. Verse 12. The pomegranate. The palm. The apple. The sweet fruitfulness.

Of enjoyment. All gone. Verse 11. Those who work the soil. Feel the shame. Of fruitlessness. They have poured their toil.

They've poured their labor. Into the ground. And it has brought forth nothing. Good work should bring forth dignity. And satisfaction. For their blood.

And their sweat. And their tears. Has been poured out. And has made nothing. It should have borne fruit. It hasn't. The fields are empty.

Those thousands of seeds. Scattered on the ground. In hope. Have come to nothing. It's all gone. Everything. That makes human life.

[24 : 25] More than mere existence. Has drained away. From Judah. And the crowning shame. Of it all. The sorrow. Of all sorrows. Is there.

In verse nine. The grain offering. The drink offering. Are cut off. What is the foundation. Of the good life.

Well it is. Worshipping the Lord. What is the crowning joy. Of the good life. It is. Worshipping the Lord. And that. Even that.

In Joel's day. Has drained away. And has seeped. Between the cracks. Of the desolate. And stony ground. There is nothing. To offer. There is no wine.

Or oil. To pour out. On the altar. There is no grain. To bring to God. In thankful joy. And so this. Stands there. As the foundational. Rot.

[25 : 20] The dust. That crowns. The brow. Of crumbling. Judah. If you want it. Said pithily. Look at verse 12. Gladness.

Dries up. From the children. Of man. The Lord. Is against his people. And so they're miserable. This is what it looks like.

When God moves. In judgment. Bad things happen. And joy. Seems to seep away. Through the cracks. Now.

I'm sure we all agree. It sounds like they had. An awful time. In the days. Of Joel. Perhaps we feel. Sympathy for them. But perhaps we're left thinking. What on earth has this.

To do with any of us. We're beginning to answer that question. Is a little bit like starting work. On an overgrown garden. There are thickets. Of assumptions. And half understood things.

[26 : 18] That we have in our minds. That we need to start. To clear away. Before this. Makes sense to us. Here in Glasgow. Today. Perhaps the densest.

Of those thickets. Is something like this. We often assume. That God doesn't judge. In history anymore. He will judge in the end. We might believe that.

But we believe that now. Jesus has come. Well he doesn't do anything. We'll read through the New Testament again. And you will see that he does. We've already mentioned.

Examples in Acts. In Corinthians. But also. Note some of the prophecies of Jesus. Against the temple. Against Jerusalem. In the Gospels. God still judges in history.

Through Jesus Christ. He still moves. In judgment. Against those named with his name. Remember Ananias and Sapphira. Remember we do not live.

[27 : 13] In a clockwork universe. Jesus Christ really is. Lord of it all. And one of the kingly things. That he does. Is the kingly act. Of judgment. Now it's about time.

For a hefty caveat. Those who truly. Trust in Christ. Are of course. Entirely protected. From the ultimate. Final judgment.

Of God. They have been washed clean. By the blood of Christ. Those who trust Christ. Are guarded by Christ. They will persevere. Until the final day. And when they come before.

The throne of God. They will be safe. Entirely safe. From the judgment of God. On that day. And they will have been. The whole time. There will be no hell for them.

That is certain. And sure. We believe this. We know this. And so when we look. From an ultimate perspective. The true believer. The true believer. Has nothing final to fear. But there are other perspectives.

[28 : 12] That we must look from. As we walk through this life. Day to day. For starters. What tools do we think. That God uses. To keep his faithful people.

Faithful. Well sometimes it's warnings. Of judgment like this. For the faithful. Warnings and judgments. Become discipline. Discipline that keep them.

On the path of righteousness. Until the end. And what about when we lift our eyes. From our own individual. Personal forgiveness. What about when we think.

In terms of history. Of larger scopes. Of the history of families. The history of congregations. Of churches within countries. Of nations themselves.

Now we know. That the church. Will never be pruned. To destruction. We have. That sure. Uncertain promise. But we must also know. That church congregations.

[29 : 08] Might be pruned out of it. That privileged nations. Might lose. Their privilege. That once faithful families. Might fade into apostasy. These things have happened.

They do happen. And the Bible tells us. To think in these terms. Of course. We must never. Ever apply this. Simplistically.

As if this is the only thing. That God has to say. About difficulty. About suffering. About judgment. History has been filled. With people who take things like this. And apply it simplistically. And that is foolish.

But we mustn't. Caveat. And qualify these things. So that they no longer exist. We mustn't. Caveat. Our way. Away from God's word.

Through Joel. The possibility. Of the judgment of God. Falling on all sorts of groups of people. Remains. And so. With that thicket. Cleared out of the way a little.

[30 : 06] What do these signs. Of judgment. In Joel's day. Have to do with us. Well this. Simply. When we see. The same things. We ought to at least.

Ask the question. A question. That has not been. On our lips much. In the last few generations. Is this. Merely natural.

Or could it be personal. When strange disasters. Come out of the blue. Do we ask ourselves. The question. Could this be.

The judgment of God. When things. That used to fill us. With joy. Leave a sour taste. In our mouths. Do we ask the question. Is this the judgment of God.

When everything. That makes life. More than mere existence. Drains away. Have we dared. To ask the question. Do we dare. Is this the judgment of God.

[31 : 05] And above all of these things. When the foundation. Of the good life. When it's crowning joy. Is taken away. When the worship. Of the living God. Is silenced. Have we even dared.

To answer the question. Ask the question. Then. Because we should. Has the Lord. Set his face. Against us. And that brings us.

To the second. The final point. This morning. This is a message. For the generations. Of God's people. And it is a message. With a purpose. So far.

This has been. Pretty grim. This part of book. This part of the book of Joel. Is pretty grim. There's no getting around that. All the gladness.

Has dried up. From the hearts of man. It would be strange. If we read this. And we're dancing. In our seats. But believe it or not. The final purpose.

[32 : 02] Of the book of Joel. Is not. To make people miserable. It isn't. To tell them. About their problems. And to leave them there. To just shrug.

And say. Well. Sorry. That's the way it is. By the end of this book. Judgment. Has transformed. Into astonishing.

Blessing. We've already thought. A little bit. About how life. With God. Was meant to be. Well. The blessings. Promised. By the end of the book of Joel.

Take that trajectory. And they send it. Straight out the atmosphere. Far beyond. The wildest imaginations. Of the people of God. The purpose of this message.

Is to bring God's people. To that blessing. And so that is precisely why. We have to start here. If you're seriously ill.

[32 : 59] You get no better. By ignoring the symptoms. If you struggle. To get out of bed. You don't need gentle music. You need the incessant. Beeping.

Of a hearty alarm clock. And it's the same here. Judah is seriously ill. And the purpose of this chapter. Is to get her to feel her symptoms.

Judah is stupefied. And she needs to wake up. As we read through this passage earlier. Perhaps you were struck with just how many commands.

There are in it. It loosely follows a cycle of command. Then explanation. Then another command. Then an explanation. Look at verse five. Awake you drunkards.

And weep. Now we've seen already in this passage. That wine is a good thing in the Bible. It is a symbol of joy. A symbol of abundance. Of gladness.

[33 : 59] Of celebration. And so the problem is not. That this symbolic drunkard. Has enjoyed wine per se. The problem is that he has taken the wine.

And he has fallen. Into a stupor. He's taken the good thing of God. And he's closed his eyes. And fallen asleep. He's enjoyed the fruit of the land.

He's taken the blessing. Of the land. And yet he's forgotten the Lord of the land. That is the problem. With this drunkard. And so he needs. To wake up.

Imagine one of those pictures. Of a stereotypical Roman feast. There's a man. A drunkard. Lounging. Reclining at table. Drunk. With a constant supply.

Of wine. Being poured into his mouth. Grapes being picked off by a servant. And put in there as well. Well someone has come along. And has. Whacked the cup out of his hand.

[34 : 56] And it's smashed. On the floor. Along with the jug of wine. And all of that wine. His joy. His celebration. Is draining away. That would rouse.

A drunkard. Removing the wine. Judah has enjoyed the wine. But God has taken it away. Has smashed it on the floor. All the things.

That Judah once enjoyed. The blessings. She took for granted. Are gone. And so maybe finally. Maybe now that catastrophe. Is here. She will stop being blind. To the Lord of the land.

She'll finally see. That her Lord. Is on the move. And that's the purpose. Of this judgment. And of this prophecy. Wake up. Stop pretending.

That everything is normal. That the status quo. Is still in force. That the things. You have taken for granted. Can still be taken for granted. Verse 8.

[35 : 51] Makes a similar point. Judah. People of God. Stop pretending. That everything is all right. It's not.

Lament. Lament. Like a virgin. Wearing sackcloth. This verse is a real horror. It drips. With tragedy.

The young woman. Who had her wedding. On the horizon. It was so close. The joy of celebration. The prospect of spending life. With the man she loves.

The prospect of a fruitful future. Of children. Of the abundant overflow. Of the blessing of God. But her bridegroom died.

Before the big day. And so now she has become. As barren. As the land around her. On the day when she should have been wearing.

[36 : 49] Her fine wedding dress. She's wearing sackcloths. In grief. Things are not okay Judah. Don't pretend that they are.

Wake up. These words are hard words to hear. But hard words are sometimes. Good words. And hard words.

Wielded. In the hands. Of the Lord of life. The Lord of love. The faithful. Husband. Of his people. Can bring about. Miraculous things.

And that is the point. Of these hard words. That something might actually happen. Not that the people of God. Would slumber on. Into oblivion. But that they would wake up.

That they would see. That their God is on the move again. And that everyone. Great. And small. Man and woman. Child. Family. Village.

[37 : 50] Nation. Would hold up their lives. Once again. To the standard of God's word. And respond. Respond. I will see next week.

That there is only one way to react. Only one way to blessing. Only one right way to respond. To the word of God. Repentance.

But before we listen. To the next passage. And repent. Before we're ready for that. We must hear. The alarm clock. Going off. And wake up.

And so that is where this passage. Leaves us. With the alarm. Ringing in our ears. Has sudden catastrophe come.

Have all the things. That make life. More than mere existence. Drained away. Has the worship of God. Dribbled faint. Faintly. Through the cracks. Well if so.

[38 : 48] Remember. We do not live. In a clockwork. Impersonal universe. And so if this is true. Let us hear. The incessant. Beep. That comes from the hand of God.

And let us. God's people. Those called by his name. Wake up. And at the very least. Let us dare to ask ourselves.

The question. The question. That could still. Bring healing. Could this be. The judgment of God. And do we need to turn to him again.

Let's pray together. Heavenly Father.

We thank you for these words. For these hard words. We thank you for this. And yet Lord. We know that you bring us these things. Because you love us. Because you care for us.

[39 : 54] Because you long for us. To be in close relationship with you. So Lord. If you are. Seeking to wake.

Your people up. In this country. In this city. Please. Please. Wake us up. May we hear.

May we respond. And so may we be led by you. To forgiveness. To mercy. And to overflowing blessing.

For eternity. To come. We ask all of this. In the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

Amen. Amen.