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## Has God Lost Control of Our World?

**Joel 2:2: (NASB) A day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and thick darkness. As the dawn is spread over the mountains, so there is a great and mighty people; there has never been anything like it, nor will there be again after it to the years of many generations.**



History does repeat itself. Sometimes in its repetition we can see the heartbreak of the transgressions of the past repeated in the present with an even deeper and more insidious result. Look around you and what do you see? Shootings, stabbings, bombings, race riots, gangs, rape, murder, genocide; Black lives matter, police lives matter, all lives matter but what does it matter? Politicians lie, people lie and so many lie unnecessarily in early graves. Save the whales, save the schools, save the planet, save the children, save them for what future? Muslims against Christians, Christians against other Christians, and seemingly the world against Judaism and the Atheists say, "I told you so." Women's rights, animal rights, civil rights, gun rights, LGBT rights - so many rights, but everything still seems so wrong. The world has become dangerous and angry. Their clamoring for peace is drowned out by the ever-increasing clamor of violence. Where is God? Does He hear? Does He know? Does He care? Has God completely lost control of our world?

God *does* hear, He *does* know and He *does* care! In fact, God cares enough to allow the entire human race to learn the lesson about right and wrong, and that lesson is powerful enough to have its effects last through all eternity!

The original sin in the Garden may seem trivial but it was in fact the WORST KIND of sin - *it was a willful disobedience (by Adam) of a direct command of God.* Genesis 3:4-7: Alternate thinking: You will NOT die. Enticing suggestions: Your eyes will be opened. Accessible pathway: You will be like God. Result: Freedom is violated! Freedom Message: We are no longer free when we violate the responsibilities of our freedom legacy by acting on those things presented to us by those out of harmony with godly principles. **For more on this, please see the program from July 3, 2016, "Is Freedom and Responsibility Still Important?"**

**Now, the inevitable downward path would not only follow, it would spread like a disease!** Genesis 6:5-6 Romans 3:23: (KJV) *For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;*

What we see as hopeless God sees as inevitably perfect - how do we get onto the same page as God?

**1st Step: PROVIDE a method to satisfy Justice - to buy back the sinner from his sin.**

**2nd Step: ALLOW the sin of disobedience to mature to its full and most destructive form.**

**3rd Step: GUIDE the inevitable self-destructive implosion of the sin of disobedience to its logical (though utterly frightening) and merciful conclusion.**

**4th Step: ESTABLISH eternal peace by eradicating sin, disobedience and all who fuel them for all of eternity.**

**1st Step: PROVIDE a method to satisfy Justice - to buy back the sinner from his sin.**

In the midst of handing down the consequences for man's disobedience and abuse of freedom, he saw fit to provide them protection *and hope* even as he banished them from their freedom: Genesis 3:21, 23 God unmistakably continues to plant hope for all in Abraham - a reward for obedience: Genesis 22:15-18: A broad and inclusive promise - How do God's promises work? Slowly, over time so they can deliver eternal results: *Jesus is the promised seed of Abraham* who came to be the fulfillment of those early promises and prophecies: Romans 5:18-19: God truly did have this under control right from the start!

**2nd Step: ALLOW the sin of disobedience to mature to its full and most destructive form.**

Genesis 6:5-6 Genesis 15:16 Daniel 8:23: While the plan of God takes time to develop, sin also takes time to develop. The lesson of sin has value and often develops in stages. What is the worth of sin? **Once mature, sin and disobedience will be recognized by their very nature for they only bring trouble:** Daniel 12:1 Jesus verifies this recognition of great trouble in his great prophecy of his return: Matthew 24:21-24

**3rd Step: GUIDE the inevitable self-destructive implosion of the sin of disobedience to its logical (though utterly frightening) and merciful conclusion.**

God has a "destruction of sin and disobedience guidance system." He guides the destruction of



sin and disobedience. He allows it to happen and guides its pathway. To understand how He does it, we need to understand some seriously symbolic prophetic language.

**The prophet Joel walks us through this:** Joel 1:2-3: This terrible prophecy of Joel is found nowhere else in Scripture. Joel uses a metaphor of the locust, which fits perfectly with what we see around us. He prophesied about “The Lord’s Great Army,” which as we will see, is not an army of God’s people but is instead made of different discontented groups. The Lord will use their hopes, fear and selfishness according to His divine wisdom to work out His strategy in the overthrow of the present establishments. This army is only capable of destroying this old order - it has nothing with which to replace it. Only the Lord can establish a new world order - His kingdom of righteousness - but in order to do so, the old and decaying structure must be removed. This is not a renovation of society; but instead is a complete rebuilding from the ground up. This army is used to destroy present society like a bulldozer.

Joel 1:4-5: *Gnawing, swarming, creeping and stripping locusts* - this suggests to us a destructive process.

**STAGE 1: GNAWING LOCUSTS** - literally a palmerworm that gnaws away vegetation but does not kill it. It does not completely strip away or kill vegetation; but rather, it gnaws away little by little. We see this representing the subtle weakening of that which is good in the sight of God - a challenge to the norm of society. In this destructive army, first come the locusts that weaken those things which are good.

**STAGE 2: SWARMING LOCUSTS** - the overwhelming power and force of changes that break down all that is good in the sight of God. Once things are weakened by the gnawing, the swarm can break them. Through the power of numbers, what was once unheard of now becomes the norm.

**STAGE 3: CREEPING LOCUSTS** - literally these are young locusts. In the wake of the shock of the swarm, the slow and steady destruction of all that is good in the sight of God by the new ways and demands swarmed upon the world. “The next generation” has accepted the changed ways and only knows what the swarm put in place.

**STAGE 4: STRIPPING LOCUSTS** - these are ravagers who totally consume all that was good in the sight of God. We are now left with nothing recognizable that pertains to a godly life.

**The complete destruction caused by locusts is a prophetic symbol - of what?** Joel 1:6-7: Locusts are symbolizing an invading and destructive people.

Joel 1:12: Trees in the Bible symbolically represent nations or countries, such as in Luke 21:29 with the parable of *the fig tree and all the trees* regarding the nation of Israel and other countries being created in the last days. Here in Joel, *all the trees have dried up*, meaning all nations are affected. This is a worldwide problem. We see how technology links all nations today.

**Here we see God’s “destruction of sin and disobedience guidance system” in action:**  
Joel 2:1

**Now another serious warning for great trouble coming - what does it look like?** Joel 2:2: *Darkness, clouds and mountains* - Darkness means the light is not present and thus produces gloom. Clouds are typical of trouble and mountains are governments. Notice here there is *thick darkness* - severe trouble. The stage is set - by God - for change!

Implementing God’s “destruction of sin and disobedience guidance system” involves two phases: 1<sup>st</sup> phase: We have the timing of the arrival of the time of trouble as was laid out in Joel 2:1-2. God knew how long it would take for sin to mature to its ugliest, most overwhelming state for it to have lasting lessons. 2<sup>nd</sup> phase: God needs the players - the *great and mighty people*.

Joel 2:2: **Who are they? His Army! They are the Lord’s Great Army!** Joel 2:11

**How are they pictured?** Joel 2:3: Locusts! Wait - how can it be that God’s Army is pictured by destructive insects?

**This is not the first time the Bible likens people to insects:** Isaiah 40:20

The Lord’s Great Army is not an army of God’s people, but people ultimately under His control for a specific purpose. God often uses the foolishness of man to further His purposes. Pharaoh’s own hard heart provided escape for Israel. God used Pharaoh’s own propensity to accomplish His plan. Israel wanted and got a king and trouble, as well. Several times in battles the enemies of Israel turned upon themselves. Even in movies, how often does the bad



guy's arrogance lead to his own demise? God therefore can and will use humankind's clamoring for their "rights" and space, etc., as the very tool needed for the utter destruction of the present broken and sinful systems. God does not interfere with anyone's free will.

*Some locust facts: (Source: Wikipedia) Their mouths have unusual cutting jaws. Fire doesn't stop them as the bodies of the dead locusts put out the fire.*

Joel 2:4: *They have an oblong head like a horse bending down.*

Revelation 9:7: Job 39 describes the war horse as fearless, strong and waiting to fight - just like these groups we see around us, strong and waiting to fight. Here we have people described as locusts described as war horses - a metaphor within a metaphor! These gnawing, swarming, creeping and stripping locusts are looking for what they can get and not what God has given. That is exactly what Satan did. 2 Timothy 3:1-5 **How does God guide this?** Joel 2:5

*They are noisy and can be heard five miles off. Their nipping leaves and blades of grass produce a noise like a roaring fire.*

**Mountains** - symbol of governments. Do we see out of control immigration throughout the world? Boundaries no longer exist. We have a global village where everything affects everybody. The battle cry of this army can be heard around the world.

Joel 2:6: (NASB) *Before them the people are in anguish; all faces turn pale.*

*They appear suddenly. They have NO natural enemy that can keep a devastating migration in check.*

It is a scary sight to see the MANY movements that are in gear now and how many more are brought into play with regularity, each with their own agenda, their own demands and their own momentum. We cannot stop this swarm, but there is no man-made, worldwide answer to solve every problem. How does God control this enormous swarming mass of humanity with all of their varied agendas? We do not believe He interferes with free will.

Proverbs 30:27: (NASB) *The locusts have no king, Yet all of them go out in ranks; There is no leader or captain, but together they form a well-organized, disciplined fighting force.*

*They are always at the mercy of the wind*

Exodus 10:13: This army cannot chart its own course. God generates the wind and the army responds to His direction, timing and location.

In Jonah 4:8 the *east wind* is described as *scorching*. In Scripture, generally the east wind is described as dry and blighting.

Joel 2:7-8: *They march everyone in his path* - each group has a particular complaint and seeks to solve the problem. In spite of all the various groups' differences, they all come together to destroy the present order. This amounts to an unstoppable force by way of sheer numbers!

*Swarming behavior is a response to overcrowding. Increased tactile stimulation of the hind legs causes an increase in levels of serotonin. When individuals at the front of the swarm settle to feed, others fly past overhead and settle in their turn, the whole swarm, and acting like a rolling unit with an ever-changing leading edge. The locusts spend much time on the ground feeding and resting, moving on when the vegetation is exhausted.*

Joel 2:9: A locust knows no obstacle. We talked about fire not stopping them because the dead bodies of locusts put the fire out. If they encounter water like a puddle, river or lake, they do not attempt to go around it - they just leap in and are drowned. Their dead bodies float on the surface and form a floating bridge for the rest to pass over. *They rush on the city* - a city is an organized population, but these locusts are not acting in a civilized way. They do not make change through regular channels like laws or through a nation's constitution. *They run on the wall* - a wall is a city's defense system. Protection of the city is destroyed by illegal means. The law, such as a police force, cannot stop them and anarchy ensues. Here again there is an almost eerie sense of our present reality shown in prophecy! Do not all of these movements have the ability to infiltrate all of our houses by way of technology?

*The largest flight on record of locusts extended over 500 miles and it darkened the sky like an eclipse. A large swarm can consist of billions of locusts spread out over an area of thousands of square kilometers, with a population of up to eighty million individuals per square kilometer (two hundred million per square mile).*



**4th Step: ESTABLISH eternal peace by eradicating sin, disobedience and all who fuel them for all of eternity.**

**The day of trouble summed up - everything that was stable is no longer stable. Nothing is left unshaken:** Joel 2:10-11: God allows the discontentment and sin to grow to show mankind they cannot do things their way. God's kingdom of righteousness is the only permanent solution. Why does God guide the shaking and crumbling of what was thought to be the "rights" of people? **He does so for the sake of truth being able to be heard:** Job 38:22-23: In Scripture, water symbolizes truth. Hail is solidified water, so hail represents truth delivered in such a way as to be destructive to what it comes in contact with.

Isaiah 28:17: All of the errors and lies that have brought harm to the world have to be dealt with. This time of trouble would not be complete without hail - hard, cold truths - that Job told us would be *reserved for the time of distress*, the time of trouble. Think about today and how nothing is hidden anymore - information is instant, corruption is constantly being uncovered. We have WikiLeaks, email scandals, classified information out in the open - nothing is secret, which further fuels the great army's outrage and demands. This was one of the indications of the End Times: Matthew 10:26: Nothing is secret anymore, and nothing is sacred either. People feel their agendas are higher than the laws and people around them. But when you lose the sacredness of life, its value is gone. Recklessly pursuing our own agendas is a sign of godlessness. God created us as sacred beings to Him and we have destroyed that.

**Here is the first part of the Scripture we just quoted:** Isaiah 28:17: When God takes it all and puts it to judgment, He does it in a clear, fair way. Justice is what is right. Righteousness is the level. What is the role of the true Christian? We have been given the task of *the ministry of reconciliation*. (2 Corinthians 5:18) That is not destructive. To reconcile is to bring together two parties who are at odds and help dissolve the differences. We cannot reconcile the world right now, but we can develop our characters now so that in the Day of Judgment, we will be an integral part of reconciling the world back to God. Sin destroyed it, Jesus saved it and we can teach it. The opportunities are exciting in spite of the darkness we live in! **The end result of this will be peace, safety, righteousness and godly authority!**

Joel 2:21-27: The destroyed earth is renewed and blessings ensue! We hope our listeners will spend some time with Joel chapters 1 and 2. When you read through this, the end is so amazing! *Rejoice and be glad*. The hail is gone and now we can get to the sweet rain! We need to focus on the end of the story - the good news of the Gospel. Praise of God will be restored as the harvests of blessing pour out! The first chapter of Joel introduced those four kinds of locusts: gnawing, swarming, creeping and stripping - the process of destruction that would come upon the world. But now God will take that "cleared out" society and build something new! **Finally, God's Spirit will permeate all humanity!** Joel 2:28-29: What is our advice to people during the coming days and years?

If we were going to choose one word to describe this whole "bug-era" it would be: TEMPORARY. The fact that God thousands of years ago gave us this prophecy of Joel 2 that directly relates to our end days, we can have faith that no matter how bad it gets - and it is going to get bad - the Bible describes this in dramatic fashion - the evil takes over and there will be darkness...we know it is coming, we know it is temporary and we know the end is glorious and need to focus on that. We want to keep light in the world as long as possible. This means do what is possible not to lose your humanity. Continue to be kind and respectful and do good wherever and whenever we can. Do not be part of the darkness overtaking the earth. Be on the same P.A.G.E. as God. Watch Him PROVIDE, ALLOW, GUIDE and ESTABLISH. God sees bigger, better and beyond all that is happening around us. When we look at a prophecy as dark as this one, we can say the light of God's truth shines through the darkness of the swarm of locusts to the other side. God's light is stronger and more powerful.

***So, has God lost control of our world?  
For Jonathan and Rick (and Julie!) and Christian Questions...  
Think about it...!***