

More of Jesus — Restored

We have been discovering the impact that more of Jesus has in our lives. When Christ comes in, situations have to change. Our sins are forgiven and the burden of our past finds real relief. He has the power and authority to cancel the culture of our past failures and destructions. We have considered many names and titles that testify of His great power and work among us. He is the Lord Who saves, delivers, and heals. He is ever-present, all-knowing, and all-powerful. The Lord is able to comfort all who mourn, to give beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness, (Isaiah 61:2-3). When He makes promises to His people, He is able to perform everything that He has said. None of His good word ever fails. Listen to the promise that God made to His people through the prophet Joel.

Joel 2:25-26 NKJV So I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten, The crawling locust, The consuming locust, And the chewing locust, My great army which I sent among you. You shall eat in plenty and be satisfied, And praise the name of the Lord your God, Who has dealt wondrously with you; And My people shall never be put to shame.

Israel sinned and fell into God's judgment. God's judgment was a sign of His discipline. The Bible tells us that God disciplines those that He loves. God's judgment was very thorough.

- Joel said chewing locust came and devoured.
- What they left, the swarming locust has eaten.
- What the swarming locust left, the crawling locust has eaten.
- What the crawling locust left, the consuming locust has eaten.
- When the judgment was finished, there was not much left.

Have you ever gone from one thing to another? After you made it through the first thing, something else swarmed in. Joel described their condition.

Joel 1:16-18 NKJV Is not the food cut off before our eyes, joy and gladness from the house of our God? The seed shrivels under the clods, storehouses are in shambles; barns are broken down, for the grain has withered. How the animals groan! The herds of cattle are restless, Because they have no pasture; Even the flocks of sheep suffer punishment.

In that condition of deep despair, God told Joel to call the people to come back to the Lord.

Joel 2:12-13 NKJV He said: "Turn to Me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning." So rend your heart, and not your garments; Return to the Lord your God, For He is gracious and merciful, Slow to anger, and of great kindness; And He relents from doing harm."

What they needed was more of the Lord in their lives. After calling them back, God gave them a word and promise of new life and rejoicing.

Joel 2:21 NKJV God said: "Fear not, O land; be glad and rejoice, For the Lord has done marvelous things!"

Joel 2:23-25 NKJV Be glad then, you children of Zion, And rejoice in the Lord your God; For He has given you the former rain faithfully, And He will cause the rain to come down for you— The former rain, And the latter rain in the first month. The threshing floors shall be full of wheat, And the vats shall overflow with new wine and oil. So I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten, The crawling locust, The consuming locust, And the chewing locust, My great army which I sent among you.

God has a plan to restore His people and bring them into the inheritance in Christ that is

full of joy and rejoicing.

It is not enough to go through the travail of repentance, fasting, weeping and mourning. After God called them to rend their hearts before Him over their sins, He promised a time of refreshing and restoration. Repentance and mourning over the events of our lives is not enough. For all of our mourning, ashes, and spirit of heaviness, God has the refreshing and restoration that heals our souls.

If we do not have a time of refreshing and restoration, we will be claiming things that have not happened in our lives. We must repent over our trespasses and sins and come back to God. After we have returned to God in prayer and repentance, we must receive times of refreshing from the hand of God. Times of refreshing and restoration bring us into the victories and joy of the Lord that gives us strength.

The Lord's message was clear, "Times of refreshing and restoration are coming." The Holy Spirit is speaking this message to my heart. God is saying, "I am sending times of renewal and refreshing." Many of us have been through times of trouble, sickness, disappointment, pain and distress. God's message is a promise that His people are not going to be depending on the former rain that came in times past. You are not going to continue living on past blessings. God is sending a new rain of His blessing.

God said: "I will restore to you the years that have been eaten up with trouble."

We need to be restored so the power of God is not just something we talk about, but something we experience and demonstrate through our lives. God has redeemed us and brought us out so that we may be restored to joy and rejoicing in the Lord.

When Israel went into idolatry, they lost their fervor for God and their favor with God. They went into captivity and were defeated and destroyed. In captivity, they were mutilated and chained. They were marked as slaves. Their women and men were abused. Their cities were ransacked and destroyed. They lost their wealth and their homes. Their future was lost. Their families were separated. They were led into captivity wailing and mourning.

Psalm 137:1-4 NKJV By the rivers of Babylon, There we sat down, yea, we wept When we remembered Zion. We hung our harps Upon the willows in the midst of it. For there those who carried us away captive asked of us a song, And those who plundered us requested mirth, Saying, "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!" How shall we sing the Lord's song In a foreign land?

From Jerusalem, they were taken into a strange land. In Babylon, they were forced to sing songs of praise to their God, while they were mocked. It is hard to sing songs of praise when you are in bondage. It is hard to rejoice when you are distressed and cast down.

They said, "*How shall we sing the Lord's song in a foreign land?*" They were in captivity more than 70 years. A whole generation passed away and a new generation of God's people were born while they were in captivity. Some of them never knew the joy of being free and singing songs of joy and praise.

Although they were slaves in Babylon, Babylon was not their home. They had heard that somewhere across the desert, down the hills, and across the river, there was a CITY. They knew that God is greatly to be praised in the CITY of our God, the joy of the whole earth, is Mount Zion on the sides of the north, (Psalms 48:1-2).

Across the river of that CITY they would come into the joy of their God. It was Mount Zion, a holy city called Jerusalem, the CITY of our God. They knew that one day God was going to deliver them out of the mess they were in. They did not know how long it was going to be. All they knew was "one day" they were going back to Jerusalem. One day their

sorrows would be turned into joy. They believed that a day was coming when they would leave the land of bondage and lay their burdens down. They were going to go back to Jerusalem and they would see the city of God. Their parents told them all about the streets and temples of Jerusalem.

At the end of 2nd Chronicles, King Cyrus started releasing the captives to go back to Jerusalem. As they started back they were beaten down and their heads were hanging low. They were in a mess. Nehemiah spoke about the survivors who went back to Jerusalem.

When they got back, they looked for the city their fathers told them about. They wanted to see the glory of God's house and walk down those streets of Zion with joy and rejoicing. The Jerusalem they returned to was not the city they remembered. The walls and gates of the city were torn down and the whole city lay in ruins. Their houses were burned and the fountains were broken down and filled in. Every sacred and holy thing had been torn down.

God had delivered them out of captivity, but there was a smell of smoke. There was a smell of decaying flesh and the walls of Jerusalem were destroyed and decaying. They dropped their heads in shame.

When they arrived in Jerusalem, they sat down and wept. They did not know what to do. The city looked like they felt. Everything was destroyed and they were cast down in their souls.

God has a message to anyone who has been brought out of bondage but is not restored. They were redeemed but still intimidated. They were home but empty and terrified. The glory and power they expected was missing. They needed the victory and joy that God's presence gives. It is not enough to be delivered from the clutches of the enemy and to be forgiven of your past sins.

Have you been delivered from something? Some of you know what it is like to be brought out of captivity. When you got out, you rejoiced.

It is one thing to rejoice when you are released from burdens and oppressions of your past, and it is another to be restored. If you have ever been delivered, you need to be made strong.

You need to be restored. You have been brought out of your past, but you need to be restored to the joy, strength, and the glory of God. You need the power of God working in you.

Nehemiah said their walls of defense were broken down. If walls of defense are not built around me, I run the risk of making the same mistakes again. I must have some defenses against the attack of the enemy. Nehemiah had to restore the walls of Jerusalem. Something had to happen to restore what had been destroyed around them and within them.

God's message through Joel said: "I will restore to you the years." Think about that with me. God is not just going to get you out, He is going to restore the years that have been lost and destroyed. Satan said nothing can be done, but God said He is ready to restore.

Isaiah was given a prophetic word for Jerusalem. He cried out to God's people and said her warfare was ended. He said her iniquity was pardoned. Then he said something that demonstrates God's desire to restore and give joy. He said: "For she has received from the Lord's hand DOUBLE for all her sins." God is not just interested in getting you out of your past, He wants to restore His people.

God has been telling me that He is going to restore. Some of you have lost your joy, but God is coming with a double hand full of His blessing. Some have suffered a great loss, but

God is going to restore what has been eaten up. Some have gone through a breakdown of things that have left you feeling vulnerable and weak. God does not want you to be like that. He is sending you the power and strength to rebuild what has been broken down.

The Lord wants to do this so that you will know that He is in the midst of His people. He wants you to know that He is invested in your life. He wants to give you double for all of the trouble you have gone through. He wants your joy to be full and overflow. He wants to give you peace that passes understanding. He wants to fill you up, good measure, pressed down, shaken together and overflowing. He wants to supply so much that there is no question that you are restored.