

NOTES FROM A SOLEMN ASSEMBLY -2015

UNDERSTANDING AND ADDRESSING CRISIS

WHAT CONSTITUTES A CRISIS?

A. Crisis can be viewed and interpreted from God's perspective or from man's perspective. There is the eternal reality of crisis and there is the immediate reality of crisis. Obviously, the reality of [lack of] eternal salvation poses the ultimate crisis, however God is deeply concerned as well over the immediate welfare of people, even His enemies (Mt. 5:45,10:29). God's will for man is that all would be saved (1 Tim.2:4).

B. Spiritual crisis involves either the ignorance, apathy and rage of unbelievers toward God, His word and His people or the apathy and resistance of His own people toward God and His word. Spiritual crisis includes ignorance of God, rebellion and apathy toward God, as well as the rise and rule of unrighteousness in a land or among a people.

C. Natural crisis involves the disruption or adversity of the natural processes that sustain and protect humanity and creation. Natural crisis can include natural disasters as well as economic, social and political crisis.

D. In one sense, there is always a crisis somewhere, whether natural or spiritual. But there are particular seasons in the history of nations and the course of world history where God Himself is sovereignly creating or drawing attention to the crisis (Matt.24; Lk.21:5-36; Mk.13).

E. The idea that God creates crisis, especially crisis that impacts His own people, can be very challenging to accept. However, the reality that God is sovereign over the course of nations and that all authority, whether righteous or unrighteous, is given by Him are clear biblical doctrines. God-caused crisis exist either because God manifests His righteous judgment against sin or because God withdraws His hand of protection.

WHERE IS GOD?

F. How do we know when God is involved? - God is deeply invested in the affairs of man. He has uniquely bonded Himself to humanity through the incarnation of Jesus and has chosen Him, the second Adam, as the One through whom He will unite and restore all of creation, that is, all things in heaven and earth (Eph.1:7-10). The bible assures us with great certainty that God is always involved in the affairs of man (Pr.5:19; 15:3; Zech.4:10).

G. Is God active or passive in crisis? Because of the severity of judgment, questions arise as to the involvement of God. Can a God of love be the author of devastation that brings pain and death? And if so, how does this relate to His people? This is a weighty subject and must be treated with the utmost care.

H. Most believers can understand with some clarity that God does indeed bring judgment in response to the sin of the wicked. But God also disciplines His people for their unrepentant sin. Here are a few verses that point this out:

“Now therefore, speak to the men of Judah and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, saying, ‘Thus says the Lord: Behold, I am fashioning a disaster and devising a plan against you. Return now every one from his evil way, and make your ways and your doings good.’” -Jer.18:11

“For the time has come for judgment to begin at the house of God; and if it begins with us first, what will be the end of those who do not obey the gospel of God? Now if the righteous one is scarcely saved, where will the ungodly and the sinner appear?” -1 Pt.4:17-18

“Repent, or else I will come to you quickly and will fight against them with the sword of My mouth.” - Rev.2:16

I. It is important to remember that God deals with our stubborn refusal to turn from sin differently than He does when we struggle but sincerely desire to be free.

J. Is God addressing the wicked or the church through crisis? The answer is, “Yes, He is.” God is addressing both for different reasons. God confronts sin in the earth to reveal His glory to unbelievers, to convict them of sin and to produce repentance. God confronts unrepentant sin in the church to purify and make us holy because we are His inheritance (Ma1.3:3; Eph.1:18) and He is ours (Eph.1:14).

“For it was fitting for Him, for whom are all things and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both He who sanctifies and those who are being sanctified are all of one, for which reason He is not ashamed to call them brethren.” -Heb.2:10-11

“...that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish...” Eph.5:27 (Rev.19:7)

K. The uniqueness of America’s crisis. It has been said, that apart from the nation of Israel, America is the only nation that from its inception was deliberately founded in covenant with God. Even if this is not entirely true, it is easy to obtain information that speaks to the original intent of the early settlers migrating from Europe. This “new land” was to be a safe haven for Godly men and women and its founders purposed to direct their efforts establishing this nation to reflect the principles of scripture and to honor the God of the Bible. This puts America in a unique role related to our progressive assault on these very same principles and Person. God has the right to require that we hold true to our earliest convictions.

BECOMING A CULTURE OF INTERCESSORY FIRST-RESPONDERS

L. The Book of Joel is the most concise address of crisis and the response that God desires in the Bible. It has only 3 chapters. It covers much in few words but is comprehensive in scope. It has vast implications related to the nature of God, His zeal for righteousness, His commitment to His people and His desire to bless, heal and restore national Israel.

M. God speaks clearly through the prophet Joel and commands us to understand the hour that we live in (Joel 1:2). He gives us the clear outline regarding how we are to respond (Joel 1:14; 2:12-17).

N. Our first response as a people is to gather together in the house of the Lord. We are to acknowledge that there exists a crisis and cry out to the Lord for His intervention.

O. This type of response is to be our culture, our lifestyle. God calls us to repent and return (Joel 2:12-13). Though we can commit to repent and return to Him in a moment, it takes time to actually walk out these commitments as we seek to be blameless in holiness (1 Thess.3:13). Therefore, as we are ‘returning’ we are committed to regular prayer gatherings asking the Lord to empower the turning of an entire city and nation.

P. As we engage in the processes of repentance and returning we are to become preachers of righteousness and trumpets of sobriety (Joel 1:3; 2:12,15). We are to engage in the work of making known the crisis and then gathering and calling others to prayer (Joel 1:14; 2:15-16).

FAITHFULLY PREACHING REPENTANCE AND GLORY

Q. We are to be preachers of righteousness functioning in the anointing that rested upon Elijah to turn the hearts of the people of God back to Him (1 Ki.18:37). This same anointing rested upon John the baptist as He sought to prepare a people for the day of their visitation (Lk.19:41-44)(Mal.4:5,6; Lk.1:17).

R. Returning to the Word. The biblical idea of returning to the Lord is centered upon returning to a sincere commitment to understand and obey His word (Ex.19:5;Deut.6:2-3; John 14:15). A departure from the clear teachings of scripture and a wholehearted desire to know God through His word always constitutes a crisis of paramount importance for the people of God.

S. Returning to the Spirit. The Father has sent the Holy Spirit so that we might know Him (Jn.14:17,16:7, Rom.5:5, 1 Cor.2:12; Eph.2:18; 1 Jn.3:24,4:13)

What happens when we return to the lord? Joel 2 18-32, "Return to me and I *will* return to you."