

Bearded Men – The Minor Prophets – Joel, Part 2

The Minor Prophets

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Bible Text: Joel 2:25-32

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I want to encourage you this morning to turn in your Bibles to the Old Testament to the book of Joel. As you're turning to the book of Joel in the Old Testament it is actually the second of twelve books towards the end of the Old Testament that we have designated the Minor Prophets. As we've seen the last couple of weeks, they are not minor because of the quality of their message, they are minor because of the quantity of their message. In a couple of weeks we're going to go to Obadiah who might only take one page in your Bible, but it's going to be a message that's so strategic and so important for us. As you're finding Joel, chapter 2, there's also two places in the New Testament we're going to find ourselves in today that you may want to write down to or put a piece of paper in. The book of Acts 2 and the book of Romans 11.

And even though the Minor Prophets, beginning with Hosea and ending with Malachi, even though their messages historically speaking were almost 3,000-2,000 years ago, their message is incredibly relevant for us today. And we've entitled this series, "Bearded Men." Why? Because there's that picture of a prophet like John the Baptist, you know, coming out of the wilderness crying with a loud voice, "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." And that is the theme, that is the message of every one of the messages of the Minor Prophets. It's simply this, that humanity as a whole, and as we've seen the people of God specifically, are headed in the wrong direction with the wrong ideals and the wrong beliefs. And unless something changes, ultimately the consequences will not be pleasurable to any and to all.

Last week we started in the book of Joel, chapter 1, and a little bit into chapter 2. And we addressed this idea and it sets up today's message, we addressed this idea of corporate or collective cultural sin. That even though you and I as individuals may not be guilty of thinking it, or communicating, advocating or even doing it, none of us live in isolation. We live in families, we live in communities and we live in a culture and a civilization and yes, even a country. And the Lord made it very clear in the book of Joel, specifically to Israel, but we adopted the principles for our lives, that we as a community will be held accountable to our rebellion against God.

We addressed last week, kind of in conclusion, an ideology or a concept that's mentioned in the Old Testament known as the solemn assembly. Now, this is important leading up to today's message. A solemn assembly was a time period, it happened about 12 times in the Old Testament, where the leaders of Israel, the leaders of the people of God, would gather together and they would circle up the horses, so to speak, and they would say, "God, we have sinned against you." Now, maybe those individuals were not guilty but their culture was guilty, their civilization was guilty, their country was guilty.

And last week, if you were not here with us particularly in this service, we whooped and we hollered and some of you all went full blown Pentecostal and you didn't even know it, when you thought about the idea of leaders who are both elected and appointed confessing the sins of our culture before God. As excited as we are at the prospects of that, Joel 2-3 is going to share with us that it is a very rare day when that actually occurs.

So, how do we continue to live in a culture and in a civilization and in a society where as a whole, we are rebelling against God? As a whole, we are not confessing our sins before God. As a matter of fact, as a whole, we are progressively going deeper and deeper into sin every day we wake up.

As we turn to Joel, chapter 2, beginning in verse 25, it's going to begin with an illustration that we used last week. Remember when we talked about the palmerworm and the cankerworm and the locusts and the caterpillar that were eating all the green things of the fields? Today in verse 25 of Joel, chapter 2, it's going to begin with speaking of how one day God is going to bring peace and restoration to this thing that we know as the world. Beginning in Joel 2:25,

“And I will restore to you the years that the locust hath eaten, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar, and the palmerworm, my great army which I sent among you. And ye shall eat in plenty, and be satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord your God, that hath dealt wondrously with you: and my people shall never be ashamed. And ye shall know that I am in the midst of Israel, and that I am the Lord your God, and none else: and my people shall never be ashamed. And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions: And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit. And I will shew wonders in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and pillars of smoke. The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be delivered: for in mount Zion and in Jerusalem shall be deliverance, as the Lord hath said, and in the remnant whom the Lord shall call.”

Now, in this passage of scripture, the first subject matter that is dealt with is a subject matter that all of humanity is obsessed and consumed with but nobody can seem to get a grasp and a hold of. It's this idea of peace. Have you noticed that any time you open a newspaper, any time you turn on the television, everybody is debating and discussing, how do we get this thing known as world peace? In Joel 2, he begins by addressing this issue of world peace. He says, “In that day, there shall be restoration and that which was broken down it shall be fixed.” That which was eaten, shall be made alive. That which was crooked, will be made straight. I know we joke about it all the time, but anytime there's a national beauty contest, what do they always ask, “If you could have anything in the world what would it be?” World peace. All the news and all of the rhetoric that we

get all around the world, you've got missiles going here and dictators and leaders meeting here. Why? Because everybody is consumed with how we can have world peace. Would you confess to me that we don't have a world in peace, we have a world in pieces. But yet here in Joel 2, it says, "One day restoration will happen. One day we shall eat plenty. One day all of this mess and chaos will end."

What we're about to see from the book of Joel is this, it doesn't happen the way that CNN and Fox and all these guys talk about. In fact, no matter what your slant is, what your political affiliation is, let me just be honest with you, they all got it wrong.

So, that being said, in Joel 2, how do we have this thing called world peace? We first have to begin with this, where is it centered? Where is it centered? Notice what it says in Joel 2, "My people Israel." You go to the end of chapter 2 and it talks about Jerusalem, it talks about Mount Zion. Now, what I'm about to share with you, please understand. I know we struggle, particularly because we're part of a specific culture and a specific civilization and we've been born and raised in such a manner, but last I checked, biblically speaking, the only country that God really cares about is Israel. Because it's the only one that he started. It's the only one that he founded and it's the only one, as we'll discuss in a moment, that he consummated. In fact, one of the things that we get in trouble with in our particular culture is that we get very ethnocentric. If you don't know what that fancy word means, it means that you think you're better than everybody else.

And you get to the end of the book of Revelation, do you know what countries are still left? You've got Rome, Babylon and you've got Israel and Gog and Magog and that's about it. You say, "What about the good old USA?" Well, that's another sermon for another day but they're not there. There are 190+ countries on this globe and the majority of them have little to no significance when world peace actually occurs on the earth. But the center of it is this place. We call it the black-eyed pea of the Middle East, it's about the size of Rhode Island. It's known as the Promised Land. It's Israel.

Do you understand that in the Bible in Genesis 12, when God called Abraham and Sarah out and they eventually had a child by the name of Isaac, Jacob had what we know as the Twelve Tribes. His purpose was to designate a people of Israel who would one day live in a place that we know as Israel. When they come out of captivity, when they come out of Egypt, they go across the Red Sea. Unfortunately, they wander around the desert but once they get out of that, they end up in what we know as the Promised Land or Israel. It would be King David that would build his city in Israel. It would be Solomon that built his Temple in Israel. It would be God in flesh who would be birthed where? Israel. Where did Jesus teach? Israel. Where did he perform his miracles? Israel. Where did he die on a cruel cross? Israel. Where did he rise from the dead? Israel. Guess where he's coming back? Israel. He's not coming back to Georgia, I'm sorry. He's not even coming back to Texas. I know that breaks my heart but he's not. He's coming back on Mount Zion in Israel.

Isn't it interesting that the whole world seems consumed with this little country known as Israel. For almost 2,000 years they were disbursed all over the world. They are the only

entity, they are the only country to be out of existence for two millennia to come back into full-fledged existence. Not just to come back, but to win their own war of independence and to have their own holy seat back. You say, “How does that happen?” Because God started it and God’s going to finish it. You cannot chock it up to anything other than just divine guidance.

The entire world, at least the majority of the world right now, despises and hates that little piece of land and those people on the other side of the world known as Israel. You say, “Why is that?” Because they hate and despise the things of God. And it drives them nuts that they’re not God. It drives them crazy that they don’t get to make the ultimate decision. Listen, for the world to have peace one day, guess where it starts? It starts in Israel. And yet it has been the place that has been so controversial for so long. That’s the centeredness of this world peace.

So, where is the consummation? How does this all take place because if you look at the news today, that place is chaos. You’ve got one country giving another country missiles aimed at this country and everybody is all arguing and fighting. How is this going to happen? Let me share with you something that you’re never going to hear in the news media, peace in the Middle East and peace globally is not going to occur at Camp David. I’m sorry to tell you that. It’s not even going to occur when the leaders of Israel and the leaders of the Arab world sit down together at a neutral site and sign a couple of pieces of paper. Do you know when you will finally have peace on earth? When Jesus Christ shows back up. I hate to tell you, but when you go into a voting booth or you go into a situation where you have the opportunity here to elect a leader, unless that leader’s name is Jesus Christ, he’s not going to bring peace to this world. They all promise it, but according to the Bible, none of them can deliver.

That will be the ultimate consummation. In fact, allow me to work us back just a little, when you get to the end of the Bible in Revelation 20 we have this thing known as the millennium. It’s a Latin word that means “a thousand years.” Why? Because in the first seven verses of chapter 20 six times it says that Jesus Christ will reign 1,000 years. Satan is bound. Sin is banished. Basically, it’s a restored, notice the word restored in Joel 2, it’s a restored Garden of Eden. Walking and talking with the Lord without the tempter.

You back it up a little bit further than that, how do we get this millennium? How do we get rid of temptation? How do we get Satan bound? How do we get rid of all the chaos? In chapter 19:11 it says, that Jesus steps out of the clouds on a white horse with a sword out of his mouth and the armies of heaven, hopefully that’ll be you, coming in behind him. That’s how it takes place. You know, Jesus said, “I did not come to bring peace but...” what? “A sword.” One day he ultimately does bring peace and he does so. According to the book of Revelation, also in the book of Isaiah, it says that the blood will go to the bridle of the horse.

You see, this whole idea of world peace, it will happen one day just like Joel said. Restoration will take place and that which was barren will be fertile again. That which was dead, will be made alive. But it’s going to happen in the place that most people never

think it will, known as Israel. And it will happen in a way that no elected or given leader will subscribe to because it's not them. When Jesus Christ personally descends, steps out of heaven and steps on the earth, then and only then can we, or will we, have world peace.

Which brings up an interesting thought before we get to point 2. If that's the only way the world is going to have peace, then that's the only way your life's going to have peace too. That's the only way your family is going to have peace. That's the only way that your community is going to have peace. That's the only way your job situation is ever going to have peace is if Jesus Christ is in the dead center of it. Everything else is a façade, it's just perfuming the pig, so to speak.

So, that's the issue of world peace. Here's the deal that we've got to deal with in Joel 2 because there seems to be, and it's a word that I've used, there seems to be this pause that's taking place because in Joel 2 it talks about the restoration, it talks about God taking that which was broken and fixing it. Verse 28, "It shall come to pass afterwards, I'll pour out my spirit upon all flesh, your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions. And also upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my spirit. I will show wonders in the heaven and on earth, blood, fire and pillars of smoke, sun will be turned to darkness and the moon into blood before the great and terrible day of the Lord."

If this passage sounds familiar to you, I want to encourage you to turn to the book of Acts 2. As you're turning to Acts 2, I want to deal with this issue of a pause. This idea that why do we not have the restoration right now. Why is Jesus Christ not descending out of the clouds right now? Why is this not happening right at this very moment? Why is it or why does it appear, it's almost as if God has pushed pause. Now, you know what pause is right? Everything is playing then you push the button and it's just a standstill until you push play again.

As you're turning to Acts 2, let me tell you where you are historically. You are at an event that we know as Pentecost. And with all respect to my Pentecostal brethren, Pentecost is not a denomination, it's actually a Jewish holiday. Fifty days after Passover, there is a celebration in the Jewish community known as Pentecost. In historic ideas here in the book of Acts, Jesus Christ has died, three days later he has risen from the dead, and then 40 days later he has ascended to heaven. For seven days, beginning in Acts 1, for seven days there are about 120 people including the Apostles, and the Bible says a lot of women, who are in the upper room and they were praying. Why? Jesus told them to. Jesus said, "Don't go anywhere, don't do anything until you have the spirit of God, the Holy Spirit, descending upon you."

In Acts 2, this is critical, in Acts 2, what we know as these people in the upper room go down into the street and it says that there are representatives, there are individuals from every nation in the world. Acts 2:4, 5 says, Jews from all nations. Now, that's important, right? What about this whole world peace thing, Israel, Mount Zion, Jerusalem? It says Jews from all over the world are gathered together. In this famous experience known as

Pentecost, Peter gets up and he begins to preach. When he does, it says that the Holy Spirit descends upon him and others as tongues of fire. And it says that all those from other nations begin to hear them speaking in other tongues. Now, before you start to think that this is a bunch of blabbing and all that kind of stuff, it says very specifically in Acts 2, they heard in their own language.

The miracle of Pentecost wasn't the preaching, it was the hearing. Now, that being said, when you get to verse 15, there is a group of people who have come on the scene. You've got 120 individuals from the upper room who are speaking in languages they've never learned but other people are able to hear. Beginning in verse 15 of chapter 2 in Acts, it says, "For these are not drunken, as ye suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day." They are being accused of having a little too much. The only problem is, it's 9:00 in the morning. Ok? "But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel." Very clearly, Peter gets up and says, "That great prophecy, that Minor Prophet that we skip over all the time because there's not a lot of pages there, what he spoke about happening this is that."

Verse 17, "And it shall come to pass in the last days, saith God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: and on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy: and I will shew wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapour of smoke: the sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord come: and it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

Now, let me first deal with what I want to call the "problem" of this passage. 750+ years before this event, Joel prophesied that it would occur. 750+ years later, Peter, a spokesman, an Apostle for the Lord Jesus Christ, gets up and says, "This is that." Here's the problem, what you have, this in this passage, actually has not yet occurred. I want you to walk with me on some of the things that are listed. "My Spirit will be poured out on all flesh."

Now, if you're a first time guest or visitor, just put up with me for a moment. Church family, what does the word "all" mean? All, not some. It means all. In this passage of scripture in the book of Acts, we see the Spirit of God falling on 120, right? In fact at the end of the passage it says that 3,000 people got saved. You can make the argument that 3,120 people had the Spirit of God descend upon them. Is that all? No. The Spirit of God did not fall on all of them.

The next question I have to ask is this, did the sun turn dark? Did the moon turn red? Did these things, these prophetic things in the book of Joel, do you see any record in the book of Acts that any of this stuff has or did occur? No. And so, the problem that we've got to deal with is why when the church of Jesus Christ was what we call instituted and established, why did Peter say, "this is that," but that has not occurred yet?

Allow me to share with you what I believe is the probability to solving this problem and it will give us some clarity to our world situation here. When you go to the book of Joel and even when you read in Acts, you do not get any idea whatsoever that the process for this to occur is a 24 hour process. What did Jesus say back in Acts 1? “When the Spirit comes upon you, be my witnesses.” Where? Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria and the uttermost parts of the earth. He actually gives them a plan, he gives them a strategy and says, “As you go forth.” Look, the Great Commission, Matthew 28, “As you go share the gospel to all those who you come across.” You don’t get the idea that somehow, somehow this all happens in 24 hours. What you get the idea of is that once it begins, it keeps going until it ends.

Which brings up the pause. Why is it that Peter would say, “This is that”? But within just a couple of chapters, there is nothing remotely happening that looks or sounds like it. In fact, something happens that’s very dramatic. Remember Acts 2 said there were Jews from all over the world represented. By the time you get to Acts 11 it’s hard to find a Jewish person anywhere in the book of Acts. It’s a bunch of pig eating, barbecuing Gentiles. Everywhere.

Which leads me to this next passage. I want you to turn over to Romans 11. I want you to turn to a passage of Scripture that the great pastor of 50 years of the First Baptist Church of Dallas, Texas, W. A. Criswell called the most difficult passage in all of the Bible. Nothing like biting off more than you can chew, right? Romans 11:25-26. It says, “For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob.” It says, do not be mesmerized, don’t be shocked, don’t be alarmed. Right now, blindness in part has occurred to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles come in.

You say, “The blindness of the Jews? The blindness of Israel? What does this mean?” Do you not remember that when Jesus Christ stood before Pilate, those leaders, those Israeli leaders said, “May his blood be upon us and our children.” In the book of Acts, in the very beginning of the church, remember Gamaliel, the old Pharisee had to stand up and say, “Hey, guys, if this is of God you cannot stop it. If it isn’t it will just die out.” It was in the book of Acts 7 that we have the first martyr, a man by the name of Stephen, who stood up and very eloquently said, “This Jesus Christ was our Jewish Messiah and we crucified him.” What did they do to him? What did they do to him? They stoned him to death.

And it says there at the end of chapter 7 and the beginning of chapter 8 of the book of Acts that there was a man by the name of Saul, and Jesus’ garments were laid upon his feet. That Saul would become Paul in Acts 9 and later in 2 Corinthians, do you know what he would say? “I’m the Apostle to the Gentiles.” Think about the letters of Paul. Thessalonica, Gentile. Colossae, Gentile. Philippi, Gentile. All of those areas that they went. Galatia, Ephesus, Gentile, Gentile. Look at the church of Jesus Christ today. The overwhelming majority of those who are believers in Jesus Christ are Gentile.

But, what's going to happen according to Romans 11? One day, the time of the Gentiles will be over. And when you get to the book of Revelation, do you know what you discover? You discover not only does all the action take place in this country known as Israel, but you find out that those 12 tribes somehow redefine and understand who they are again. It talks about the 12,000 out of the 12 tribes in Revelation 7. It talks about Mount Zion, Armageddon, the Valley of Jezreel, that northern area of Israel. All of the action takes place there again.

You say, "Jeff, what is all that culminating in, what does all that mean?" Let me tell you what it means, it means that Jesus Christ was and is who he said he was and is. He came to the Jews first and to the Gentiles second. They rejected him as a whole. Yes, there are individual believers who do believe in Jesus that are Jewish by nature but they are few and far between. He came to them. Blindness is now in part and for lack of better terms, prophetically speaking, we see the pause button has been pushed. Restoration is coming. Peace is going to come but not until the Lord descends and pushes play. And when he pushes play, what we know as the rest of these verses will commence and take place.

Now, let me sandwich these together and bring it back to real life, here. World peace is a figment of our imagination. It's going to take place in Israel when Jesus comes back, not when you elect anybody and everybody you want to, ok? 2. All this is eventually going to happen when Israel is once again prominent, onstage and the Gentiles, you and I, are gone, we're out of here. So, how do we live? How do we live this thing called life? How do we leave here and say, "Ok, Jeff, you've given me a lot of head knowledge. What do I do with it?" I want to give you a perspective that you need to desperately have.

Go back to Joel 2. We finished in verse 32 and I want you to pick up in chapter 3:1. "For, behold, in those days, and in that time, when I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem, I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for my people and for my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land."

Let me tell you what you're reading. That's Armageddon. It is the battle of Armageddon. Let me give you that perspective that you desperately need to have as you and I, as believers in Jesus Christ live in these "last days" waiting for Jesus to push the play button again. You need to be prepared. Listen, not for revival but for persecution. As we get closer to the end, as you read the Scriptures, the closer we get to Jesus coming back, it does not get better. It does not get prettier. In fact, what you see is kind of a thinning out. 2 Thessalonians 2 calls it "the great falling away." What we're going to experience, most likely in our time period, is that the heat is going to get turned up and not great revival but persecution.

Now, I want you to notice the last phrase in verse 32 of chapter 2. "In the remnant who the Lord shall call." Here's the perspective I want to give you today. Though biblically speaking global revival is not next on God's calendar, there is always a remnant. There is always a small group of people somewhere, somehow who dedicate their lives to the

Lord. And I want you to have the perspective of being willing to be the remnant amidst a world that is going to up the persecution ante.

Now, let me give you some comfort in this. I have never personally been subjected to what I would call martyrdom-type harsh persecution. But let me give you the perspective of a young man. I went to a high school that had about 2,500 students. It's a pretty good sized high school. I was part of an organization known as the Fellowship of Christian Athletes. It's a great thing to be part of, right? Actively we had eight students. Eight students out of 2,500 actually participated faithfully in the Fellowship of Christian Athletes. We wore t-shirts and did all the kinds of things that you're supposed to do to advertise who you are. Guess what happened when I walked down the hallways? I got made fun of. I got mocked. They used some words that I will not use in this environment to describe who I was and what I thought and what I believed. But when you're in a school of only 2,500 people and there are only eight of you who are standing up for that truth being Jesus Christ in your life on that specific day when you wear a t-shirt, you are incredibly outnumbered. I was never thrown into or up against a locker, I was never brutally beaten or anything like that. The last time I checked sticks and stones may break my bones but words leave scars that never heal.

Then I went to college. Ah, went 90 miles south and I descended upon the largest historic Baptist college in the world. Do you know what I found out? That when young men slept in for church on Sunday, they got dressed and went to the cafeteria so no one would know they skipped church. All of a sudden it was a church environment. Everybody talked the language. Everybody looked the part. Can I be honest with you, church? It was easier being a Christian at DeSoto High School than at Baylor University. You say, "How is that?" Because there were definitive lines drawn in the sand. And do you know where revival is actually taking place in this world? Where Christians are being persecuted. Communist countries, closed countries. Why? Because there is just something about, in the face of opposition, that which is of strength will grow.

I want to give you that perspective. Do not walk out of here thinking that there is a national, global revival coming. No, let me tell you what's coming. Persecution. We will be few in number but we will be mighty in strength. Remember in Zechariah, "Not by might nor by power but by my Spirit says the Lord." Do I need to remind you of Gideon and the Captain of the Host? With 185,000 angels that showed up miraculously. How about the 300 that battled off the tens of thousands. Over and over in the Bible you see examples. And we say all the time here, "God can do more with our little than we could ever do with our lot." That needs to be our perspective. To understand that persecution is coming and that we need to be prepared for it.

So, what needs to be your priorities? How do you systematize this all down. Go back into chapter 3 of Joel, verse 13, it says, "Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down; for the press is full, the fats overflow; for their wickedness is great." Go back up to verse 10, "Beat your plowshares into swords, and your pruninghooks into spears: let the weak say, I am strong."

Now, I want you to hear me very clearly, I am not, in any shape or form, advocating the taking up or the collection of, or the utilization of arms, caves or meals ready-to-eat, ok? Because last time that I checked, in Ephesians 6 it says, you and I as believers in Jesus Christ we do not fight against flesh and blood but against principalities and powers and rulers of darkness and the wiles of the devil. And it says in Ephesians 6 that we are to take up the belt of truth, breastplate of righteousness, the helmet of salvation, the shield of faith, the sword of the Spirit and our feet are to be shod with peace.

Folks, let me just be as clear as I can. If there has ever been a time in your life where you'd better get real serious about what you believe, it's right now. Because the heat is going to get turned up hotter. And if you are not put together with the truth of God's Word, if you are not protected with the breastplate of righteousness, if your thoughts are not guarded with the helmet of salvation, if you do not have up the shield of faith and the sword of the Spirit and your feet being shod with peace, let me tell you what's going to happen. The devil's going to eat your lunch and your supper. Because that is the world that we live and are ever going to live in.

Listen, Armageddon is right around the corner. All it takes is Jesus Christ pushing the play button and all these things will begin to commence. Folks, don't believe the hype. Don't believe the rhetoric. One day peace is coming, only Jesus Christ can and will bring it. Don't fall for anything else because the world will fall for something else. He's called the Antichrist.