

GROWING IN GOD

PODCAST



GIG128 – The Heart of the People

Hi, and welcome to the podcast. I am so glad you joined us today. I am following up on a previous podcast I did in which I used the Scripture from Joel the third chapter, at verses 12-14. I will read that now: “Let the nations be aroused and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat, for there I will sit to judge all the surrounding nations. Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, tread, for the wine press is full; the vats overflow, for their wickedness is great. Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision.” When we talk about this idea of the day of the Lord, we recognize through these words of Joel that part of the reality of the day of the Lord is it is a time of decision. I believe that we are coming into the day of the Lord. I believe we are in those end days, and that we are confronting the fact that God, in this time, and during this time, calls all the nations to a decision.

In the previous podcast, I talked about the rulers of the nations – how the rulers of the nations are brought to a decision before God, and God is dealing with the leadership of nations. I also think that there is a dealing with all the peoples of the nations as well. It is almost like there are two categories: the leadership of nations, the government itself, as well as the peoples. I know that those two things, in the way a nation functions, are very connected. In the United States of America, we live in a democracy; and so there is a deep connection between the government, and who is serving in the government, and the people – We the People of the United States, who vote in and elect these leaders and the ones who are ruling over us and making the laws and the decisions of what transpires. We see that there is a connection – but there is also a separation. There is a very real place in which leadership has control and moves apart and separate from the people. And I think that as the day of the Lord comes into the earth, there is this separation in God where God deals with the leadership, and deals with the rulers of the nations in one way, calling them individually to account for what they are doing. It is not like they get a free pass because they say, “Well, they elected us,” or, “They chose us,” or, “I became the king because of heritage,” or whatever. No, there is an individual way of responsibility; and the rulers of the world, the nations, are called into account before God for their relationship with Him and the decisions they make, and the consequences are going to follow.

So we discussed this idea about the rulers of the nations, and what we see God able to do. We discussed what He has done historically in the Scriptures, using the examples of Saul and Nebuchadnezzar as two world rulers that God really dealt with in a very personal way. And so, we do see that God moves that way, He is moving that way, and He will continue to move that way in the day of the Lord, because the nations, with their rulers, are being called to account. But also, as part of that day of the Lord, I think that what transpires in a nation is very much affected by the people. We are people of a nation, and there are ways that the people of a nation make decisions or choose directions in their relationship with God that have a part. I know that each of us eventually stands before the Lord and gives an account for our life and our own actions on a personal level, without reference to anyone else or anything else. But I also know that while we are here, as we are in the United States and in other democracies, we, as those who are electing officials and have a voice in that government, we do exist as nations, and we do see the

reality of national pride, and national decisions, and actions that are taken. Therefore, I think there is a very real way in which the people of a nation have a responsibility to that nation, and for the decisions of that nation. Many times we feel like, "Well, I think one way, and my vote doesn't count for much, and things still happen – so how can I be responsible?" Well, one of the first things we learn spiritually is to be responsible. We are responsible. If God makes us a part of something, then we are responsible for what transpires regarding those things. And I think that is true on a national level. Maybe you feel your vote doesn't count, but your voice does. And to speak up and speak into what is transpiring is very important. So I want us to realize that one of the things we are going to see, witness and experience as we live in the day of the Lord, and this day of God calling the nations into the valley of Jehoshaphat to make decisions, is that it may be a very real experience for us. We need to understand it and not be taken by surprise as we find ourselves living in these days.

I want to give an illustration out of Joshua, the twenty-fourth chapter. In verses 14-15 it says, "Now, therefore, fear the Lord and serve Him in sincerity and truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord. If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the Lord, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." So this is Joshua speaking to Israel just before they are released to go to their areas within the promised land and to dwell in the land, and start living in the land of Canaan. He is admonishing them that they need to make a decision at this point before going into their homes. They need to make a decision right now to serve the Lord; and if they are not going to serve the Lord, then to be honest about what they are going to do and who they are going to serve. So we see this great connection, really, with what Joel is talking about, that there are these times when God brings us to a valley of decision. And as he says, "Multitudes, multitudes are in the valley of decision." Why? Because the nations are being brought there, and the day of the Lord comes near in the valley of decision. When the day of the Lord comes, it throws us into a decision. Joshua is recognizing this: "Hey, you are in a great time of decision. And what is going to happen in and to the nation of Israel is going to happen by virtue of this decision that you, as the people of Israel, make. Not just the king; not just the high priest; it is going to be what you decide that you are going to serve, and how you are going to serve, as you go in to possess the land." And I think that this is the spirit and the feeling we need to have as believers, to realize that we are seeing a time of global decision that really is going to take place.

I believe one of the signs of it, really, was COVID-19. For me, it was one of the first times we have seen the world being thrown into a global decision with global consequences, and things transpiring on a global level. That to me was very much a sign in itself that we are entering a new day, a day in which we are seeing the day of the Lord come to the nations – not just to a handful, or to a nation here or peoples there; we are seeing something happen with the nations. And I believe that is transpiring for us now, as we come to the day of the Lord.

I want to read out of Deuteronomy chapter 11, and I am going to read quite a few verses, because it applies to this idea of how we as the people walk. Now, this is a great illustration, because remember that Israel under Moses really walked with the greatest leader that they could have. Moses was a man humble in all his ways. He was the most humble man – God spoke to him face to face. What he led and what he directed was absolutely and specifically from God, by the Word of God, to the people of Israel. And when we look at the timeframe coming out of Egypt to the time when they were getting ready to go possess the land of Canaan, we see that the people had very difficult times in their obedience to God – certainly with their obedience to Moses, but their difficulty with Moses was because of their difficulty

and rebellion against God. It was very flagrant and obvious that that was the problem, because of the purity of Moses' leadership, how he led and the humbleness of his spirit – even when he was challenged and confronted. And we know he was challenged to such a point that it really did exasperate him to the place where he failed himself in honoring God, and instead he smote the rock. As a result, he was not able to go in and possess the land, which again, was assigned to the people. We see that someone like Moses, if they would become disobedient, was not going to be able to continue under the blessing of God. So I think Moses was an illustration here of a fantastic leader – I don't think a nation could have a greater leader than what Israel had in Moses. And yet it makes it evident that the problem that is transpiring and does transpire is not with the leadership; it is not the national leader; it is the heart of the people. That is what we are being aware of in this podcast. It is not looking at the leadership of nations and what happens by virtue of the leadership, and God dealing with that leadership. We are looking at the peoples of the nations, and recognizing that truly the direction that the nations eventually move into is more influenced and guided by the heart of the peoples of those nations than it is by the leadership, in most nations today. I know it is not a hundred percent across the board; there are dictators and rulers that the people have no control over. But they still control the atmosphere of how that nation lives, by their being given to God or not.

We are in Deuteronomy 11, starting with verses 1-15. “You shall therefore love the Lord your God,” – this is Moses addressing Israel at the time before they are going in to possess the land – “and always keep His charge, His statutes, His ordinances, and His commandments. Know this day that I am not speaking with your sons who have not known and who have not seen the discipline of the Lord your God—His greatness, His mighty hand and His outstretched arm, and His signs and His works which He did in the midst of Egypt to Pharaoh the king of Egypt and to all his land; and what He did to Egypt's army, to its horses and its chariots, when He made the water of the Red Sea to engulf them while they were pursuing you, and the Lord completely destroyed them; and what He did to you in the wilderness until you came to this place; and what He did to Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, the son of Reuben, when the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them, their households, their tents, and every living thing that followed them, among all Israel—but your own eyes have seen all the great work of the Lord which He did. You shall therefore keep every commandment which I am commanding you today, so that you may be strong and go in and possess the land into which you are about to cross to possess it; so that you may prolong your days on the land which the Lord swore to your fathers to give to them and to their descendants, a land flowing with milk and honey. For the land, into which you are entering to possess it, is not like the land of Egypt from which you came, where you used to sow your seed and water it with your foot like a vegetable garden. But the land into which you are about to cross to possess it, a land of hills and valleys, drinks water from the rain of heaven, a land for which the Lord your God cares; the eyes of the Lord your God are always on it, from the beginning even to the end of the year. It shall come about, if you listen obediently to my commandments which I am commanding you today, to love the Lord your God and to serve Him with all your heart and all your soul, that He will give the rain for your land in its season, the early and late rain, that you may gather in your grain and your new wine and your oil. He will give grass in your fields for your cattle, and you will eat and be satisfied.”

These things are so fantastic, because he is talking about what God did for them – how they saw and witnessed God's hand moving; how God established by giving them a land that was already a blessing. All they needed to do was to go in and live in that land with a heart and a drive to serve the Lord. I think that this is what we have experienced, at least in America, in United States. God gave a land, and gave it with blessings already upon it. And what was left to question is, how would we live? What would we do?

How would we treat those who were already inhabiting the land? What was our lifestyle to be, our choice in our relationship with the Lord?

He goes on in verse 16 and says, “Beware that your hearts are not deceived, and that you do not turn away and serve other gods and worship them.” This is the choice that we are left with. This is the choice we are facing, just like Joshua said to them, “Choose this day who you will serve.” That is what Joel is warning, that the day of the Lord comes as a time of decision. And I think that we are, in this age, facing a day of decision. We are facing a time when everyone, every nation's people, must decide how they are going to live – to serve God, or not to serve Him; to serve other gods, and worship those other gods – and reap the consequences of those choices. We are at a place of choice, a place of decision; and we, as believers, should be praying, not just for America or the country we live in, but for all of the nations. We should be praying that the peoples of those nations, when confronted with the decision to serve God, make that decision. We should also determine in our hearts to be the voice to them to assist them in making that decision, to choose the one true God, the Creator of the universe, and His Messiah, who will be King and reign over us as He brings His Kingdom. Make the right choice. And that should be our cry to the nations. That is the cry of evangelism.

Verses 17-18: “Or the anger of the Lord will be kindled against you, and He will shut up the heavens so that there will be no rain and the ground will not yield its fruit; and you will perish quickly from the good land which the Lord is giving you. You shall therefore impress these words of mine on your heart and on your soul; and you shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontals on your forehead.” There is something we should do with the Word of God. You know, we live in a day when everybody is trying to figure out, “What's going on with the world? What's going on with the climate? How is climate change happening?” Well, I will give you the foundation of climate change: it is the way we have lived in making a decision to follow other gods and not serve the Lord our God. You may say, “Well, it's carbon emissions.” Yes, probably carbon emissions have something to do with it, and you are looking at the natural level. What we need to be staring down is the spiritual reality that is at the foundation and root of what is taking place around us. Because all these things are really driving us to make a decision in this day of the Lord that has come to the valley of decision. We should take the Word of God, which is our greatest answer, and we should impress these words.

When I read these next verses, I think about what we haven't done in educating our children, because we have invited God out of our schools. One of the greatest things that we should have done is teach the truth of the Word of God, and the truth about God, to our children, in whatever nation we live; and instead, we have done the opposite. Listen to these words, from verses 18-21: “You shall therefore impress these words of mine on your heart and on your soul; and you shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. You shall teach them to your sons, talking of them when you sit in your house and when you walk along the road and when you lie down and when you rise up. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates, so that your days and the days of your sons may be multiplied on the land which the Lord swore to your fathers to give them, as long as the heavens remain above the earth.” So we see this reality. You say, “What has transpired in our nation?” Well, we have not lived the Shema prayer, that we love the Lord our God with all of our heart and all of our soul. This was the question they asked Yeshua, “What is the great commandment?” And that was what He repeated back to them. Those are the words we are reading here, that you teach them diligently to your sons. We have not imparted our faith and the Word of God to the generations that have grown up in America over the last fifty years. Instead, we have been dictated to not do that. We should have done it at home if we could not do it in school. We should have done it in church in a

greater way if we could not do it in school. But we should not have relented in teaching our sons the ways of God and how to walk with God. Because we did, we are reaping the consequences of that decision and that way of life. And now our children are living in confusion, not knowing male from female.

Verses 22-28: “For if you are careful to keep all this commandment which I am commanding you to do, to love the Lord your God, to walk in all His ways and hold fast to Him, then the Lord will drive out all these nations from before you, and you will dispossess nations greater and mightier than you. Every place on which the soul of your foot treads shall be yours; your border will be from the wilderness to Lebanon, and from the river, the river Euphrates, as far as the western sea. No man will be able to stand before you; the Lord your God will lay the dread of you and the fear of you on all the land on which you set foot, as He has spoken to you. See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse.” He was setting this before them, just like He said in Joel, “I am bringing you to the point of decision. I am giving you a choice. It is yours to choose.” It is the people of the nation; and that is what we need to do in this country called the United States of America. We the People need to decide if we want the blessing or the curse; and we need to make that decision, recognizing the consequences. “See, I am setting before you today a blessing and a curse: the blessing, if you listen to the commandments of the Lord your God, which I am commanding you today; and the curse, if you do not listen to the commandments of the Lord your God, but turn aside from the way which I am commanding you today, by following other gods which you have not known.”

I know I have taken time with this, and there are many verses, but it is so necessary that we get this deeply implanted in our hearts. We must back up and write once again the Word – the Word of God needs to be written on our foreheads. Remember when you get to the book of Revelation, everybody is worried about the sign of the beast that is stamped on your forehead. Well, before that, God seals His people on their forehead. We need that sealing of His Word on our forehead. We need it on our heart, on our soul. We need to make a decision that has the power, I believe, to direct a nation, and to speak to a nation. We need to write the Word on our doorposts. When we come into our houses, they need to be the house of God. We need to see a change in the way we as believers have walked.

Remember Second Chronicles 7:13-14. It says, “Listen, if I shut up the heavens, and all these negative things start taking place” – which, by the way, read the verses: they are taking place now – “and My people who are called by My name would seek My face and pray and get rid of their wicked ways....” We need to choose a different way to walk as believers in this nation. We have had the blessing of the Lord, and we are in the process of seeing it removed. The covering that has been over us in the sheep nations is removed if we, as the people, do not make the decision with all of our heart to seek God and to walk with Him.

I want us to really get this into our spirits and our minds when we talk about the restoration that is prophesied – because it is prophesied that there will be a restoration, and it is a positive thing. So, let's read that before we quit. I know we have been going for a while here, but it is worth hearing the good news. Ezekiel 11:17-21 says, “Therefore say, “Thus says the Lord God, ‘I will gather you from the peoples and assemble you out of the countries among which you have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel.’” When they come there, they will remove all its detestable things and all its abominations from it. And I will give them one heart, and put a new spirit within them. And I will take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in My statutes and keep My ordinances and do them. Then they will be My people, and I shall be their God. But as for

those whose hearts go after their detestable things and abominations, I will bring their conduct down on their heads,' declares the Lord God." This prophecy out of Ezekiel talks about these last days and what happens for Israel. And we know that Israel is always the symbol that God gives us, as any nation on the earth, of how to walk. I think that we can all see this restoration where God will hear our cry. He will bring us back together as one in the nations in which we live. We can come together, remove the detestable things, the abominations, from our midst. We can be of one heart, and He will give us a new spirit, and He will take the heart of stone out of our flesh. He will enable us to walk by His statutes and to keep His ordinances, and to see returned to us the blessings of God in our generation. I believe that for America. I believe it is certainly for Israel. And I believe it can happen for every nation, that we can worship the God of our fathers, and we can see the blessing and the covering of His Presence return to us. I believe for it. Let's all pray to that end. Amen.