

Joel 1:8-13 – What does real repentance look like?

Calvin, Armstrong, TSK, HebrewLexicon, Gill, Geneva, Barnes, Expositor, Handfuls, Delitzsch, Poole, JFB, Trapp, Henry, Clarke, INT, Brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ: **Judah did not learn from Israel's complacency** and their consequent captivity and dispersion throughout the world by Assyria in 722BC!

But God had made a covenant with Adam, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob to show mercy to their descendants. So God did not want to totally destroy Judah, the remnant, as he did to Israel, and be gone for good. So God declared through Joel he would bring plagues on Judah to open her eyes, cause her to repent and choose to stay close to her Bridegroom.

What would that real repentance look like – the kind God wanted to see? You will hear about that today!

Our headings are:

Sing Lamentations

Show Shame

Start with the Leaders

Our goals are: **That you will not just routinely say you are sorry, but that you learn to show true repentance so the church can be restored to its rightful place and resume kingdom work.**

Sing Lamentations

8 Lament like a virgin girded with sackcloth For the husband of her youth.

1. God called the Jews to lament- to sing sad songs that expressed their guilt and shame.

We have an entire book in the Bible called the Lamentations. These were the lamentations Jeremiah used just before the Babylonians came and took Judah captive. Obviously the Jews did not take these lamentations seriously. The sad songs did not evoke their emotions and move them to repentance.

2. God wanted the Jews to lament like a young bride (not virgin) whose husband died.

A young widow would put on sackcloth, the clothing of mourners, and strip herself of her bridal clothing.

Sackcloth was made of camel's hair and was for the poor ordinary people or **when one was mourning to show humility.**

Isn't it hard for newlyweds to do anything wrong to each other? Isn't true that newlyweds are passionate and excited. So death then would be painful. In the throes of passion, the bridegroom is killed and the bride mourned bitterly for him.

Similarly, God wanted them to feel deep pain when he would leave them. Look at a description of this love.

Jeremiah 2:2 "Go and cry in the hearing of Jerusalem, saying, 'Thus says the LORD: "I remember you, The **kindness of your youth, The love of your betrothal**, When you went after Me in the wilderness, In a land not sown.

Ezekiel 16:8 "When I passed by you again and looked upon you, indeed **your time was the time of love**; so I spread My wing over you and covered your nakedness. Yes, I swore an oath to you and entered into a covenant with you, and you became Mine," says the Lord GOD.

9 The grain offering and the drink offering Have been cut off from the house of the LORD; The priests mourn, who minister to the LORD.

3. The Jews would lament knowing that because of the plague, worship would be stopped – disappear.

The **husband would be gone**, the **food would be gone**, and **worship would be gone**.

The grain offering was made of fine flour mixed with oil and frankincense. The drink offering was wine. But there would be neither food nor drink for the people and the offerings. Lev 2:1. Ex 29:40-41.

The grain offering pictured believers' dedication to God and their support of the priests and Levites. But not anymore!

4. The priests would mourn because they would not be able to worship God, for the grain and the wine would be destroyed, and they would not have food for themselves, as the people would not be bringing anything to God's house.

1 Corinthians 9:13 Do you not know that those who minister the holy things eat of the things of the temple, and those who serve at the altar partake of the offerings of the altar?

There is no worse thing in a society than when worship is stopped. This was showing that the covenant was broken between God and man! Ichabod. The glory had departed.

Jeremiah 6:15 Were they ashamed when they had committed abomination? No! They were not at all ashamed; Nor did they know how to blush. Therefore they shall fall among those who fall; At the time I punish them, They shall be cast down," says the LORD.

10 The field is wasted, The land mourns; For the grain is ruined, The new wine is dried up, The oil fails.

5. In fact, the Jews would suffer from a collapse of the whole economy.

Their fields would be wasted as everything would be eaten up by the locusts.

The land would mourn. After captivity there would be no one to plant. The land looked dry and empty. This was a source of

great shame to the people of God. God touched everything and made it wither!

The grain would be ruined.

The new wine would dry up. Literally, the grape clusters would be dried up because the leaves would be gone.

The oil would fail. This means the olive trees or fruit would wither or the leaves would be eaten by the locusts.

6. Lessons:

a. Don't hold too tightly to creature comforts. (Though God's not against delicious food and enjoyments. Ps104.) **They can all be taken away in an instant!** Hold on to God instead. A heavenly life can quickly turn to a hellish life without holiness.

b. Learn to lament. Laments put Christians in the right mood to repent. Sing the sad songs, like the Psalms of imprecation, to know what you deserve. They will move you to repentance. Teach your children imprecatory Psalms!

c. You need to lament because today worship is being threatened with contempt. Churches are only allowed to have 5 people and Albertans are told they are not to sing (till the end of summer) when they livestream. You could sing in Walmart, but if you sing in church, you could be charged. The government says "**community gardens**" are essential services, but **not the communion of the saints!** That a \$880.00 fine. But don't think this is merely the evil of the state. **It is the sin of the church!** The state is more like Nebuchadnezzar, coming against the church. God wants to punish her! We must look in the mirror. Like the Bride of God that was preoccupied by self-indulgence, the church today cannot produce and flourish like she should.

d. If you're not near, physically and spiritually, with your husband, you can't have children!

e. You don't have to bring grain offerings to the church, but when you give your tithes, talents, and time to the Lord's work, you are fulfilling this command of God.

f. Thankfully, Jesus is the perfect sacrifice for you! Plead him before the Father!

Show Shame

11 Be **ashamed**, you **farmers**, Wail, you **vinedressers**...

1. The Lord then called the Jews to feel shame.

Saying sorry wasn't enough. Crying wasn't enough. They had to feel shame in their hearts.

2. The Lord pointed to 2 sets of persons who had to feel shame: farmers and vinedressers—those who represented food and drink.

The farmers had invested much time, but nothing would remain.

The vinedressers would prune and fertilize their crops, but nothing would remain.

11...For the **wheat and the barley**; Because the harvest of the field has perished. 12 **The vine has dried up**, And the **fig** tree has withered; The **pomegranate** tree, The **palm** tree also, And the **apple** tree—All the trees of the field are withered; **Surely joy has withered away** from the sons of men.

3. The Lord specifically pointed out the food and drinks that would disappear.

- a. **Barley** was the 1st crop, so they would have grain early in the year.
- b. **Wheat** was the last crop and it would sustain them through the winter.
- c. **The grape** vines would dry up. This was not just for enjoyment, but for medicines also.
- d. **Figs** would wither and die, so no fruit would remain. They could last a long time – even for years.
- e. **Pomegranate**. This was a tasty and refreshing fruit that was also used for making wine.
- f. **Date palms**. This was another important crop for the Jews. Dates were used for food, for sweetening, for roofs, for brooms, for medicines, and a very long lists of things.
- g. **Apples**. Used for beauty, food, and for pleasure. But this is a generic word for fruits like lemons, oranges, and pears. Worms likely took them and their leaves were destroyed. God gave all these details to make the hearer crave these things even more them...and regret their sins and repent.

The things in which they indulged God would take away.

4. And just as those trees would wither and their luxuries and essentials lost, so the joy of the Jews would wither away.

The saliva and the dung of the locusts were harmful to the trees.

And notice the play on words: Just as the leaves would wither and die, so the joy of men would wither and die.

5. Lessons:

a. It is possible to have the appearance of innocence while living in iniquity. Examine your hearts!

b. The call to show shame...was because the Jews had seen (and been involved in) sins, but treated them as nothing. They did not know how to blush! Isn't this the same thing today? Even Christians don't seem to think adultery is wrong, or taking God's name in vain is a violation, and that Sabbath breaking is sin! **Self-indulgence kills shame!**

c. The nations needs to confess sins also. Remember when Abram tried to find 10 godly men in Sodom? He could not. Sin /was too prevalent. So today. Sin is prevalent in the world, but sometimes it is hard to distinguish the church from the world. Confess them through Jesus Christ.

Start with the Leaders

13 **Gird yourselves** and lament, you priests; **Wail, you who minister** before the altar; Come, **lie all night in sackcloth**, You who minister to my God; For the grain offering and the drink offering Are withheld from the house of your God.

1. Along with the lamentations, along with the humiliation, God wanted repentance, true repentance, repentance through Christ.

This was Jeremiah's call.

Jeremiah 4:8 For this, **clothe yourself with sackcloth**, Lament and wail. For the fierce anger of the LORD Has not turned back from us.

Lamentations 2:10 The elders of the daughter of Zion Sit on the ground and keep silence; They throw dust on their heads And gird themselves with sackcloth. The virgins of Jerusalem Bow their heads to the ground.

This was the only means to end God's plague and avoid captivity.

James 4:9 Lament and mourn and weep! Let your laughter be turned to mourning and your joy to gloom. 10 **Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and He will lift you up.**

2. Repentance required preparation, so they had to put on sackcloth, lay down in the courts of the temple and repent.

Losing their brand-named robes for sackcloth would have been tough...but was necessary.

3. Repentance required time, so they were challenged to stay there all night.

This was the cry of the Psalmist... They had to switch off the TV and take time away from Instagram!

4. Repentance required leadership; leadership had to start!

5. Lessons:

a. The removal of plagues does not come by crying and complaining; plagues are removed only by true repentance.

b. Your repentance must be seen. Because these sins are public, repentance has to be in public, and marked by a change in life. Saying you will change, even in public, is not enough.

c. If worship is not done, man will be undone.

d. All men are to pray, but they must be led by leaders, ministers and elders! How terrible if ministers don't pray and teach others to pray-intense prayer-lengthy prayers when required- and sensible prayers-prayers of repentance! Remember, fathers are the ministers to their children. Husbands are ministers to their wives.

Conclusion:

God wanted to save Judah from captivity, so he urged Judah to **sing songs of lamentations** to humble her, and he **wanted Judah to see her shame** so she would **cry out in repentance**.

Brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ:

1. Don't just sing happy Psalms of God's love and his promises; sing Psalms of judgment – the Psalm of imprecation. Be reminded of what you truly deserve when you indulge yourself and wander away from God.

2. Read from history and read God's Word so you can see what happens when God's covenant people become complacent in their lives. Don't imagine that because things were relatively good in the past, that somehow those things will continue without faithful living.

3. Your spiritual leaders and you must begin and cry out in confession for the sin of indifference toward God, for complacency in worship, and for love of pleasure and profit. If you do, you will be reassured that Jesus died for all your sins.

Finally, maybe you don't have a relationship with God, but you realize today that without a relationship with God and without his Son dying for your sins you will be going to hell forever. Why not ask God to make you his child? If you ask sincerely, you will hear.