

The Day of the Lord

An Expository “Journey” Through the Prophecy of Joel

3-Rend Your Heart- Not Your Garments; What Genuine Repentance Looks Like- Part 1

August 23, 2020

Joel 2:1-17

1 Blow a trumpet in Zion, And sound an alarm on My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, For the day of the Lord is coming; Surely it is near,

2 A day of darkness and gloom, A day of clouds and thick darkness. As the dawn is spread over the mountains, *So* there is a great and mighty people; There has never been *anything* like it, Nor will there be again after it To the years of many generations.

3 A fire consumes before them And behind them a flame burns. The land is like the garden of Eden before them But a desolate wilderness behind them, And nothing at all escapes them.

4 Their appearance is like the appearance of horses; And like war horses, so they run.

5 With a noise as of chariots They leap on the tops of the mountains, Like the crackling of a flame of fire consuming the stubble, Like a mighty people arranged for battle.

6 Before them the people are in anguish; All faces turn pale.

7 They run like mighty men, They climb the wall like soldiers; And they each march in line, Nor do they deviate from their paths.

8 They do not crowd each other, They march everyone in his path; When they burst through the defenses, They do not break ranks.

9 They rush on the city, They run on the wall; They climb into the houses, They enter through the windows like a thief.

10 Before them the earth quakes, The heavens tremble, The sun and the moon grow dark And the stars lose their brightness.

11 The Lord utters His voice before His army; Surely His camp is very great, For strong is he who carries out His word. The day of the Lord is indeed great and very awesome, And who can endure it?

12 "Yet even now," declares the Lord, "Return to Me with all your heart, And with fasting, weeping and mourning;

13 And rend your heart and not your garments." Now return to the Lord your God, For He is gracious and compassionate, Slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness And relenting of evil.

14 Who knows whether He will *not* turn and relent And leave a blessing behind Him, *Even* a grain offering and a drink offering For the Lord your God?

15 Blow a trumpet in Zion, Consecrate a fast, proclaim a solemn assembly,

16 Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, Assemble the elders, Gather the children and the nursing infants. Let the bridegroom come out of his room And the bride out of her *bridal* chamber.

17 Let the priests, the Lord's ministers, Weep between the porch and the altar, And let them say, "Spare Your people, O Lord, And do not make Your inheritance a reproach, A byword among the nations. Why should they among the peoples say, 'Where is their God?'"

To the Glory of God

Now the words, “**Repent**”; “**Repentance**”; and “**Repented**” are found in the sacred Writings 69 times. So, “Repentance” is not strange or odd to the Bible or to those who love the Bible. It is a fairly common word describing a very common idea. In the New Testament, the term comes from a Greek word (*metanoieo*; Strong's#3340) that means: *To change one's mind*. The Hebrew word that Joel and the other Old Testament writers used (*nacham*; Strong's #5162) means: *To regret; and to suffer grief*.

The concept of Repentance has been translated as, “*after-wit*,” or “*after-wisdom*,” It is the individual finding out that he was wrong- usually AFTER he has sinned. But even though that is the actual meaning of the root word- the *concept* of Repentance has come to mean much more than

that. Perhaps there is no better definition of Repentance than that which is given in an old children's hymnbook:

'Tis not enough to say
We're sorry and repent
Yet still go on from day to day
Just as we always went

Repentance is to leave
The sins we loved before,
And show that we in earnest grieve,
By doing so no more."

Charles Spurgeon wrote:

“**Repentance** is a discovery of the evil of sin, a mourning that we have committed it, along with a resolution to forsake it. It is, in fact, a change of mind of a very deep and practical character, which makes the man love what once he hated, and hate what once he loved. **Conversion**, if translated, means a turning round, a turning from, and a turning to- a turning from sin, a turning to holiness- a turning from carelessness to thought, from the world to heaven, from self to Jesus- a complete turning. . . **Regeneration** is the implanting of a new nature, and one of the earliest signs of that is, a faith in Christ, and a repentance of sin, and a consequent conversion from that which is evil to that which is good.”

Notice the connection Spurgeon made between **Regeneration**; **Repentance**; and **Conversion**. Because one, *necessarily*, leads to the other. If a person experiences the Miracle of the New Birth (**Regeneration**) one of the results that this person has truly been born again- is they are brought to a real, deep, and effective **Repentance**. And only in, by, and through genuine **Repentance** can a person experience **Conversion** (Justification).

J. I. Packer said:

“Repentance means turning from as much as you know of your sin to give as much as you know of yourself to as much as you know of God. And as our knowledge grows at these three points so our practice of repentance has to be

enlarged.”

Jonathan Edwards said,

"Thus it is essential to Christianity that we repent of our sins, that we be convinced of our own sinfulness, and that we are sensible we have justly exposed ourselves to God's wrath, and that our hearts do renounce all sin, and that we do with our whole hearts embrace Christ as our only Savior; and that we love him above all, and are willing for his sake to forsake all, and that we do give up ourselves to be entirely and forever his, etc. Such things as these do as much belong to the essence of Christianity, as the belief of any of the doctrines of the gospel."

John Wesley said,

"... the only way under heaven to this religion is to **'repent and believe the gospel;'** or, (as the Apostle words it,) **'repentance towards God, and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ.'** And as to the first acceptance or pardon, does not all experience as well as Scripture prove, that no man ever yet truly believed the gospel who did not first repent? Repentance therefore we cannot deny to be necessarily previous to faith."

The Puritan, Thomas Watson said,

"Some bless themselves that they have a stock of knowledge, but what is knowledge good for without repentance? It is better to mortify one sin than to understand all mysteries. Impure speculatists do but resemble Satan transformed into an angel of light. Learning and a bad heart is like a fair face with a cancer in the breast. Knowledge without repentance will be but a torch to light men to hell." "Repentance is necessary: **'except ye repent, ye shall all likewise perish'** (Luke 13.5). There is no rowing to paradise except upon the stream of repenting tears. Repentance is required as a qualification. It is not so much to endear us to Christ as to endear Christ to us. Till sin be bitter, Christ will not be sweet." **"He commandeth all men everywhere to repent'** (Acts 17.30). Repentance is not arbitrary. It is not left to our choice whether or not we will repent, but it is an indispensable command. God has enacted a law in the High Court of heaven that no sinner shall be saved except the repenting sinner, and he will not break his own law Though all the angels

should stand before God and beg the life of an unrepenting person, God would not grant it."

And, on another occasion, Watson also said,

"If God should save men without repentance, making no discrimination, then by this rule he must save all, not only men, but devils."

Now when the locust invasion of 1915 struck Palestine and Syria- the Desolation was as great as anyone could possibly have imagined. The first swarms appeared in March of that year- while the final stages did not depart until early summer. And during that four- or five-month period- 71,500 square miles of earth was stripped of every living green thing. Nothing survived. All the vines; all the fig trees; and all the grain was gone. But it didn't stop there. Every form of life that depended on those living green things- also died: cows, horses, mules, and goats. And even people. It is estimated that as many as 25,000 people died- either directly or indirectly as a result of that locust Invasion. But as bad as the Destruction was- the locusts finally did move on. And in time, the land and the people- recovered.

Now since the Invasion of locusts in Judah back in Joel's day was, no doubt, very *similar* to the plague of 1915- you would think that the Prophet would have spoken at least a few encouraging words. He might have said, "*Hang in there!*" or "*Things are bad, but they'll get better.*" He might have even quoted that great Reformed theologian, Doris Day and said, "*Que-sera-sera- whatever will be- will be*". Or he might have implemented a little humanistic psychology and said, "*The important thing is to always look up! After all, every cloud has a silver lining.*"

Yet Joel didn't do that. Instead of suggesting that things would get *better*- the Prophet was moved by God the Holy Spirit to tell the people that the *worst* was yet to come. The Destruction of the locusts was total- but, according to Joel- it was as *nothing* compared to the final Judgment of God- which was almost around the corner.

And this is the explanation of the apparent shift in the Imagery that we find in Chapter 2. The description in chapter 1 is literal. For example:

- The various stages of the locusts are specified (v. 4)
- The destruction of vines, grain, and trees is described quite clearly (vv.

7-12)

... and Judah was told to mourn for the land.

But in Chapter 2- the literal description of the 3-4" bugs is *transformed* by the use of very powerful and frightening imagery. And the insects that caused them so much trouble back in Chapter 1- begin to be described as an even worse; more dangerous; and more powerful- "people"- a well-trained; well organized "Army" of "people". For example:

Joel 2:1-11

1 Blow a trumpet in Zion, And sound an alarm on My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, For the day of the Lord is coming; Surely it is near,

2 A day of darkness and gloom, A day of clouds and thick darkness. As the dawn is spread over the mountains, *So* there is a great and mighty people; There has never been *anything* like it, Nor will there be again after it To the years of many generations.

3 A fire consumes before them And behind them a flame burns. The land is like the garden of Eden before them But a desolate wilderness behind them, And nothing at all escapes them.

4 Their appearance is like the appearance of horses; And like war horses, so they run.

5 With a noise as of chariots They leap on the tops of the mountains, Like the crackling of a flame of fire consuming the stubble, Like a mighty people arranged for battle.

6 Before them the people are in anguish; All faces turn pale.

7 They run like mighty men, They climb the wall like soldiers; And they each march in line, Nor do they deviate from their paths.

8 They do not crowd each other, They march everyone in his path; When they burst through the defenses, They do not break ranks.

9 They rush on the city, They run on the wall; They climb into the houses, They enter through the windows like a thief.

10 Before them the earth quakes, The heavens tremble, The sun and the moon grow dark And the stars lose their brightness.

... and then in verse 11, Joel pulls back the sheet and lifts the veil and tells the Jewish nation what is really happening.

The Lord utters His voice before His army; Surely His camp is very great, For strong is he who carries out His word. The day of the Lord is indeed great and very awesome, And who can endure it?

Now, understandably- many scholars teach that Joel is describing a *military* Invasion- perhaps by the Syrian or Babylonian armies. Others have taken both Chapters as referring only to nothing but literal locusts. Probably neither is completely right. But what is almost certain, is that Joel is saying that the original, literal Invasion of locusts- is actually a Divine Warning of even *worse* things to come- unless the people repent.

So, even though there had been several locust Invasions before Joel's day; and even though there would be others in the future- THIS Invasion was different. THIS Invasion was a Sign; a Symbol of something that would change the course of human history. THIS Invasion was symbolic of something so great and so terrible- that would transform every single person on the face of the earth- forever!

Now there is an important clue to Joel's Purpose in the way he begins Chapter 2. The Prophet begins the 2nd Chapter NOT with a view to the Past- like he did in Chapter 1 ("**Has anything like this happened in your days Or in your father's days?**" v. 2), but in anticipation of the Future ("**Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, For the day of the Lord is coming; Surely it is near,** v. 1).

The Invasion described in Chapter 1 has already happened. But the Invasion described in Chapter 2 has NOT yet happened- even though it is threatening. So, Joel wants to "sound the alarm" so that those who are threatened by the 2nd- even *greater* Invasion might get ready for it.

But how would Joel instruct the people to prepare for this 2nd "Day of the Lord"? By storing up ammunition? No. By sharpening their swords? No. By training the people in hand-to-hand combat? No. How? By Fasting; and Weeping; and Mourning; and Praying; and Repenting.

Joel 2:12-17

"Yet even now," declares the Lord, "Return to Me with all your heart, And

with fasting, weeping and mourning; And rend your heart and not your garments." Now return to the Lord your God, For He is gracious and compassionate, Slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness And relenting of evil. Who knows whether He will *not* turn and relent And leave a blessing behind Him, *Even* a grain offering and a drink offering For the Lord your God? Blow a trumpet in Zion, Consecrate a fast, proclaim a solemn assembly, Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, Assemble the elders, Gather the children and the nursing infants. Let the bridegroom come out of his room And the bride out of her *bridal* chamber. Let the priests, the Lord's ministers, Weep between the porch and the altar, And let them say, "Spare Your people, O Lord, And do not make Your inheritance a reproach, A byword among the nations. Why should they among the peoples say, 'Where is their God?'"

Here we see the imagery of intense Grief and Weeping- associated with Repentance. We see people so overtaken with Agony over their Sins- that they refuse to eat. We see people so serious about being heard by God- that they weep and walk as they pray- crying out to God for Mercy and Forgiveness.

Now this Passage illustrates something that is almost completely foreign to the modern Church: a Way to pray and mourn and grieve over Sin that is so intense; so vocal; so powerful- that many today are taken aback. Most people alive today have never even heard of anything like this- and fewer than that have actually participated in this. It is called, "A Solemn Assembly".

Joel 2:15&16

Blow a trumpet in Zion, Consecrate a fast, proclaim a solemn assembly, Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, Assemble the elders, Gather the children and the nursing infants. Let the bridegroom come out of his room And the bride out of her *bridal* chamber.

A Solemn Assembly is a scheduled, planned Event- usually accompanied by a "called" Fast- where the "people of God" (the Church) are "called" to assemble together. So, when Joel says,

"Blow the trumpet in Zion"

... he is using the term, "Zion" (the express habitation of God; i.e.

Jerusalem) to refer to all of God's people. The New Covenant way to understand this- is to equate Zion with the Church. "Blowing the trumpet" usually meant that Jerusalem was under attack and so the leaders "blow the trumpet" to sound the alarm to warn the people that the enemy is approaching the gates of the city and to prepare themselves for battle.

Under the superior New Covenant- this symbolizes times (seasons) when there is something happening that is so serious and so important that the Leadership "calls" the entire Church to gather together to fast and pray about a particular situation. So, Christians do not "go to war" against the enemy like the Jews did in the Old Testament. Our weapons are not swords and spears- but Prayer and Fasting. In **2Corinthians 10:4-6**- the Apostle Paul said

for the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh, but divinely powerful for the destruction of fortresses. *We are* destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and *we are* taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, and we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete.

Although not specifically labeled as "Solemn Assemblies" there are a few examples in the New Testament where the Leaders of the Church gathered the people together to cry out to God for a specific need. For example in **Luke 24:49**- Jesus had told the disciples to go to the Upper Room and pray-

... until you are clothed with power from on high.

Now over 500 people saw Jesus bodily ascend into Heaven. But only 120 obeyed the Lord and went into that Upper Room and prayed. And, depending on how you count the days- those 120 people (including the mother of Jesus) prayed anywhere from ten- to 40 days without stopping. So, day and night- those 120 people cried out to God. And at the end of that "season" of Prayer and Fasting Dr. Luke records what happened:

The Acts 2:1-4

When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. And there appeared to them

tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance.

... and the Church of Jesus was born!

Also, in **The Acts 12**- Dr. Luke records that the Apostle James has been martyred and Peter had been imprisoned. The Church (although not able to assemble in the church building) gathered at the “**house of Mary, the mother of (the Apostle) John**” to pray (and fast). Once again, God moved in a spectacular way and an angel of the Lord came and set Peter free.

Now even though Joel does not tell us the specific Sin- he did instruct the Leaders to gather the people together in a Solemn Assembly to fast and pray and weep and mourn over whatever their Sin was.

Now back in Joel’s day- Solemn Assemblies were designed to illustrate; define; and identify a particular Sin or even a collection of Sins- in very clear detail- along with all of its horrific implications and consequences. So, evidently, during the Solemn Assembly- the Old Testament Scriptures were read and taught so the people could understand what they had done wrong. And then, time was given to mourn and grieve and pray about that Sin- so that the correct level and intensity of seriousness would be attached to the Offense. Some ancient rabbinical writings suggest that specific Plans were also made (both individually and corporately) so as to avoid that Sin in the future.

Now notice that there is mention again of “the Day of the LORD.” in Chapter 2:

Blow a trumpet in Zion, And sound an alarm on My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, For the day of the Lord is coming; Surely it is near,

... and this time- the “Day of the Lord” is described:

A day of darkness and gloom, A day of clouds and thick darkness. As the dawn is spread over the mountains, *So* there is a great and mighty people; There has never been *anything* like it, Nor will there be again after it To the years of many generations.

Now this is the first mention of the “Day of the Lord” in the so-

called “Minor Prophets”, since it is absent from **Hosea**, at least by name. But the “Day of the Lord” is a major theme both in these Prophets and in other biblical literature.

The “Day of the LORD” (literally, “the Day of Yahweh”) is a technical phrase used initially by the Old Testament Prophets to designate a future period of catastrophic Judgment. Sometimes, the references are to destructive Events which were present at the time the Prophecy was given (like the locust Plague in Chapter 1). But always there is overriding reference to an even *more* intense, *final* Judgment by God.

So, the “Day of the Lord” is a time in which Yahweh will break His Silence and personally intervene and insert Himself into Human History to judge both Israel and the gentile nations of the world. This “twofold use” of the phrase “Day of the Lord” is illustrated by the way we use the word “Armageddon,” which is also a biblical term.

Armageddon refers to the great, final Conflict to be fought between the Powers of Good and Evil on the plain of Megiddo in northern Palestine. It is the final Holocaust. Yet, many people have used that term to describe a great and terrible Event that occurred in their day.

For example, General Douglas MacArthur used the word, “Armageddon” in this way in his observations on World War II:

“We have had our last chance. If we will not devise some greater and more equitable system, Armageddon will be at our door.”

... but this word is also used of any particularly destructive Conflict.

The characteristics of the “Day of the Lord” are seen in the following quotations. Isaiah prophesied against the people of God when he said,

Isaiah 13:6, 9&10

Wail, for the day of the Lord is near! It will come as destruction from the Almighty. Behold, the day of the Lord is coming, Cruel, with fury and burning anger, To make the land a desolation; And He will exterminate its sinners from it. For the stars of heaven and their constellations Will not flash forth their light; The sun will be dark when it rises And the moon will not shed its light.

Ezekiel, however, cried out against the wickedness of Gentile nations,

Ezekiel 30:2-8

"Son of man, prophesy and say, 'Thus says the Lord God, 'Wail, 'Alas for the day!' 'For the day is near, Even the day of the Lord is near; It will be a day of clouds, A time *of doom* for the nations. "A sword will come upon Egypt, And anguish will be in Ethiopia; When the slain fall in Egypt, They take away her wealth, And her foundations are torn down. "Ethiopia, Put, Lud, all Arabia, Libya and the people of the land that is in league will fall with them by the sword." 'Thus says the Lord, "Indeed, those who support Egypt will fall And the pride of her power will come down; From Migdol *to* Syene They will fall within her by the sword," Declares the Lord God. "They will be desolate In the midst of the desolated lands; And her cities will be In the midst of the devastated cities. "And they will know that I am the Lord, When I set a fire in Egypt And all her helpers are broken.

... while the Prophet Amos was most explicit:

Amos 5:18-20

Alas, you who are longing for the day of the Lord, For what purpose *will* the day of the Lord *be* to you? It *will be* darkness and not light; As when a man flees from a lion And a bear meets him, Or goes home, leans his hand against the wall And a snake bites him. *Will* not the day of the Lord *be* darkness instead of light, Even gloom with no brightness in it?

. and in Zephaniah 1:14-18- the Prophet said,

Near is the great day of the Lord, Near and coming very quickly; Listen, the day of the Lord! In it the warrior cries out bitterly. A day of wrath is that day, A day of trouble and distress, A day of destruction and desolation, A day of darkness and gloom, A day of clouds and thick darkness, A day of trumpet and battle cry Against the fortified cities And the high corner towers. I will bring distress on men So that they will walk like the blind, Because they have sinned against the Lord; And their blood will be poured out like dust And their flesh like dung. Neither their silver nor their gold Will be able to deliver them On the day of the Lord's wrath; And all the earth will be devoured In the fire of His jealousy, For He will make a complete end, Indeed a terrifying one, Of all the inhabitants of the earth.

Now, it is obvious from the references to the darkening of the sun, moon, and stars in several of these Passages that this is the event referred

to by Jesus in **Matthew 24:29-31**. In that Passage, Jesus quotes the verses in **Isaiah** dealing with the “Day of the Lord” and applies them to the Time when He will judge the world.

Peter also refers to this Day, saying,

2Peter 3:10

But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, in which the heavens will pass away with a roar and the elements will be destroyed with intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up.

From an examination of these and other Passages (cf. **Jeremiah 46:10; Lamentations 2:22; Zechariah 14:1-7; Malachi 4:5**) several things are clear.

- The “Day of the Lord” is a time of God’s Judgment
- The time is still future
- It is accompanied by a time of great Trouble on earth (i.e. the locusts)
- It is to be followed by the Reign of the Lord Jesus Christ

... and Joel says that Day is coming.

So, the Disasters of this Life- locust Invasions; Plagues; Famines; Wars; Invasions by other nations; and natural Catastrophes- as bad and as destructive as these things may be- are small Signs of any even *greater* Wrath to be revealed.

But the Goal of Joel’s Prophecies are NOT *only* to tell the people how bad they have been. It is NOT to *only* assign Blame for all their Troubles. It is NOT to *only* illustrate how angry God is about Sin and Worldliness. The primary Goal of Joel (and every other Prophet and godly Minister) is to bring the people to a place of genuine Repentance. For any human- to illustrate how angry God is about Sin- and yet NOT give the sinner any Hope that he may repent and that God will (perhaps) turn the Wrath away- is for us to do the Work of satan.

Satan *always and only* condemns. Satan *always and only* assigns Blame. Satan *always and only* reminds people how sinful they have been- but he NEVER allows for Conviction; Repentance; and a path to alleviate the Wrath of God.

For example, during Jesus’ earthly Ministry- He came across a

man, who was born blind. But for many years prior, those who followed Jesus, had been schooled by the Pharisees to ONLY assign Blame for a situation like this. So, they asked Jesus,

John 9:1b

... Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents, that he would be born blind?

Notice that nobody actually cared about the man. Nobody wanted to help him. At all. All they cared about was to find out who to blame. Obviously, they had forgotten what God told Moses back in **Exodus 4:11**:

The Lord said to him, "Who has made man's mouth? Or who makes *him* mute or deaf, or seeing or blind? Is it not I, the Lord?"

So, Jesus said to them,

John 9:3b&4

... *It was neither that this man sinned, nor his parents; but it was so that the works of God might be displayed in him. We must work the works of Him who sent Me as long as it is day; night is coming when no one can work.*

... and then Jesus healed this man in a very strange way.

Yet, for the next 26 verses- instead of rejoicing that a blind man could now see- the Pharisees put this man and his parents under such intense scrutiny- that the parents actually betrayed their own son- out of fear! The problem was their Man-made theology would not allow a man born blind to be in Favor with God. To the Pharisees- his blindness was "proof" that he was being judged (condemned) by God.

The Pharisees actually convened a Council to try the man; and they finally *excommunicated* him from the synagogue- all for the "crime" of being healed by Jesus!

So, the man God uses- thunders God's Condemnation of Sin and Worldliness. And he thunders that Condemnation clearly; without hesitation; and unapologetically. But the man God uses- ALWAYS along with that Condemnation of Sin- gives the sinner Hope that he can repent; and (perhaps) fall under the Mercy of God.

So, unlike satan, God's Goal (and ours) is to bring the worst sinner to a place of genuine Conviction- so they may repent and AVOID the promised

Judgment. So, it is no surprise that the next section of Chapter 2 contains a direct and moving appeal for Repentance.

Joel 2:12-14

"Yet even now," declares the Lord, "Return to Me with all your heart, And with fasting, weeping and mourning; And rend your heart and not your garments." Now return to the Lord your God, For He is gracious and compassionate, Slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness And relenting of evil. Who knows whether He will *not* turn and relent And leave a blessing behind Him, *Even* a grain offering and a drink offering For the Lord your God?

Notice what this "Divine Appeal to Repent" contains:

- An *analysis* of true Repentance (vv. 12-13)
- *Incentives* for that Repentance (vv. 13-14).

Also notice that as Joel speaks of Repentance- the emphasis is on the human heart. And that is simply to illustrate that the Prophet desires a *true* Repentance; a *sincere* Repentance; a *genuine* Repentance- and NOT a *fake* Repentance.

Also notice (v.12) that Joel speaks of different "outward expressions" of this *true* Repentance:

- Fasting
- Weeping
- Mourning

So, we must understand that *outward* Expressions of an *inward* Reality are both Right and Valuable. For example, Baptism is an *outward* Expression; an *outward, visible, tangible* Sign of an *inward* Reality. But we know that no amount of water can wash Sin away. Yet, even though that is true- we are **COMMANDED** by the Authority of Scripture- to be baptized in water. So, Baptism is an *outward* Sign of **ALREADY** having our Sins washed away in, by, and through Jesus Christ.

But the Fall made human beings to always be lopsided. So, we are either *over-emphasizing* the outward Signs- to the *exclusion* of the inward

Reality OR we are *minimizing* or even *eliminating* the outward Sign altogether- using the inward Reality as “justification.”

For example, there is a literal sea of people in the modern Church, who have never been baptized. And for *some* of them- their excuse is the fact that they have truly been reborn by a sovereign Act of the Spirit of God. Yet, instead of being humbled by that Experience; and following Jesus in Obedience- they *refuse* to be baptized- thinking that it is completely unnecessary- since they have the Reality of the new Birth.

Yet others are wrongly trusting in the fact that they have been baptized in water, as “proof” that they are saved- rather than having actually experienced the Miracle of the New Birth.

So, what God and Joel are against- are outward Expressions that do NOT correspond with an inward Reality. In **1Samuel 16:7**- God told the Prophet Samuel;

Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for God *sees* not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.

.. and this is why Joel told the people,

... rend your heart and not your garments ...

... even though tearing their garments over Sin was common.

Now the Hebrew word, “Kriah” means: *tearing*. And tearing or ripping the garment was an expression of great grief or anger or even bewilderment. For example, it was common when a Jew experienced the death of a loved one- that he would tear his garment in response. And as he tore his garment- he would exclaim:

Barukh atah Adonai Eloheinu melekh ha'olam dayan ha'emet.

...which means: *Blessed are You, Adonai Our God, Ruler of the Universe, the True Judge*. And the torn garment was worn for seven or even thirty days- as an *outward* Expression of an *inward* broken heart. When the 3 “friends” of Job saw him with boils all over his body- **Job 2:12&13** says,

When they lifted up their eyes at a distance and did not recognize him, they

raised their voices and wept. And each of them tore his robe and they threw dust over their heads toward the sky. Then they sat down on the ground with him for seven days and seven nights with no one speaking a word to him, for they saw that *his* pain was very great.

Also, when a Jew would hear someone blaspheme God- he would tear his garment- in response. And that was supposedly an *outward* Sign of an *inward* rejection and horror at the blasphemy. But not all tearing of garments was legitimate. Some were completely hypocritical. For example, the Pharisees tore their garments all the time- in response to something Jesus either infallibly said or sinlessly did.

So, is it possible for someone to use the *outward* Expression as a ruse? Of course. Is it possible that somebody will simply “put on a show” by fasting- so as to make himself look “godly” or “spiritual”? Yes. So, because that danger exists- should we then *prohibit* the *outward* Expression of Fasting? No. Why not? Because God commanded that we fast. So, how do we eliminate the frauds? We can't. But what if they use the *outward* Expression to deceive someone? They might. But God will mark it all down. Here is what Jesus said in **Matthew 13:24-30**:

The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while his men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went away. But when the wheat sprouted and bore grain, then the tares became evident also. The slaves of the landowner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?' And he said to them, 'An enemy has done this!' The slaves said to him, 'Do you want us, then, to go and gather them up?' But he said, 'No; for while you are gathering up the tares, you may uproot the wheat with them. Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn.

So, to the extent that some people's Baptism results in nothing more than them getting wet- to that very *same* extent- some people are determined to try to fool others into thinking that they are more spiritual and godly than they really are by fasting- when they really aren't repenting at all. But to teach that, because some may abuse it- therefore we should downplay; minimize; or eleven eliminate Fasting- is unbiblical. And to teach

that Fasting has been done away with in the New Covenant is false Teaching.

Joel said that the people of God are to rend their hearts- not their garments (v. 13). But you can't *force* that broken heartedness on others- any more than you can *force* that broken- heartedness on yourself. And that is *why* it is so much easier to rend our garments rather than our hearts. People always retreat into *outward* Expressions- when they find the *inward* Reality to be too hard or impossible.

Yet the Goal of God in identifying Sin- is ALWAYS for us to be "heartbroken" over it. And only by being genuinely heartbroken over our Sin will we actually turn from it and find God's Favor again. But the kicker is that being truly heartbroken over Sin- is a sovereign Work of God the Holy Spirit. You can't fake it. You can't "gin it up". And you can't make it happen. God has either broken your heart over your Sin or He hasn't. And if He has- then it will be much harder for you to engage in it- in the future. And if He hasn't- then you will engage in it often and with delight.

But one thing we *can* do. We can ask God to make us to be a people, who *are* heartbroken over our Sin. We can cry to God to change us to be a people like that. And as we cry- we should ask God to take out of us- *anything* that would hinder that from being true. And we should ask God to add to our lives- *whatever He sees*- that will make us to be a people who are truly heartbroken over Sin. And then we will be able to rend our hearts and not our garments.

Amen. Let's pray.

© 2020 by The Covenant of Peace Church. All rights reserved. Printed in the United States of America

The Covenant of Peace Church 13600 John Clark Road Gulfport, Mississippi 39503 228.832.7729

Scripture quotations, except those noted otherwise, are from *The New American Standard Bible* © 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.

This is a single transcript in a larger series of Sermons taken from a verse by verse "journey" through the **Book of the Prophecy of Joel**. You are free to reproduce it and distribute it as the Lord leads you- without cost or reimbursement to us with the stipulation that you may not add anything or take anything away from this transcript without the express written permission of The Covenant of Peace Church and that this complete copyright statement be at the end of all copies.

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.