

Joel: The Prophet of Fire
God's Remedy for National Crisis, Part 1
Joel 2:12-27
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Review:

- I. In Chapter 1 of Joel God sounded the Alarm – The locust are coming!
- II. In Chapter 2 he made an appeal–Repent or else! (Sounds kind of like Jonah chapter 3 doesn't it?)
- III. In Chapter 4 we will see that God made an announcement–and we will describe that when we come to it.

Joel may have been one of the first writing prophets. Why writing prophets? Because there were quite a few that prophesied to kings, nations and other individuals that did not write a book or at least one that was included in the inspired canon of Scripture. Elijah and Elisha were prophets but we don't have a book by them. Nathan was a Prophet but we don't have any of his writings. So you see that Joel was a writing prophet.

We do not always know why disasters come. Sometimes for evil and sometimes for greater glory! Look at Luke 13:1-5 - Jesus makes the point that all men everywhere need to repent or they will all likewise perish. Repent or Perish! It may sound a little too rough of a message but the kind and gracious Lord Jesus uses it. Sometimes God has larger purposes beyond our ability to understand. So we rest ourselves in the sovereign purpose of God, knowing that God is a good and when we cannot trace His hand, we can always trust His heart.

- 1) God has a **prescription** for repentance – (verse 12-17) God's prescription is repentance. That is always His prescription for sin. John the Baptist came and preached, "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." The Lord Jesus Christ came and He preached "repent." The Bible tells us that the message of the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ begins with the message of "repent." The Bible says that there must be repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. Repentance is the first approach of the soul to God in

turning from sin. This is not a pleasant prescription. Repentance is not an easy matter. Repentance is a change of mind. The word, repent, literally means to change the mind. It is a change of mind about your sin, a change about yourself, a change about the Lord Jesus Christ. When we truly repent of our sins:

- we will abhor our sins in our mind will,
- we will abominate our sins in our heart,
- we will abandon our sins with our will. That's what true repentance is all about. Repentance is not a trot down an isle and a fire insurance policy for the future or a deal making session with God. Repentance is a cleansing work of god and a complete yielding of our will to him. Please notice:

a) Repentance takes **time** - verse 1

- i) The time is now – the time to get right with God is when you know there is a problem. We should not store up offenses but confess them as they are revealed to us.
- ii) The time is plenty – God is not willing that any should perish... all should repent and he is patient. He is saying that
- iii) It's not too late. You may think it's too late. It's not too late. You may think you have gone too far. You have not gone too far.

b) Repentance is **heart-rending**. Verse 1 Without any doubt the heart of the matter is the matter of the heart. "Turn to me with all your heart." **What breaks your heart?** I asked a week or two ago what makes you mad? What makes you glad? What makes you sad and what makes you bad? If you didn't get that sermon on Jonah chapter 4 you need it. Now I ask "what breaks your heart?? Does getting caught doing wrong break your heart? Did you ever get caught with your hand in the cookie jar so to speak? Repentance is not only sorrow over getting caught; repentance is brokenness over the offense. Does knowing that we have transgressed break our heart? When David was repenting of his sin in Psalm 51:17 it says, "The sacrifices of God are a contrite spirit, and a contrite and broken heart, o God, thou wilt not despise. Turn with all of your heart with fasting and weeping and mourning."

- i) Do you know that in the modern fast paced, success oriented world has dictated to the church that we have to be success oriented too? How many? How big? How much money? God is going to measure us

according to his scale of repentance and not according to our scale of riches and success. The church at Laodicea measured their wealth and success and Jesus measured their hearts. His proscription...

REPENT!

- c) Repentance is not found in **ritual**. Verse 13 - He says in verse 13, "And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the Lord your God." The Jewish people were famous for what we read right here. Many times they would tear their garments. (Ezra, Mordecai, and Kings Ahab and Manasseh) It was a sign of mourning, but if they were not careful it had come to be a routine ritual. If we are not careful that's the way spiritual matters become with us. --- National Days of Prayer, Prayer meetings, even the Lord's Prayer. We put up signs of repentance but without the sincerity.
 - i) There has to be a change not only in you outward ceremony but also in your lifestyle to illustrate that you have genuinely repented. You haven't repented unless you have changed your behavior, unless you have quit doing the things you were doing and truly turned back to the Lord. To obey is better than to sacrifice and obedience better than the fat of rams...
- d) Repentance is a step **toward God** verse 13 – God hasn't gone anywhere we have. He says in verse 13, Return to the LORD your God, For He *is* gracious and merciful, Slow to anger, and of great kindness; And He relents from doing harm.
 - i) The great incentive for us to repent on a personal basis is the character of God.
 - ii) Exodus 34 has a statement similar to this. Numbers 14:8 has a similar statement to this about the character of God.
 - iii) God is a gracious God, that is, He is a kind and merciful God. That's the great incentive to repentance. We have a God who loves us. We have a God who puts up with a lot on our part. If you and I got what we really deserved, we would all be in hell tonight.
- e) Repentance should **be public**. Verse 15-17
 - i) Blow the trumpet – sound the alarm.
 - ii) Fast – it is serious – Esther knew how serious the threat to her nation was when Haman tricked the King into signing a death warrant for all

of her people. She called for a fast. Today the only thing “fast” means to us is the amount of time between the prayer request and God’s exact answer to our request.

iii) Get the people together.

- (1) The elders lead the way... leadership must be right, must be righteous
- (2) The children need the elders to lead the way and to set the example. Have your children and Grandchildren ever seen you serious about prayer and repentance?
- (3) Pastor how old should a child be when they are exposed to Christian things? Look... gather the children, the nursing babes! How old always from birth...

iv) Stop the show for once and get right with God. Put the wedding on hold... Put off that vacation; put off the new deck and get right with God. What a deal that would be. Around 911 we stopped baseball and college football waited a week or two I think. Isn’t it sad that it takes a disaster like that to get our attention? Do you know that is one of the reasons for the Sabbath for the Jews? Stop it all; commerce, games, weddings, meal preparations, all work and meditate on the Word of God and the goodness of God.

- (1) Stop the Church Show... I don’t know how to do this really. I would like to just stop some time at the preaching time and say we are not ready to hear God because we never get the filth out of our lives. Let us repent!
- (2) PREACHERS LIKE ME ARE THE BIGGEST HINDRANCE TO REVIVAL SOMETIMES. WE KEEP THE SHOW GOING NO MATTER WHAT! PROGRAMS, PUSHES, I WISH I KNEW HOW TO OBEY THAT LITTLE VERSE THAT SAYS BE STILL AND KNOW THAT I AM GOD! Look at Psalm 46...
- (3) I know that we gather to **celebrate** from Sunday to Sunday and we should. We **celebrate** the Lord Jesus’ resurrection. We celebrate our forgiveness and freedom from sin. But instead of celebration we should have a service of humiliation. **NEXT SUNDAY HUMILIATION SUNDAY!** That would go over wouldn’t it. **Next Sunday we weep and wail over our sin and the sin of the**

Nation! I'd have to write and apology letter to get anybody back the next week. But do you know what God says...

(a) 1 Peter 5:5-7 "God resists the proud, But gives grace to the humble." ⁶Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you in due time,⁷ casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you.

(4) We need to repent sincerely of our offenses, our commissions and omissions. We need to repent.

f) Notice that in the prayer of the priests that ask "why should others ask where is their God". When Christians live worldly unrepentant lives and we become weak and our light becomes dim – the mockers ask where is this big God of your?

2) God makes **promises** to the repentant verse 18-27

a) God **relents** when we repent – verse 18 (see 14 who knows what God will do for repentant people?)

b) God promises **prosperity** when we repent - verse 19, 21,22 – not a plan for individual riches but for national provision and the capacity to gain. Jesus put it this way. "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you." God may not make you a wealthy person if you live for Jesus. I question whether it's God's will for most Christians to be wealthy.

c) God promises **protection** (personal and national) when we repent – verse 20 Fear not verse 21

i) Where is the security of America? It is not in a satellite defense system. I certainly do not oppose one. But America's security is not in a satellite system, America's security is in the Lord.

d) God promises **continuing prosperity** when we repent – verse 23-24. God gives the former and the later rains upon the land. The land needed rain at the time of planting and at the time to fill out the crops before harvest. One without the other is no good. Only God can give what we need at every stage of our life.

e) God promises to **give back the past** when we repent. Verse 25-27

i) What the locusts of life have eaten God can give back. The years you lose in sin God can make a thing of the past. The years you lost in self

absorption God can make you forget.

(1) No more barrenness

(2) No more fruitlessness

(3) No more shamefulness

ii) Only God can do something about your past. We can turn over all the new leaves we want, we can make resolutions, we can make promises but none of those deal with the past.

iii) Locust plagues of the past:

(1) Public sins:

(a) Addictions

(b) Habits

(c) Hate

(d) Envy

(e) Strife

(f) Unforgiveness

(g) Self absorption

(h) Selfishness

(2) Private sins:

(a) Pornography

(b) Physical and mental fornications

(c) Unfaithfulness

(d) Indifference

(e) Apathy

(f) Lost opportunity A man asked a boy, "Son, is your mama a Christian?" He said, "Yes, sir." "Is your dad a Christian?" "Yes, sir, but he hasn't worked at it lately."

(g) Blowing your life is not living your life.

(3) God and God alone can do something about our past. God and God alone can promises about the future.

iv) He gives contentment – verse 26

v) He gives us a reason to praise – verse 26

vi) He the only thing he takes away is our shame. – verse 27 It is never too late. We may have had a sad yesterday but we can have a glad today and plan on a glad tomorrow.

3) Next week: God gives **special privileges** to the repentant. Verse 28-32