

A Biblical Response to Crisis: Solemn Assemblies (Joel 2)

I. RECEIVING INSTRUCTION FROM THE BOOK OF JOEL

- A. Great revival and crisis are coming to the nations. The Spirit is calling the Church to *understand* the crises and *respond* in the way that Scripture teaches. The right response includes gathering in solemn assemblies to return to God in wholeheartedness as we cry out for a greater measure of mercy and power as we walk in love doing righteous deeds and faithfully proclaiming His truth.

¹Blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; for the day of the LORD is coming...¹⁵Blow the trumpet in Zion, consecrate a fast, call a sacred assembly...²⁸“It shall come to pass afterward that I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh...³¹before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD. (Joel 2:1-31)

- B. Jesus will shake all the nations before He returns so that multitudes would come to Him.

⁶“...I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land; ⁷and I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the Desire of All Nations [Jesus], and I will fill this temple with glory...⁸The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine,” says the LORD of hosts. (Hag. 2:6-8)

- C. Day-of-the-Lord preaching is to alarm God’s people and cause their hearts to tremble. Most messages today are focused only on making people rejoice. We must often declare the message of God’s kindness to cause rejoicing, but we also need messages that cause hearts to tremble. Prophetic preaching creates urgency to take hold of grace to fast and pray (Joel 2:12-17).

- D. Day-of-the-Lord preaching will not be popular among the masses, but it will change history and serve God’s purpose. God is commissioning men and women all over the earth to sound the prophetic alarm. They will proclaim both the *great* and *terrible* aspects of the Day of the Lord as a year of favor and a day of vengeance. It takes the power of the Spirit to cause hearts to tremble.

²“...to proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God.” (Isa. 61:2)

II. THE RESPONSE THAT GOD REQUIRES: SOLEMN ASSEMBLIES

- A. The Lord tells us what to do to receive “more” mercy and deliverance in a national crisis.

¹²“Turn to Me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning.” ¹³So rend your heart, and not your garments; 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. ¹⁴Who knows if He will turn and relent, and leave a blessing...? ¹⁵Blow the trumpet in Zion, consecrate a fast, call a sacred assembly; ¹⁶gather the people, sanctify the congregation...” (Joel 2:12-17)

- B. **Rend your heart:** God wants our hearts more than anything else. He wants our wholehearted love. This reveals His heart for us. He requires that we respond to His love for us by loving Him. When we turn to God with all of our heart, we position ourselves to receive more of His favor. He desires the rending or the tearing of the heart, which speaks of separating ourselves from everything that is displeasing to Him. To rend means to tear forcibly. This is intensely personal.

III. REPENTING WITH CONFIDENCE IN GOD’S TENDER HEART

- A. Joel summons the people to return to the Lord, giving **five reasons** why this is wise—because God is *gracious, merciful, slow to anger, of great kindness*, and He *relents from doing harm*. He desires to make a way of deliverance. The knowledge of God’s heart for us gives us courage to tear our hearts in repentance. If we take one step toward Him, He will take ten steps toward us.
- ¹³Return to the Lord...He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness; He relents from doing harm.* ¹⁴Who knows if He will turn and relent, and leave a blessing...? (Joel 2:13-14)**
- B. God desires to transform would-be disaster zones in a geographic area into revival centers. There are two stages in God’s decrees. First, the decree is established in the heavenly court. Second, either it is issued as God releases angels to execute judgment (Ezek. 9-10), or it is canceled. I refer to this as the “perhaps” in God’s plans. “Perhaps” He will answer your prayers by hiding (protecting) and blessing you and your geographic area in a time of crisis.
- ¹Gather yourselves together, yes, gather...²before the decree [of judgment] is issued...Before the day of the LORD’s anger comes upon you! ³Seek the LORD...it may be [perhaps, NAS] that you will be hidden [protected from judgment] in the day of the LORD’s anger. (Zeph. 2:1-3)***
- C. I refer to “pockets of mercy” in a crisis where God’s mercy is released in a greater measure. A disaster that is declared in God’s court may be changed (Gen. 18:22-32; Ex. 32: 9-14; 2 Sam. 12:15-23; 24:10-14; 2 Chr. 34:22-28; Jer. 18:7-10; 51:6-8; Ezek. 18:21, 22, 28; 33:10-14; Dan. 4:29; Amos 5:1-3,14-15; 7:1–6; Zeph. 2:1-3; Hab. 3:16-19; Jon. 3:4-10; Mal. 3:16-4:6).
- ⁷“...I made it rain on one city, I withheld rain from another city. One part was rained upon, and where it did not rain the part withered... ⁸Yet you have not returned to Me.” (Amos 4:7-8)***
- ¹The Lord...formed locust swarms at the beginning of the late crop... ²I said: “O Lord GOD, forgive, I pray!...” ³So the LORD relented concerning this. “It shall not be,” said the LORD. ⁴Thus the Lord...called for conflict by fire...⁵I said: “O Lord GOD, cease, I pray!...” ⁶So the LORD relented concerning this. “This also shall not be,” said the Lord GOD. (Amos 7:1-6)***
- D. God searches for people to stand in the gap to pray that His judgments be withheld.
- ³⁰So I sought for a man among them who would make a wall, and stand in the gap before Me on behalf of the land, that I should not destroy it; but I found no one. (Ezek. 22:30)***

⁹The LORD said to Moses, "...indeed it is a stiff-necked people! ¹⁰Now therefore, let Me alone, that My wrath may burn hot against them and I may consume them..." ¹¹Then Moses pleaded with the LORD, and said: "...turn from Your fierce wrath, and relent from this harm to Your people..." ¹⁴So the LORD relented from the harm which He said He would do to His people. (Ex. 32:9-14)

³²He [Abraham] said, "Let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak but once more: Suppose ten should be found there?" He said, "I will not destroy it for the sake of ten." (Gen. 18:32)