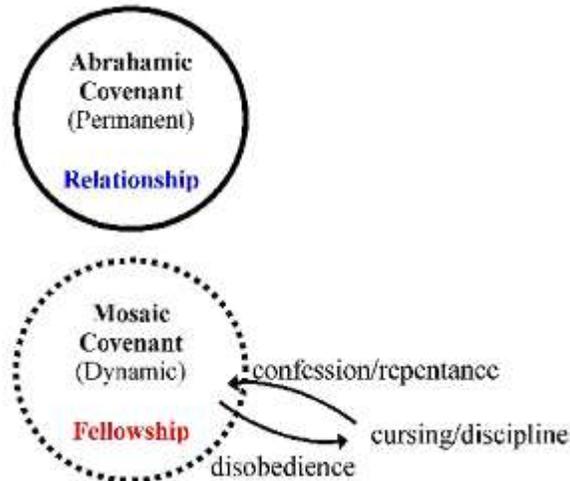


Pastor Jeremy M. Thomas
Fredericksburg Bible Church
107 East Austin
Fredericksburg, Texas 78624
830-997-8834 jthomas@fbgbible.org

**C0807 – February 20, 2008 – Joel 2:12-17 – The National
Repentance Of Israel**

Alright, we've been working with the Book of the Twelve. These are typically referred to as the Minor Prophets, that's a little terminology brought in by Latin ecclesiastics and what they meant was that their content was less than the Jeremiah's and Isaiah's. They're just shorter, they're not less important. But they've been neglected. You can look through audio catalogs and these books will be missing and it's a travesty because some of these books are setting up major doctrines that are assumed by the NT authors. Joel is one example with his concept of the Day of the Lord. Remember, Joel, written ~835BC, his name means "Yahweh is God" and that's the whole point, that there are no other gods except Yahweh. Therefore He alone is to be worshipped. It's simple logic. But the Israelites had apparently gotten caught up in idolatry, they were violating the first of the ten commandments. "You shall have no other gods before Me. ⁴You shall not make for yourself an idol, or any likeness of what is in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the water under the earth. ⁵"You shall not worship them or serve them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers on the children, on the third and the fourth generations of those who hate Me..." Visiting the iniquity, that's what we see in Joel, we see God visiting in judgment and there's a specific term Joel uses for this visitation, first used by Obadiah, now developed by Joel, the day of the Lord. That's the theme of Joel and it carries through the rest of the Bible. We said there are past days of the Lord and that's what we met in Joel 1:1-14, a past day of the Lord where their iniquity was judged by a locust plague. This was predicted in the cursings of Dt 28:38 where you see the 5 degrees of cursing which are an outworking of the Mosaic Covenant. That covenant deals with the dynamic dimension of Israel's relationship with God because she had a relationship with God via the Abrahamic Covenant, nothing was going to change that, that was permanent, it is permanent and it will always be permanent. God stakes the whole thing to His character, to His covenant faithfulness. So Israel had a father-son relationship, other passages portray it as a husband-wife relationship, but the point is that in both relationship motifs there's a solidarity, a permanency and that's

what the Abrahamic Covenant provided. But the Mosaic Covenant dealt with these dynamics, “if you bless me I will bless you, if you curse me I will curse you.” The fellowship could change, they could be in fellowship or out of fellowship and when they got out of fellowship there was discipline and the nation would have to confess/repent to get back in fellowship. And we looked at this diagram depicting both covenants.

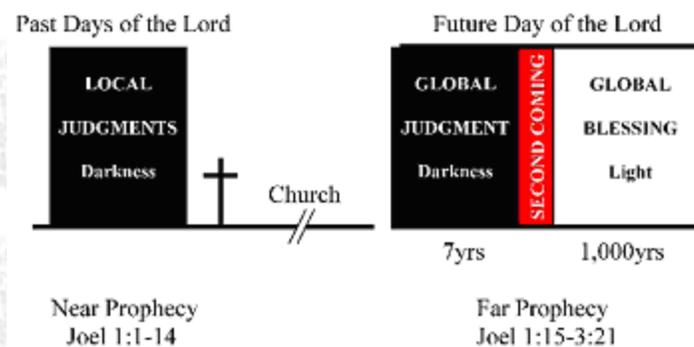


Now, a day of the Lord was one of the means of discipline such as the locust plague in Joel 1:1-14, that’s a past day of the Lord brought in to stimulate national repentance so they could be restored to fellowship and enjoy divine blessing. That’s what Joel 1:13-14 are all about, they are to gather together and weep and cry out to God in confession/repentance. But that day becomes a harbinger of a greater day of the Lord because the Locust plague, that was a local event but according to Joel it foreshadows a greater day of the Lord, what we call in the Hebrew, “the day of the Lord” not just “a day of the Lord” but “the day” because it’s global in scale, it’s massive, it affects all seven continents and every ocean as well as the heavens. And we said that all these days, whether they be past or future are proving that Yahweh is God, that Yahweh is sovereign, that He controls all aspects of His creation and disposes of them as He pleases. It’s supposed to stimulate repentance, it’s supposed to get people to bend the knee to Him but of course, these events, just as they did in the Egyptian plagues don’t return void, there are always two responses to the words and works of God, rejection and acceptance, rejection and acceptance but the word of God does not return void, there’s going to be a response. That’s why it’s not good for someone to attend church week in week out and not go positive to the word of God because if they’re not going positive they’re going negative and that means hardening of the heart, a callousness begins to build up against the word of God. So I just say, don’t come, don’t show up, don’t listen to the word of God until you’re at your wits end and you’re ready to study the word, study the word, study the word. So that’s what these days of the Lord in Joel are meant to accomplish with the nation of Israel, repentance. God’s not trying to initiate a relationship with them,

they already have that via the Abrahamic Covenant. What he's trying to stimulate when he says things like, "Return with all your heart" "Cry out to God" is return to fellowship with God, return to covenant loyalty. I'm spanking you now go positive, repent, get back in fellowship so I can bless you son." That's the point.

Now, we've seen A Past Day of the Lord with the locust invasion, let's just outline where we've been so far, chapter 1:1-14 refers to first invasion, a past day of the Lord. 1:15-2:11 shifts to The Future Day of the Lord including the demon invasion.

JOEL: DAY OF THE LORD



1:15-20 outlines The Devastation brought on the land of Israel by these demons. 2:1-11 describes the Demon Invasion. And 2:12-17 are going to deal with the National Repentance of Israel just before the Second Coming of Christ. So, the call to return starting in v 12 is a call back to covenant loyalty in the latter days. But before we get there let's pick up in 2:1.

Blow a trumpet in Zion, that's the shofar and here it's an alarm And sound an alarm on My holy mountain! That is, the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, **Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, For the day of the LORD is coming; Surely it is near, ²A day of darkness and gloom, A day of clouds and thick darkness.** That's a typical description of the day of the Lord in other passages, **As the dawn is spread over the mountains, So there is a great and mighty people;** We said this is the ultimate army, the ultimate force, the emphasis is on the greatness of the force and the unity of operation of the force. **There has never been anything like it, Nor will there be again after it To the years of many generations.** Now that's a key phrase because it's describing an unparalleled period of history and since there can be only one unparalleled period then this and three other texts that refer to it must all be referring to the same period, those passages are Dan 12:1; Jer 30:6-7 and Matt 24:21-22. Jesus called this "a great tribulation" and Daniel referred to this as "a time of distress" and Jeremiah said it was "the time of Jacob's distress." It's the last 3 ½ years of the Tribulation when you have the Trumpet and Bowl Judgments of Revelation. Verse 3 describes the demons devastation to the land, **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. Verse 4 describes their wicked appearance, **Their appearance is like the appearance of horses; And like war horses, so they run.** Verse 5 describes their deafening sound, **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.** Verse 6 describes the terror they invoke, **Before them the people are in anguish; All faces turn pale.** Verse 7 describes their speed and agility, **They run like mighty men, They climb the wall like soldiers; And they each march in line, Nor do they deviate from their paths.** Verse 8 describes their discipline and unity, **They do not crowd each other, They march everyone in his path; When they burst through the defenses, They do not break ranks.** Verse 9 describes their attack, **They rush on the city, They run on the wall; They climb into the houses, They enter through the windows like a thief.** Let's pick up here because we didn't finish vv 1-11. V 10 describes an accompanying blackout.

b. The Blackout (2:10)

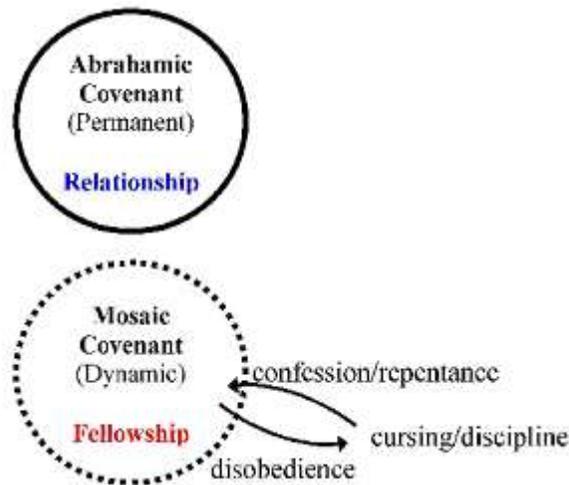
Before them the earth quakes, The heavens tremble, The sun and the moon grow dark And the stars lose their brightness.

These are global cosmic phenomena accompanying the attack, both on **earth** and **heaven**. **Before them the earth quakes** due to the immense number of demons in the attack. Rev 9 says it's an army of 200 million. No human force has ever come close to amassing this many troops. The largest army in the world is China with estimates between 1.6 and 2.8 million, about 1 % of this force. **The heavens tremble, the sun and the moon grow dark And the stars lose their brightness**, this is the second blackout of the Tribulation. You have one during the sixth seal and one during the fifth trumpet, this is the one during the fifth trumpet (Rev 9:3) that continues to block the light during the sixth trumpet. The darkness will be caused by debris in the air that blocks the light of the sun and the moon and the stars. This will only increase men's terror because it makes it very difficult to see the demons.

c. The Lord's Judgment (2:11)

Verse 11 reveals that this demon army is His army. **The LORD utters His voice before His army;** This is the shocking note and this is why Joel is written, to demonstrate that Yahweh is sovereign. This is Yahweh's judgment. Even though this army of 200 million

demons will be led by four angels who releases them to begin with? Who is sovereign over them? Go back to Rev 9:13-14. “Then the sixth angel sounded, and I heard a voice from the four horns of the golden altar which is before God, one saying to the sixth angel who had the trumpet, “Release the four angels who are bound at the great river Euphrates.” The command to release comes from heaven. They can’t do a thing until God says so. He and He alone is sovereign. Nothing happens in the universe without God’s approval. So that this army of demons is actually **His army** used to accomplish His purposes. **Surely His camp is very great, For strong is he who carries out His word.** This army of fallen angels is carrying out the word of God. **The day of the LORD is indeed great and very awesome.** Friends, it’s hard to imagine all this when we live in a relatively tranquil world; yes we have tsunamis, earthquakes, volcanoes, tornadoes, hurricanes, but this is something indeed **great and very awesome.** About 50 people died two weeks ago in a tornado. This is not talking about 50 people, this is not talking about 6 million people, this is not talking about 300 million people, the population of America, this is talking about billions of people. And this gives us something to very seriously ponder. One, the wickedness of sin; the rottenness of human depravity. Two, the graciousness of God. He’s extended His arm of salvation to all the nations that are at enmity with Him. Christ died for all men. Anyone who believes in Him receives eternal life. And three, if you are saved, if you do possess eternal life, what are you doing with your life? People you know, people I know, people all over the world made in God’s image will enter this time of terror if they don’t believe, if you and I don’t take the message to them or provide funds for missionaries who are taking the message to them. What in the world are we here for if not to live everyday for the glory of God? How much of our lives are wasted on piddly things? Why should God give you another day in this world? **The day of the LORD is indeed great and very awesome And who can endure it?** That’s the question Joel leaves us with. **Who can endure** the day of the Lord, the second half of the Tribulation? The sense of the endurance here is physical survival. Who can physically survive to the end of the future day of the Lord? Who can escape? It is so great. vv 12-17 give the answer, the generation that repents nationally. But keep in mind that national repentance does not mean individual salvation. National repentance means being restored to covenant fellowship. Individual faith is required for eternal salvation. So our passage deals with national repentance not individual eternal salvation. So, Joel is talking about a nation that repents and is restored to covenant fellowship. This is all in the future. The rapture is imminent and when it happens the day of the Lord begins. We are right on the verge of these events, they could start tonight and then the unbelieving Jews would enter the day of the Lord. So, the Jews living today could well be the generation this message is addressed to. But right now the nation of Israel is in a state of covenant disobedience. Remember our diagram.



Ever since the 1st century the nation has rejected the Messiahship of Jesus. John the Baptist came and told the nation to repent and be baptized, that baptism would separate them from Judaism. Some came out but not the whole nation. Then Jesus came and He was baptized by John to fulfill all righteousness. From that point Israel has 40 years to repent before judgment comes, before the 5th cycle of judgment. So the 40 years begins when Jesus' ministry began in AD30. Did they repent? No, they did not. Individuals repented but not the nation. The nation rejected the Messiahship of Jesus in Matt 12. Thus, Jesus pronounced judgment on that generation in accordance with Lev 26 and Deut 28, the nation would go into the 5th cycle of discipline unless they repented. They didn't so the judgment came in AD70 when the Roman armies under Titus razed Jerusalem to the ground. That's when the nation went under its fifth and final degree of cursing, total exile according to Lev 26 and Deut 28. Now, we know from Romans that the nation was partially hardened but that when the fullness of the Gentiles comes in, I take it that's the Rapture, when the Rapture happens that partial hardness will be lifted and you're going to have a tremendous Jewish response to Jesus as the Messiah, the two witnesses come on the scene, the 144,000 Jews and all that. They are the covenanted nation but they are out of fellowship because of their rejection of the Messiahship of Jesus and the condition to restore fellowship is that they repent. You may remember the message of John the Baptist and Jesus early in the gospels. What was the message in Matt 3:2? "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." It wasn't there but it could have come if the nation repented. What was Jesus' message in Matt 4:17, "Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." Same thing. What are John and Jesus looking for? The same thing Joel is looking for. It's the same message. National repentance. The prophets, John the Baptist, Jesus, Peter in Acts are all looking for the same thing. A faithful generation. There are always faithful individuals but what they are looking for is a faithful nation. There has never been one. That's a grand theme of world history. That's what we're waiting on, a faithful

generation of Israel. It could be the generation living on earth right now. So that's what verses 12-17 are calling for, national repentance.

C. The National Repentance of Israel (2:12-17)

Verse 12, "**Yet even now,**" even now which is a future day, the great tribulation there's still an opportunity, the time is not up yet **declares the LORD, "Return to Me with all your heart, And with fasting, weeping and mourning;** Two things here, the command to **return** is the Hebrew *shub* and it clearly refers to returning to covenant loyalty, you can't return to somewhere you've never been. They were out of fellowship, out of the bottom circle. Also this is plural not singular so it's a call to national repentance. I say this is a repentance message. I say this is the same message John the Baptist and Jesus brought in the gospels. I say this is the same message Peter brought in Acts, a message of national repentance. I say that because this word *shub* in the OT times was always translated by the Greek word *epistrepho* but during the intertestamental times the Theological Dictionary of the New Testament (TDNT) says that *metanoeo* became a synonym for *shub* so that when Jesus and John the Baptist and Peter come with the message "repent" (*metanoeo*) or "repent and return" (*metanoeo* and *epistrepho*) (as in Acts 3:19) it's the same message from God here in Joel. Is this going to be the faithful generation or not? Is the nation going to return to covenant loyalty or not? If so then this will prepare them for accepting the Messiah when He came. That's the issue. It's up to you Israel. So, first, there's the internal heart response, **Return to Me**, return to covenant loyalty, return to your Father, return to your Husband O Israel **with all your heart**. And with this bring **fasting, weeping and mourning**, those are the externals that accompany the deep seated **heart** response. ¹³**And rend your heart** that's a command for tear, tear your heart, let your heart be torn **and not your garments**. See, you could tear your garments but that's only external and the warning here is don't let it just be external, don't just be putting on a show, it has to be real, God knows the heart, He knows if it's real or a show so it's got to be real. But the big thing here is that this is addressed to the nation, clearly in v 16 the entire nation is summoned and what is being called for in v 12 is a national wholehearted, deep seated repentance toward YHWH. It's not too late for this even in the midst of the terrifying judgments of the second half of the Tribulation. Middle of verse 13, **Now return to the LORD your God**, do it now because time is running out, there is literally a set time to repent. Why should they do it now? **For He is gracious and compassionate, Slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness And relenting of evil**. Now this is a description of the name Yahweh, it comes right out of Exod 34:6 where Moses was in the cleft of the rock and God's glory passed by and Moses saw a reflection of the essence of God. That context is dealing with the covenant

disloyalty of Israel, they had made an idol, the golden calf and interestingly, the context here is dealing with the covenant disloyalty of Israel, they were worshipping idols. So both texts are dealing with the covenant disloyalty of Israel and the fact that God has every right to discipline them more but He's **gracious**, He's **compassionate**, He's **slow to anger**, He abounds in **lovingkindness** and He **relents**. That's the character of God. Now, several of his attributes are listed here and obviously the key is that God's character is such that He may respond to genuine national repentance. I just want to look at one word, lovingkindness. In Jewish culture they have two words for love. One is boy meets girl, boy falls in love with girl, the second one is boy and girl get married, now it's a different word for love because a covenant has been made. That's the word used here *chesed* which is a contractual love, covenant love, it's loyalty. God is loyal to the nation of Israel and especially to the Abrahamic Covenant. Verse 14, **Who knows whether He will not turn and relent**, He did after the golden calf incident, perhaps He will again. The Scriptural testimony affirms that when God proposes judgment and a people change then God relents. The Hebrew word **relent** is *naham* and is the same word used in Exod 32:14 where the people worshipped the golden calf and God said, "Alright, that's it, I'm wiping your rebels out Moses" and Moses prayed a carefully crafted prayer in that chapter, it's actually an argument. Moses argued with God, He wrestled with God in prayer and it says "the Lord changed His mind". God responds to well crafted, well thought out Scriptural prayers. Of course the translation "changes His mind" can be misleading but it's the same Hebrew word *naham* and it means that God "relented". God proposed a course of action and then didn't follow through. He does this because of a change in the people and because of His lovingkindness. God is a relenting God. He is the God who relents. But we have to be careful talking about God like that because we can't say God's character changed. That's not what we're saying. His character is immutable, He never changes. But He may change a proposed course of action. That's different. In this case if Israel wholeheartedly returned to Him and rented their hearts then He might **turn and relent** in the midst of the judgment **And leave a blessing behind Him?** That is, He may **leave** some of the land of Israel undestroyed. In all truth the nation will repent near the end of the Tribulation and He will turn to them in grace. So, this is the national repentance of Israel.

Verse 15 gives the steps to demonstrate national repentance. First the priest needs to **Blow a trumpet in Zion**. The *shofar* was blown in v 1 to sound an alarm of the approaching demon army but this *shofar* blast is an alarm announcing a **solemn assembly**. **Consecrate a fast, proclaim a solemn assembly**, ¹⁶**Gather the people, sanctify the congregation**, all this is preparation for national worship. If you're going to have national repentance you have to have a national gathering for national worship. The

people who are called to the solemn assembly are then proclaimed. Verse 16, **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.** That's everybody in the land of Israel, everyone from old to young including the **bridegroom and bride.** See, in Israel when a man married a woman he didn't have to do any civil service for an entire year, he was off the hook to get his marriage established (Deut 24:5) but this is such a crisis in the nation that his marriage rights get cancelled. Verse 17, alright they're all going to be gathered at the Temple, the men in their court, the women and infants in their court and **Let the priests, the LORD'S ministers, Weep between the porch and the altar,** these are the worship leaders and they will **weep** between the Temple doorway and the bronze **altar.** This presupposes a Tribulation Temple of course (Dan 9:27; Matt 24:15; 2 Thess 2:4; Rev 11:1-2). **And let them say,** here's their prayer "**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?'**" Note the closing words are an argument. Same argument is used in Ps 79:10. "If you let us get wiped out God then what are the nations going to say about You?" "Well, I guess Israel's God doesn't exist." "If He does exist maybe He went out to lunch." "Or maybe He just couldn't do anything about it?" "Or maybe He was sick of that people and didn't want them anymore." See what people would say? Just think about it in today's world, you've got all these Jews over there and the orthodox one's are into some kind of Judaism and they basically worship a monotheistic God. And then they get wiped out. What are people going to say? "Well, I guess the God of the Bible doesn't exist." "So God," the priests are saying, "You're character, your very existence is riding on our continued existence because we're your covenanted people." That's the prayer. And it's very bold, very in your face but you find them throughout Scripture, they're biblical prayers. This is a prayer that God told them to say! This is what God wants to hear. He doesn't want to hear some pansy prayer. God wants us to not only ask for things but show you've done some thinking about this and give Him some reasons. God's not at your disposal, God's not a nice big fluffy Santa Claus in the sky. He's a person who expects you to think and to not be so nonchalant with your prayers. It's hard, we all fail here, but if you get some time go back and read Solomon's Temple dedication prayer in 1 Kgs 8 and watch how he uses Scripture in His prayer and how he sets up the argument, he actually mentions the 5 degrees of cursing in his prayer, he goes through them, it's very interesting. These people thought about their prayers. So, the first thing they pray for here is mercy, "**Spare Your people, O Lord**" and notice that they deliberately say **Your people.** Lord this is **Your people** aren't you going to **Spare Your people? And do not make Your inheritance a reproach.** His **inheritance** is the Jewish people. So, again, "Hey Yahweh, this people is **Your inheritance,** what are you going to do **make them a reproach,** make them a

detestable people, just **A byword among the nations?**” See how the argument is imbedded there. This is how I try to pray for my children and my wife, I say “Alright God, we dedicated this kid to you, He’s your kid and You’ve got some responsibility here so aren’t You going to do something for this kid. Let’s go we’ve got a concentration problem here with this one and if he’s going to be a warrior for You then he’s going to need concentration. You don’t want some kind walking around under your name and he can’t think. And this is the wife you gave me over here so “C’mon, do this for her. You said she pictures the church and the church is responder to God’s grace so make her a responder. Let’s go.” And that’s how you start learning to argue with God.

But the big idea here is that this is the call to National Repentance of Israel in the Tribulation. If they repented they would be restored to covenant fellowship. God is looking for the faithful generation of Israel, the generation that will repent. Of course we know it’s going to be the Tribulation generation but all the prophets looked for it, John the Baptist looked for it, Jesus looked for it, Peter looked for it and in the future, Elijah will look for it, the two witnesses will look for it, the 144,000 will look for it, it’s coming, it may be the present generation of Jews. But keep in mind this does not remove the individual responsibility of each and every Jew to believe for eternal life. John the Baptist (John 1:7), Jesus (Mk 1:15; Jn 6:29-47) and Peter (Acts 2:44; 4:4, 32; 10:43) all brought that message too. But the message here is national repentance.

So, tonight, let’s close with a reading from Deut 4:23-31 which teaches the same thing. ²³“So watch yourselves, that you do not forget the covenant of the LORD your God which He made with you, and make for yourselves a graven image in the form of anything *against* which the LORD your God has commanded you. ²⁴“For the LORD your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God. ²⁵“When you become the father of children and children’s children and have remained long in the land, and act corruptly, and make an idol in the form of anything, and do that which is evil in the sight of the LORD your God *so as* to provoke Him to anger, ²⁶I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that you will surely perish quickly from the land where you are going over the Jordan to possess it. You shall not live long on it, but will be utterly destroyed. ²⁷“The LORD will scatter you among the peoples, and you will be left few in number among the nations where the LORD drives you. ²⁸“There you will serve gods, the work of man’s hands, wood and stone, which neither see nor hear nor eat nor smell. ²⁹“But from there you will seek the LORD your God, and you will find *Him* if you search for Him with all your heart and all your soul. ³⁰“When you are in distress and all these things have come upon you, in the latter days you will return to the LORD your God and listen to His voice. ³¹“For the

LORD your God is a compassionate God; He will not fail you nor destroy you nor forget the covenant with your fathers which He swore to them.”

[Back To The Top](#)

Copyright (c) Fredericksburg Bible Church 2008