

Joel 1:14-20 – Leadership and Repentance

TSK, HebrewLexicon, Geneva, JFB, Trapp, Poole, Clarke, Armstrong, Henry, Calvin, Barnes, Handfuls, Gill, ThemeIndex, INT.

Brothers and sisters in Jesus Christ: The last time we concluded with Yahweh calling on the leaders of Judah to **lead the congregation into genuine repentance – repentance that was heartfelt and publicly seen.**

And that's where it always starts, doesn't it? The leaders have to be the guides to the congregation.

Today we pick up with **how leaders were expected to do this.**

Our headings are:

The leaders were to call for a Sacred Assembly

The leaders were to reflect on the consequences of sin the Sacred Assembly

The leaders were to lead in the cries at the Sacred Assembly

Our goals are: **That leaders will gather the congregation together and pray together for the forgiveness of sins that the church might be restored to the heavenly Father and restart the work of serving the Bridegroom.**

The leaders were to call for a Sacred Assembly

14 Consecrate a **fast**, Call a **sacred assembly**; **Gather the elders** And all the **inhabitants** of the land Into the **house of the LORD** your God, And cry out to the LORD.

1. God called Judah to a sacred assembly and to prepare to fast and pray.

Fasting is a sacrificing of the body – fleshly desires - so the soul can focus on prayer.

Fasting without prayer is famine!

Fasting was **not to save money to give to the poor**...It was **not to purify the body**...

The sacred assembly was a “day of restraint.” The Jews had to put aside everything else and focus on repentance. Fasting and prayer was used in times of severe troubles, like when Jehoshaphat called for fasting and prayer when Moab and Ammon came to Judah's door. Now **Judah needed restraint from self-indulgence, like Israel before, and had to put God first.**

Deuteronomy 32:15 "But Jeshurun grew fat and kicked; **You grew fat, you grew thick, You are obese!** Then he forsook God who made him, And scornfully esteemed the Rock of his salvation.

They had to stop all the fleshly things that had taken them away from serving the Lord...give up the vacation...stop the 2nd job!

2. God called the elders to gather to the Lord and lead Judah in repentance.

The elders' sins were worse because they knew better and should have taught better.

Leaders were expected to lead.

3. God called the people together to repent as they had done before.

Judges 20:26 Then all the children of Israel, that is, all the people, went up and came to the house of God and wept. They sat there before the LORD and fasted that day until evening; and they offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the LORD.

2 Chronicles 30:8 "Now do not be stiff-necked, as your fathers were, but yield yourselves to the LORD; and enter His sanctuary, which He has sanctified forever, and serve the LORD your God, that the fierceness of His wrath may turn away from you. ¹³Now many people, a very great assembly, gathered at Jerusalem to keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread in the second month.

Even the Ninevites did repented in sackcloth and ashes! (Jonah 3)

Since all, high and low, contributed to the national sin, all, high and low, had to confess that sin.

This was what Solomon had prayed for at the consecration of the temple.

4. Lessons:

a. Fasting is mostly ignored today. But we should not ignore it. The Lord Jesus said we would need to fast after he left. Henry: When God says, "'You shall fast,'" it is time to say, "'We will fast.'"

b. We need a public repentance called for by the leaders of God's church...to confess our shame and beg for forgiveness. We spend hundreds of millions of dollars every year killing babies who were made in the image of God! We need peace with God. Less than 5% of the population regularly worship God. Sunday is now for sports! There has been a falling out. We encourage and support adultery! We need to surrender.

Isaiah 27:5 Or let him take hold of My strength, That he may make peace with Me; And he shall make peace with Me."

Yes, God is often very patient, **but don't mistake his patience for tolerance of sin.** He will come in and stop sin!

b. I wonder if the Lord has made us stop working so the land would have rest.

c. Public sins require public confession. This was pleasing to God. This was a great teaching tool for the young. Let your children hear you confess your sins and the sins of the church!

d. You have to be in Christ to approach God. But don't miss the significance of this.

The temple was a picture of Christ. Even Jesus' appearance on earth is described as his "tabernacling" or "templing" among us!

The Leaders had to reflect on the consequences of sin at the Sacred Assembly

15 Alas for the day! For the day of the LORD is at hand; It **shall come as destruction from the Almighty.**

1. The Jews were called to meet because the Day of the Lord was coming on them.

The Day of the Lord was a **day of God's judgment.** It was **near** and it was **severe.** Look at other days of the Lord!

Isaiah 13:9 Behold, the day of the LORD comes, Cruel, with both **wrath and fierce anger,** To lay the land desolate; And He will destroy its sinners from it. **Zephaniah 1:15** **That day is a day of wrath,** A day of trouble and distress, A day of devastation and desolation, A day of darkness and gloominess, A day of clouds and thick darkness,

Destruction predicted... It is not correction anymore.

2. The Jews had to know God's judgment was coming!

Because the **situation was relatively good economically and politically,** the Jews seemed to have little reason to worry at this time. This was **similar economically and politically to the situation at the destruction of Jerusalem in AD70** when the Jews did not believe judgment was going to come from the Romans as they were warned. Business was booming. Life was good!

There is a beautiful alliteration in the last half of the verse...making it easy to remember... "Showed, Sha-day." Their "showed" (destruction) shall come from Shaddai (Almighty)! **God (El Shaddai) had all this power...but it wouldn't be used for his people's provision and protection but for their punishment!** Who could resist the power of the Almighty.

16 Is not the food cut off before our eyes, Joy and gladness from the house of our God?

3. The food for the temple was "going" to be cut off; it was not cut off yet.

The people were **concerned about their physical meat** and **ignored the spiritual meat,** so they would **lose both.** There used to be a national celebration when the crops came in- celebration of people and temple, but not anymore.

And just as the food was cut off from the temple, so were joy and gladness cut off.

Worship was going to end and there would be no singing the songs of praise to God.

17 The seed shrivels under the clods, Storehouses are in shambles; Barns are broken down, For the grain has withered.

4. The seeds were going to die and not bear food.

At least if plants started growing up out of the ground, the people could have hope for the future...but not anymore.

5. The storehouses would not have any grain left and the barns would be broken down.

No one would care about the barn because there would be no food in it. **This was exactly as Micah wrote before** Israel, the northern tribes fell.

Micah 6:15 "You shall sow, but not reap; You shall tread the olives, but not anoint yourselves with oil; And make sweet wine, but not drink wine.

18 How the animals groan! The herds of cattle are restless, because they have no pasture; Even the flocks of sheep suffer punishment.

6. The animals would groan because they would have no grass to eat.

“Groan” literally means “perplexed.” The animals would not know what to do or where to go. They would die.

God wanted the groaning of the cattle to soften the heard hearts of his covenant children. And surely the humble dependent sheep starving to death would have evoked more emotions!

7. Lessons:

1. Man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that comes from the mouth of God! (Matthew 4:4)

Proverbs 10:3 The LORD will not allow the righteous soul to famish, But He casts away the desire of the wicked.

Yes, there may be those who satiate themselves with wine and worldly pleasures, but those things don't truly satiate the soul. They will die, being spiritually hungry.

2. Your sins cause others to suffer...even animals. Your children will suffer because of your sins! The church suffers for your sins...and the nation too! Won't the next generation be worse than this at the rate we are going? See the need to repent?

3. True joy and gladness flee when imposters are in the house. God can't stand ritualistic worship! He wants holy and passionate hearts!

4. I wonder how much God misses the praise of his people because of the action of the government. Does he really miss the church's worship? Was the worship good enough or is God saying that **it is better they not worship me than offer me token worship?** That is a hard question for modern times.

The Leaders had to lead in the cries at the Assembly

19 O LORD, to You I cry out; For **fire** has devoured the open pastures, And a **flame** has burned all the trees of the field.

1. Joel got involved and cried out in prayer to Jehovah for the people.

Without directly saying it, **he was acknowledging what God said earlier.** He was acknowledging Judah's sins and the failure of the leaders.

Jeremiah 23:9 My **heart within me is broken because of the prophets**; All my bones shake. I am like a drunken man, and like a man whom wine has overcome, Because of the LORD...

What a good personal example Joel was setting in acknowledging sin! He was following the earlier prophet Amos.

Amos 7:4 Thus the Lord GOD showed me: Behold, the Lord GOD called for conflict by fire, and it consumed the great deep and devoured the territory. 5 Then I said: "**O Lord GOD, cease, I pray! Oh, that Jacob may stand, For he is small!**"

2. Joel acknowledged God's fire had devoured the pastures, meaning God would destroy the animals.

3. Joel acknowledged God's flame had burned the land.

This meant all the grains, fruits, and oil had gone. (This was written in perfect tense to show certainty!)

Surely sending the fire and the flame would confirm God was the one in control. Joel was telling them ahead of time!

20 The beasts of the field also cry out to You, For the water brooks are dried up, And fire has devoured the open pastures.

4. Joel acknowledged even the animals were crying out to God...just as he, Joel, cried.

For the brooks had dried up, and fire had devoured the open pastures, so the animals spoke up. But the Jews did not have the sense to do as the animals. (Calvin: You could see the people's stupidity.) Look at what God said earlier!

Job 38:41 Who **provides food for the raven**, when its **young ones** cry to God, And wander about for lack of food?

Psalms 104:21 The young lions roar after their prey, And **seek their food from God**.

Psalms 145:15 The eyes of all look expectantly to You, And You **give them their food in due season**.

This is what Jeremiah saw closer to the Babylonian captivity. The animals would starve.

Jeremiah 14:6 And the wild donkeys stood in the desolate heights; They sniffed at the wind like jackals; Their eyes failed because there was no grass."

When the animals' water was dried up, they cried! So Joel was saying, "You won't learn from me, but learn from the animals."

5. Lessons:

a. When you see judgments, don't think they are coincidences. God is the God who orders and controls everything.

b. Learn to pant for God. He is man's chief reward. When God is your chief reward the things of this life will become dimmer and dimmer to you.

Psalms 42:1 ...As the deer pants for the water brooks, So pants my soul for You, O God.

c. Let the leaders begin to lead. Save the church from judgment.

Conclusion:

God called for a special assembly of his people, led by the elders, to repent in order to avoid destruction. Amos make the loudest human cry, urging them to do the same thing.

Brothers and Sisters in Jesus Christ:

1. Maybe you can't call the whole church to repent, but you can call each other here at New Horizon to do so. You can sit together and recollect and confess personal, ecclesiastical, corporate, and national sins.

2. You must do this, because God wants a clean bride...so he can work with her...uplift her...and have children with her.

3. God is a wonderful Father. What kind of a mother are you, dear church? Are you ready to welcome the one who wants spiritual adoption? Are you ready to be a mother? Are you ready to give up some of the things you love so dear? God, your husband, expects nothing less. He gave his Son so you may live.

Finally, if you are not a Christian, note how severely God punished his children...but noticed he would not totally destroy them. He will totally destroy you if you carry your sins on your own head. I plead with you not to carry your sins with you to hell, but leave them at Jesus' feet. He took the punishment for the sins of the world. If you do leave your burdens, you will get to heaven when you die.