

## A PROPHET'S CALL TO REPENTANCE

Joel 2:12-17

Intro: It seems that Joel is the oldest of the writing prophets--possibly 850 years B. C.

In his prophecy we learn that the people of Judah have fallen under the judgment of God--a judgment never before experienced by God's people, the Jews.

In chapter 2 we see that that judgment was to serve as a warning of the worst judgment ever to fall upon the earth: "The day of the Lord."

Joel uses many figures of speech to describe it, but clearly indicates that Israel will not be able to do a thing to withstand the judgment of the last days.

This, very normally, leads to his CALL TO REPENTANCE which we want to consider tonight.

Moses made it very clear that obedience, obedience from the heart, was the way to experience the blessing of God.

But he also made it clear concerning the way back to blessing if the nation fell into sin. Cf. Deut. 4:29.

### I. WHAT NEEDS TO BE DONE (vv. 12, 13).

It is very, very simple. They needed to turn to the Lord, to the Lord their God. Cf. both verses.

There is no other message which is more characteristic of the prophets. Cf. Isa. 1:2, 4; 55:6, 7; Jer. 2:5, 8, 13.

And this had to be "with all your heart." It must originate inwardly, but then be expressed outwardly. However, the outward emphasis is not upon words (although words often accompanied them): fasting, weeping, mourning--as the publican in Luke 18:13, and those who stood around the Cross in Luke 23:48.

Also they were to rend their hearts, not their garments--the latter always being an expression, not of ordinary grief, but of some sudden, overwhelming grief. Cf. Gen. 37:29, 34; 44:13; Josh. 7:6; 1 Sam. 4:12

### II. WHO NEEDS TO REPENT (vv. 15-17a).

This includes the oldest ("the elders") and the youngest ("the children" - cf. 1:3), and even the bride and the

bridegroom. Even the nursing children were to be brought. No one was to be left out. And what a lesson this would have been for all!

But the important point in this passage are the reasons that are given. We can speak of it as

III. THE REASONS FOR THE REPENTANCE (several sections from the text). What were the incentives that the prophet held out to them? There are four.

A. Because of their relationship to God. Cf. v. 13.

Joel calls Him, "the Lord, your God"—Jehovah, your Elohim. And he repeats it in v. 14.

Although their sin had grieved the Lord, and had caused Him to bring judgment, yet it had not caused Him to sever His relationship with them. He was still their God, and they were still His people.

This is a truth which we need to be very clear about. Cf. 1 John 2:1, 2.

B. Because of the very character of God. Cf. v. 13b. These words were first impressed upon the hearts of the people at the time of Israel's first great sin as a nation. Cf. Ex. 34:5, 6.

He is---

"gracious"--favorably inclined toward His people.

"merciful"--like a mother with her children, or like a bird with its young.

"slow to anger"--longsuffering, patient.

"of great kindness"--One who is looking for every opportunity to bless.

C. Because of what it may mean to the people of God themselves. Cf. v. 14.

"Who knoweth?" is all anyone can say about the results which follow repentance. But without any guarantee, the people are to turn to the Lord just because that is what He says for them to do.

And they are not to do it in order to be blessed with crops again, but so that fellowship with the Lord may be restored—"a meal offering and a drink offering" (cf. 1:9, 13). Without these offerings the other offerings could not be made. So they were not concerned about what God will give them except as it would allow

them to worship Him!

If we have gotten away from the Lord, then we know that nothing but restoration to Him can ever satisfy our hearts.

But finally,

D. Because of what it will mean to the unregenerate nations of the earth. Cf. v. 17b.

This question, "Where is their God?", was deeply rooted in Israel's history. Cf. Ex. 32:11-14;

Josh. 7:6-9.

Then notice it in the Psalms: 42:3, 10; 79:10; 115:2. The emphasis is upon ELOHIM!

Concl: From this point on the prophecy of Joel makes a complete change. Judgment is turned to blessing, as prophetically it will between the Great Tribulation and the Millennium, but what a tragedy that Israel will have to endure the Tribulation in order to learn that lesson.

What is the importance for us?

It is very obvious. The Lord wants us to know that blessing for us will only be experienced as we love Him, and as we manifest that love by walking day by day in obedience to His Word. It is just that simple.

Great issues are involved. A world is looking on. It is only as they see that there is a God by the evidence of His presence in our lives that they will have any feeling at all that they should turn to Him.