

THE CALL TO PRAYER AND REPENTANCE:

Joel 1:1-14, 2:12-17

The book of Joel is a prophecy about future events in Judah. Prophecies sometimes speak of things or events that will take place sometimes in the near future and also in the distance. They also speak to the physical as well as to the spiritual. Also, the Scriptures relate to people in terms they can understand in very practical everyday relevant terms. I'll give two examples; In the parable of the sower in Matthew 13 about the wheat and tares, Jesus's disciples asked Him to explain to them the meaning, and in verse thirty-eight He explained that the field is the world, and the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom.

In another instance He referred to the people as the field. He said, "the harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore, pray earnestly to the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest" (Matthew 9:37). Here Jesus referred to the people of the world as the field. The people could understand that when the wheat or barley were ripe and time for harvest came, they needed workers to reap the harvest. Likewise, He was saying the harvest of souls is plentiful but only few people were laboring for the harvest of souls for the kingdom. He instructed us to pray to God to send more laborers into His harvest.

In reading the prophecy in the book of Joel, it speaks to both the physical and spiritual events that will take place. When the Bible speaks of the day of the Lord, it is referring to a time of judgment. Joel's prophecy can be considered as a harbinger, in that it addresses or signals things of the future, or he was a forerunner in speaking of these future events. In light of our understanding of the references used in the Matthew accounts by Jesus, it stands to reason that this prophecy is not just about the devastation of plants but also of people.

The passage in Joel chapter 1:1-14 calls for God's people to mourn because of the approaching

judgment that awaits the nations if they continued in their ways. It becomes burdensome when the people of the kingdom see the condition of the nations. It says we are to mourn as how a virgin mourns when she learns that the man to whom she was engaged was killed, or how a newlywed mourns when she receives news that her husband was killed. Here we are called to put ourselves in the place of that widow and lament over the loss of our loved ones who are not serving Christ. We are to be passionate about winning the lost.

Our weeping and mornings should not be aimless, but they should be a cry unto to the Lord for mercy. They should bring us to the point where we stand in the gap for our nation and the world. We should be intercessors crying out for mercy for the people. Moses was leading the Israelites through the wilderness; they were very disobedient, and God was ready to destroy all of them. Moses interceded on their behalf, and they were saved. (Numbers 14:11-19) In another instance God was about to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah and Abraham interceded for them. God heard him and Abraham was told that if he could find the righteous there, the cities would not be destroyed.

He negotiated with God beginning at finding fifty righteous persons that he thought lived there, when did not find them, he started lowering the number and God agreed with him every time. He reached to a number of ten and he still failed to find ten righteous persons there, then he stopped interceding. He stopped, God did not stop, the cities were destroyed because ten righteous people could not be found in them. (Genesis 18:24-33) Joel's prophecy was a plea to the people of Judah to lament over their present situation, pray for mercy, intercede on behalf of the inhabitants and repent.

Verses two to thirteen speak of a plague that would affect their way of life. It spoke about the devastations in many forms that would destroy their livelihood. It said there would be four

forces of destruction, namely, the Palmerworm, the locust, the cankerworm, and the caterpillar. At that time Israel was an agronomy society. The attacks would be directed to their fields to completely destroy them. They were told to wake up. In other words, they were to be aware of the danger that threatened them. It was not a time of panicking and withdrawal but a time to take action. A time to repent, worship and intercede.

The leaders were told in verses thirteen and fourteen that the priest and ministers should gird themselves and have an all-night prayer vigil at the altar and cry unto the Lord. They should sanctify themselves call a fast of all the elders and call all the people, then gather the assembly into the house of the Lord. The offerings were cut off from the house of the Lord.

The gathering had three purposes, (1) All should be aware of the impending judgement. (2) It was a call of the assembly of all the people to prayer and fasting. It was not just for the leaders and the people were exempted, or a call for prayer and fasting by the leaders for the people where they did not participate; that call required the participation of leaders and the general public. (3) The call was a call to repentance for both leaders and the public at large. The people needed to do their part and God would do His. A cry for mercy and restoration.

3. Chapter two verses 12-13 reads; “Therefore also now, saith the LORD, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning:

4. 13 And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil.”

God is looking for people to worship Him in Spirit and in truth. Israel worshipped God but it was an outward form of worship. They would tear their clothes and put ash on their faces so that man could see that they were fasting and mourning but their hearts were evil and full of wickedness. God said He was not looking for torn clothes as a sign of mourning but instead, a broken and

contrite heart. He called them to turn their hearts towards Him. In other words they needed to repent. With repented hearts they should sound the trumpet and gather the people as a sanctified assembly which would please the Lord. (Joel 2:14-17)

CONCLUSION: A call to Judah is a call to the church. It's time for the people of God to wake up. Be like the sons of Issachar who understood the times. We need to know and understand the season in which we live. The plagues were directed towards the fields in Joel's prophecy, because the economy at that time depended on what was produced in the fields. Our economy today is not driven mainly by what is produced in the fields, we rely more on our Human Resources along with technology.

There were four destructive plagues mentioned in Joel chapter on verse four. There was a call for intercessory prayer and a call for repentance. God stated clearly in chapter two verse twelve that He is looking for a people who will stop the outward form of worship which is done in order to please or impress man and start worshiping Him with purity of hearts. It was then and is now a call to repentance.

One final question; Could the current pandemic be one of the four plagues? It attacks humans on which the economy is dependent. If it is, could there be four waves or variants to the pandemic.? Cities are having challenges with providing water because of demand for the use of ventilators and manufacturing companies of electronics and automobiles are unable to produce to meet the demands because of a short supply of the microchips that are used to make their products efficient; the challenges are caused by the pandemic. The world economy is threatened because of the pandemic. Joel's vision was not one of gloom, but one of hope and grace. It shows God's love for His people; therefore, He sent His prophet to bring to their awareness their present state, warn them of His judgment if they continue in their ways, and to offer hope if they

repented. He did not just tell them to repent, but He told them what was acceptable to Him. In addition, He gave them the promise of His blessings and restoration not only for themselves, but His blessings would be a legacy for their future generations. (Joel 2:18-29, 32)

When we do our part, He will do His. We are experiencing the fulfillment of a portion of Joel's prophecy. Verses twenty-eight and twenty-nine started on the day of Pentecost when the one hundred and twenty followers of Jesus Christ received the baptism in the Holy Spirit. I believe today the body of Christ is being called to not just hear the word of God but to take action. Leaders are called to blow the trumpet and sound the alarm to alert the people to repent and be ready for battle. They are to gather their people for prayers of intercession and fasting for families, country and the world, for the outpouring of God's Spirit. We are yearning for revival which can only come after repentance.