



Cry out to the Lord

The prophecy of Joel

Study 3

(Chapter 1:13-20)

Before God sends judgement He always warns both the faithful and the unfaithful. Especially He warns the leaders of His people. However, God also requires a thorough and heart felt repentance of those leaders because they are responsible for the spiritual welfare of His flock.

The Lord Jesus said, "The Eye is the lamp of the body. If your eyes are good, your whole body will be full of light. But if your eyes are bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light within you is darkness, how great is that darkness!" (Matthew 6:22-24)

Who gives light to the Body of Christ we call the Church? It is the teachers who have this responsibility. If what they teach is according to the pure light of God's Word then His people will be full of light. However if the teachers are in spiritual darkness then God's people will also be in spiritual darkness. This is the major reason why Paul said, "Let not many of you be teachers my brothers for we who teach will be judged with greater strictness!" and so Joel now calls for the leaders to repent.

Today in the professing Christian Church there are multitudes of Church leaders and teachers who need to repent of what they have been teaching the Church. Today we live in a post-modern culture where according to their views there is no real and final

absolute truth and this includes people's attitudes towards the Truth of God's Word, the Bible. For example the doctrines of sin, hell and Eschatology are no longer considered important. Those who have sacrificed "the faith once delivered to the saints" for expediency and because of the fear of man label anyone who stands for the truth of the Bible a legalist. They do not even understand how the Bible describes a legalist!

(Vs 13) "Put on sackcloth. O priests and mourn; wail you who minister before the altar, Come spend the night in sackcloth, you who minister before my God for the grain offerings and drink offerings are withheld from the house of your God."

Nehemiah was a godly Jewish believer in exile who was the Cupbearer to the Persian King Artaxerxes. Nehemiah had a burden for his people Israel and loved Jerusalem. When he heard that the walls of Jerusalem were broken down and the gates burnt with fire he sat down and wept and for some days he mourned and fasted and prayed to the God of heaven. He wasn't found laughing and rolling around on the floor and having a good time. Instead he was grieving, fasting and praying because the spiritual defences of God's people had been broken down. The walls of truth and faithfulness to God had been demolished by the enemy and were rapidly deteriorating.

After Nehemiah had prayed, at the risk of losing his life, he went to the king to get per-

mission to go back to Jerusalem to rebuilt what the enemy had broken down. He trusted in the Lord and went to the king and was given permission to go back to Jerusalem and to repair the city.

Paul the apostle had this same kind of burden when he wrote to the believers at Corinth. "I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to Him. But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpents cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to Christ."

At this time he was fighting against the false teaching of so-called, "Super Apostles" Today they are still around! Paul went on to describe his trials and tests as a true apostle but he also said, "Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches." Was Paul laughing, rolling around on the floor and having a good time? Certainly not! Neither was he was dressed in a \$5,000 suit, wearing a gold ring, a Rolex watch and a bouffant hairstyle, driving around in a limousine or flying across the country in a Lear jet! He certainly didn't run a so called, "Coalition of apostles" that required an annual fee to join their ranks as C Peter Wagner and his associates require!

God Himself calls the teachers to repent, "*Put on sackcloth. O priests and mourn; wail you who minister before the altar, Come spend the night in sackcloth, you who minister before my God.*" When a person wore sackcloth they showed by this outward action that they were truly sorry for their sin and rebellion against God and desired with all of their hearts to get back into a right relationship with Him.

Teachers who realise they have fleeced the sheep for money and have abused the sheep with heavy shepherding will be willing to repent of these things and of the false visions, unbiblical doctrines, their false prophecies and their greedy, appetites for money and power. God required a total change from the teachers of Israel and He

requires the same of all those who have the responsibility to lead and to teach the flock.

Whether it is the over realised eschatology of the kingdom dominion teaching perpetuated by C Peter Wagner and associates, or the post-modern thinking of Brian McLaren with his doctrine of the emerging Church, or the purpose driven marketing strategies of Rick Warren, or the faith prosperity gospel of Kenneth Copeland, or the showman ship of Benny Hinn with his exorbitant and luxurious lifestyle and false prophecies, it is all spiritual deception. In effect these men are undermining the whole counsel of God for man revealed in His Word the Bible. Actually these men need to repent and get out of the ministry and go and get an honest job and stop fleecing the sheep!

God Himself categorises these kinds of teachers with "*drunkards*" and "*drinkers of wine*" who not only act intoxicated but intoxicate others as well with the wine of their adulteries. Indeed they compel God's people to worship around the golden calf of money and power! They lead God's people into all forms of idolatry and wickedness.

How many "Jeroboams" are there in God's camp today that stands at God's altar making an offering while building their golden calves as Jeroboam did? Who, like Jeroboam, install their own priests at the high places of worship that God has not sanctioned or ordained? Jeroboam had his cronies and those teachers of the law who are enslaved to spiritual deception have their cronies as well.

God wants the teachers and pastors who have some spiritual integrity left to allow Him to totally change them from within and to make them mourn over their own utter inability to do anything apart from the strength and power of the Holy Spirit.

Multitudes of pastors, teachers and "educators" need to dump their programmes, their purpose driven marketing strategies for Church growth and their, "Seeker sensitive" cautious approach to sinners who in reality

are going to an eternal hell! Because of these things, *“The grain offerings and drink offerings are withheld from the house of your God.”* There is a famine for the hearing of God’s Word and the life-giving fountain of the Holy Spirit is hindered in His saving and Sanctifying work!

It also needs to be said that if the teachers and pastors into spiritual deception do not repent then there will be disastrous consequences; not only for them but also for the churches they lead. God Himself says that He will send a famine for hearing the Word of God. *“The days are coming,”* declares the Sovereign Lord, *“when I will send a famine through the land-not a famine of food or a thirst for water, but a famine of hearing the words of the Lord. Men will stagger from sea to sea and wander from North to East, searching for the word of the Lord but they will not find it.”*(Amos 8:11-12)

When you look at the spiritual state of the Church in the west today this is precisely the case. Yes there is a faithful remnant holding fast to God’s Word today who are like the 7,000 in Israel who had not bowed the knee to Baal. However there are multitudes of *“Jezebel’s prophets”* who are blowing God’s people everywhere with the winds of false teaching that destabilize Biblical truth like the false prophets did in the time of Elijah. Now God not only calls the Teachers and pastors to repent but also the elders and the people to repent as well.

(Vs 14) “Declare a holy fast; call a sacred assembly. Summon the elders and all who live in the land to the house of the Lord your God and cry out to the Lord.”

“Declare a holy fast;” Fasting that does not facilitate holiness and consecration to the Lord in us is a useless religious exercise. Sometimes repentance will require fasting. When we fast we show God that we really mean business with Him and that we fully intend to get what we need to have from Him. If what we are asking and longing for whatever is in line with His will and with His Word then we will have the partitions we desired from him.

(1 John 5:14-15)

“Call a sacred assembly” A Sacred assembly is not one that creates an atmosphere of joviality, laughter and all kinds of emotional excesses and behaviour but an assembly that creates a sense of solemnity and reverence before God. It is not austere and lifeless but an assembly where hearts and consciences are tender towards God, towards each other and towards the hearing of His Word the Bible.

Summon the elders and all who live in the land to the house of the Lord your God.” When there is disaster looming God’s people need to be in his house looking only to Him for what they will need in the coming crisis. In these days in which we are now living it is not time for the Church to be playing around with purpose driven concepts, post-modern thinking and sitting in the circle of the merrymakers.

Today the Western democracies are on the verge of collapse. The *“Babylonian”* Army of Islam is on the march, the nuclear arsenal is increasing, plagues, and earthquakes, famine, pollution, and global recession and spiritual deception are increasing in frequency and intensity. It is time for the church in the west to wake up before it is too late. The *‘Sennacherib’* and his armies are at the very gates of *‘the city’* and about to breach its defences! Indeed it is time that God’s people heeded God’s call for a sacred assembly!

“And cry out to the Lord.” Sometimes it takes an extreme situation to get God’s people to turn back to Him. Multitudes of Christians are sitting on the fence. They are trying to live in two worlds. They want the benefits of living in God’s kingdom but also they want the best of everything in this life. However, God is going to *“electrify”* their fences of complacency and indecisiveness and they will have to jump one way or the other. Ultimately it will be one of two choices for everyone, Christ or the Antichrist?

Today there is no real sense of urgency in multitudes of Churches. Many are into Purpose Driven, Seeker sensitive; and

Kingdom now Churches and have it good in this world and many pastors and teachers are leading them in this direction. There are many, who like Aaron, are encouraging God's people to worship around the 'Golden Calf' of prosperity and pleasure when they should be encouraging them to get further into God's Word, "to seek the Lord while He may be found and to call upon Him while He is near!" especially as the Day of the Lord rapidly approaches.

(Vs 15) "What a dreadful day! For the day of the Lord is near, it will come like destruction from the Almighty.

The major theme of this whole prophecy could be summed up in this statement for it is "the Day of the Lord" when His wrath will be poured out on the inhabitants of the earth on a global scale. Skyscrapers will fall, Missiles will fly, and whole cities will be levelled, Fallout will occur as radiation sickness kills unnumbered multitudes. Millions will die unsaved and unreconciled to God and go to hell. Indeed God says, "All the nations that forget God will be turned into hell!" The Day of the Lord will be a dreadful day indeed! This day will surely come upon all the earth, suddenly and without warning. "For you know very well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, "Peace and safety" destruction will come on them suddenly, as labour pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape"(1 Thessalonians 5: 2-3) Already we see earthquakes, tsunamis, famines, diseases, disasters, terrorism, ethnic wars within nations and anxiety and fear on a scale unparalleled in history, however, the end is not yet. The worst is yet to come!

(Vs 16) "Has not the food been cut off before our very eyes-joy and gladness from the house of our God?"

When the Babylonians laid siege to the city of Jerusalem many people within the city resorted to cannibalism to ease their hunger. The same thing occurred in 70 AD when the Romans besieged Jerusalem. There was no joy in those days at all. All the merriment of

life was gone. There was no music or laughter or eating, drinking, marrying and giving in marriage. All business had been suspended indefinitely. Every one was merely trying to survive!

When God's people go into rebellion and disobedience to God's Word they lose their capacity to understand it and respond to it. True joy and peace come when we are walking under the authority of God's Word, the Bible. Indeed Jeremiah said, "When your words came, I ate them; they were my joy and my heart's delight." David also said, "Oh, how I love your law, I meditate on it all day long."

Today right across the western nations there is no real joy in the Church. We have hype and laughter but it is hollow and without substance! Real joy and gladness are impossible when God's Word is ignored. To lose touch with God's Word is to lose the joy of the Lord and the sense of His presence! Because of the backslidden state of the western Church God has sent it a famine for the Word of God.

(Vs 17) "The seeds are shrivelled beneath the clods. The storehouses are in ruins, the granaries have been broken down, for the grain has dried up."

There was a time in the west when Churches were storehouses or granaries of God's Word and there were faithful sowers who regularly fed their congregations with the pure grain of the Word. However, today with the purpose driven, kingdom Dominion, Ecumenical doctrines and practices the Church in the west by enlarge no longer holds the deep mysteries of the faith once delivered to the saints.

There was a time when sinners could be really saved and saints truly sanctified but now the granaries have been broken down. Most churches no longer have the capacity to store the nutritious grain of God's Word. Instead they have become dispensers of "straw" instead of "grain."

Many today would rather live on dreams and personal prophecies, see miracles, signs and wonders, entertain purpose driven concepts, and engage in interfaith and ecumenical dialogue. Many want kingdom dominion in this world and prosperity and blessing. Many hunger and thirst after temporal blessings and things in this life but very few hunger and thirst after righteousness! Indeed the Lord Jesus Himself said, "It is a wicked and evil generation that seeks for a sign." It is little wonder that society is spiritually and morally bankrupt! The state of the Church directly affects the state of society.

The great revivals of the past have proven this. Whether it was the revivals under Wesley, Finney, Torrey, Moody William Booth or the Jesus movement of the sixties they all directly changed society for the better!

However, today there is no real revival in the Western Church but the 'locusts' of hype, purpose driven programs positive thinking concepts, Faith prosperity, the signs and wonders gospel, kingdom dominion or psychology, psychotherapy and emerging church post modernism to name the major ones!

When Israel walked in the ways of God's Word they were blessed and so were the nations around them but when they backslid they became a laughing stock and a derision among the unbelieving pagan world. Today it is no different in the Church!

(Vs 18) "How the cattle moan! The herds mill about because they have no pasture; even the flocks of sheep are suffering."

When Israel were not enjoying their inheritance in the Lord because of their disobedience and idolatry the nations around them that should have seen the True and Living God remained in spiritual darkness, ignorance and sin. Today it is the same with the western Church. Indeed *"the cattle moan."* These cattle can represent the souls

of the unsaved who groan under the weight of sin and darkness but see no light to show them the way out. *"The herds mill about because they have no pasture."* Watch how so many drift aimlessly through life with no real plan and purpose. Many dreams and ambitions lay slain and unfulfilled on the altar of disillusionment. Yet there are many 'Jonahs' who are asleep while unbelievers around them are in danger of losing their very lives in the storms of this life.

"Even the flocks and sheep are suffering." There are as many if not more backsliders in the Church than there is in the world. Then there are also the wolves in sheep's clothing and hirelings who love money and those kingdom building 'apostles' who love both power and money. A so-called 'Theocracy of Pharisees' whose secret ambition is the praise, adulation and honour of men and who are in reality lovers of money and power! No wonder, *"the cattle moan, the herds mill about and the flocks of sheep suffer."*

The one thing that men and women need is the light and the truth of God's Word that points them to the Lord Jesus Christ and the salvation that is in Him alone and in no other.

He who Himself takes away the sin of the world, He alone who said, "I am the way the truth and the life and no one comes to the Father except through me." He who said, "I am the light of the world. If a man follows me he will not walk in darkness but have the light of life!" Indeed the Lord Jesus is the true and good shepherd who leads us into green pastures and remains with us even when we walk through the valley of the shadow of death or as another translation says through the deepest and darkest valley. If men and women would see God and the Lord Jesus Christ for who He really is then they need the light of God's Word quickened by the Holy Spirit and reflected in the lives of those who profess Godliness.

Now Joel sees the desolation of Israel and the judgement to come and cries out to God.

(Vs 19-20) "To you, O Lord, I call, for fire has devoured the open pastures and flames have burnt up all the trees of the field. Even the wild animals pant for you; the streams of water have dried up and fire has devoured the open pastures."

When the Babylonian hordes swept across the land of Israel and sacked Jerusalem they used fire and sword. The whole land was invaded; even the other cities and many villages were not spared. Today we live in a nuclear age where there are enough atomic weapons to destroy the whole world many times over. Once more fire and sword is coming to Israel but will also sweep the whole world. There will be nuclear exchanges, pollution, sickness, death and disease on a scale unparalleled in history.

The spiritually decadent west has yet to see a 9/11 repeated on an unparalleled scale.

Indeed the late Romanian Pastor Dumitru Duduman saw the destruction of at least five cities in the United States. He is quoted, "It was not a dream. It was not a vision. I was awake just as I am now. He showed me all of **California** and said, "This is Sodom and Gomorrah! All of this, in one day it will burn! Its sin has reached the Holy One." Then he took me to **Las Vegas**. "This is Sodom and Gomorrah. In one day it will burn." Then he showed me the state of **New York**. "Do you know what this is?" he asked. I said, "No." He said, "This is New York. This is Sodom and Gomorrah! In one day it will burn." Then he showed me all of **Florida**. "This is Florida," he said. "This is Sodom and Gomorrah! In one day it will burn." Then he

took me back home to the rock where we had begun. "All of this I have shown you - **IN ONE DAY IT WILL BURN!**"

Indeed this is a frightening scenario. If America goes then everything goes! The Babylonians are advancing once more across the pages of history. A mighty army unequalled in the world's history and never to be equaled again is on the move! All it needs is a leader to unite its ranks. Indeed this army will be as the locusts marching in ranks with wave after wave descending on mankind. Ultimately this great army will cover the whole land of Israel where it will meet its final doom at the hands of the Lord Jesus Christ in the Battle of Armageddon, the battle to end all battles! In the end the Lord Jesus Christ will have the total victory and His kingdom will know no end!

The Great boulder of God's kingdom will smash all the empires depicted in Nebuchadnezzar's statue in the book of Daniel. The last kingdom to be destroyed will be the kingdom of the Antichrist when his hordes fall on the mountains of Israel and are consumed by the fire of God!

Indeed on that day there will be deliverance for Israel and for the faithful Church when their Lord and Messiah Jesus Christ comes back again. From that time on He will rule and reign in righteousness and true holiness over all of the nations that have survived the Great Tribulation! On that day, "there will no longer be a Canaanite in the house of the Lord!"

"The Lord dwells in Zion!"

BLOW THE TRUMPET IN ZION

"For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ"

