

THE PROPHECY OF JOEL IN CONNECTION WITH THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST, AND THE LORD'S COMMAND FOR US TO FAST

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We all know from the signs, that this world is approaching the final events of Bible prophecy and the imminent second coming of Jesus Christ. But are we truly preparing for such a time and event? This is a serious question that we all need to examine ourselves with. Knowing that time is running out fast, are we making the necessary preparation to be ready? The prophecy of Joel gives us warning and instruction regarding this.

*Joel 1:15 ...'Alas for the day! **for the day of the Lord is at hand**, and as a destruction from the Almighty shall it come.'*

*Joel 2:1 ...'Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: **for the day of the Lord cometh, for it is nigh at hand.**'*

*Joel 2:11 ...'And the Lord shall utter his voice before his army: for his camp is very great: for he is strong that executeth his word: **for the day of the Lord is great and very terrible; and who can abide it?**'*

*Joel 3:13,16 ...'Put ye in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe: come, get you down; for the press is full, the fats overflow; for their wickedness is great ... **The Lord also shall roar out of Zion, and utter his voice from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth shall shake.**'*

As you can see from the above verses, Joel is dealing with the approaching return of Jesus Christ. The harvest, as Jesus confirmed in Matthew 13:39, and also Revelation 14:14-19, is "the end of the world." So as we see "the day of the Lord" approaching, what is the advice given by God through the prophet Joel?

Joel 1:14 ...'Sanctify ye a fast, call a solemn assembly, gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land into the house of the Lord your God, and cry unto the Lord.'

Joel 2:1 ...'Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the Lord cometh, for it is nigh at hand.'

*Joel 2:12-13 ...'Therefore also now, saith the Lord, **turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting**, and with weeping, and with mourning: 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.'*

Joel 2:15-17 ...'Blow the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly: Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children, and those that suck the breasts: let the bridegroom go forth of his chamber, and the bride out of her closet. Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord, weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O Lord..'

Do you get the idea of the seriousness of the situation we are in from the above verses? Preceding the day of the Lord is the "time of trouble such as never was" (Daniel 12:1), which this world is going to be thrown into. Then, Alas! Alas! Alas! The day of the Lord! As a destruction from the Almighty shall it come! Are we ready and prepared to defend the truth to magistrates and possibly be thrown into prison? Are we ready and prepared to lose EVERY earthly possession and money, and stand in a time when we can neither buy nor sell? Are we ready and prepared to possibly wander through the wilderness, destitute of food, and having to rely **SOLELY** upon our faith in Jesus to provide? This cannot be overstated. Most of us live in favorable and easy circumstances right now. But what of the time coming upon us? Are we truly preparing?

The LORD knew the preparation needed for this time, hence the prophecy of Joel.

We have ONE preparation to be able to pass through the events coming upon this world, as we will only pass through those events ONCE, leading up to the close of human probation and the second coming of Christ. And what is part of our preparation which the LORD has instructed us to do? "Sanctify ye a fast" - "turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting" - "rend your heart." So we are counselled to fast and to draw near to God, rending our hearts. Are we heeding this clear instruction from the LORD to fast and draw near to Him?

Many do not realize that fasting is a gospel institution. When rebuking the disciples for them not being able to cast out a demon, Jesus told them ... "this kind goeth not out but by **prayer and fasting**" (Matthew 17:21). In Acts 10, God sent an angel/messenger to Cornelius who fasted and prayed (Acts 10:30). Paul commends fasting and prayer in 1 Corinthians 7:5. Jesus fasted in His wilderness experience (Matthew 4:1-2). Also the disciples fasted as Acts 13:2-3 confirms.

So what is the purpose of fasting? And what should our fasting look like? Well, the very basic element of fasting is to abstain from food, which is healthful for our bodies to fast for say, 24 hours once a week, or once every two weeks. But this is the very basic element of fasting. The main purpose of fasting is to draw nearer to God, spending time searching our souls for any sin and defilement that needs repenting of and forsaking. Done correctly, fasting also helps to produce temperance in our characters, which is an important building block of faith as Peter confirms in 2 Peter 1:5-7.

Self denial! Self denial! ... *"If any man will come after me, let him **deny himself**, and take up his cross daily, and follow me"* (Luke 9:23)

*Romans 12:1 ... 'I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye **present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service.**'*

*Philippians 2:5-7 ... 'Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: **But made himself of no reputation**, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:'*

The words *"but made himself of no reputation,"* in the original Greek means - Christ **"EMPTIED Himself"**

Should we not be able to do this out of LOVE for our Saviour? Jesus gave His all for us. Sacrificed all for us. Should we not in return give our all for Him? Is denying self in regular fasting and prayer too much of a sacrifice for us? Shame! What shame on our part after all that God has done for us if we cannot make a sacrifice for Him! Anyone who thinks it too much a sacrifice to do such things will NEVER be ready to meet the trials ahead, or the LORD of glory when He returns. But let us make sure we understand what true fasting is. It is NOT only to abstain from food and do what we please during that time. Neither will God accept our fasting while we hold onto any cherished sin or selfish motives. This is where the Pharisees failed, as God confirmed in Isaiah:

Isaiah 58:3-4 ... 'Behold, in the day of your fast ye find pleasure, and exact all your labours. Behold, ye fast for strife and debate, and to smite with the fist of wickedness.'

The fastings of the Pharisees were occasions of outward ceremony only. It was a mere EMPTY form, which is something we need to be very careful NOT to do. They did not humble their hearts before God. They were filled with bitterness, envy, malice, strife, selfishness, and self-righteousness. While their heads were bowed in pretended humiliation, they were covetous, full of self-esteem, self-importance. They were oppressive, exacting, and proud in spirit. So what was God's response to that?

Isaiah 58:6-8 ... 'Is not this the fast that I have chosen? to loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to deal thy bread to the hungry, and that thou bring the poor that are cast out to thy house? when thou seest the naked, that thou cover him; and that thou hide not thyself from thine own flesh? Then shall thy light break forth as the morning, and thine health shall spring forth speedily: and thy righteousness shall go before thee; the glory of the Lord shall be thy reward.'

Now we are getting a fuller understanding of fasting. Does this mean we do not need to take part in actual fasting? No, no! Isaiah 58:6-8 is an answer to the mere empty form of fasting that the Pharisees performed, all the while concealing sin and hatred. God is teaching us that true fasting involves a denial of self. The Pharisees on the other hand thought only for self, even while they were fasting. But what does it take to *"deal thy bread to the hungry"*? SELF DENIAL! SACRIFICE! LOVE! Remember what Jesus did for us according to Philippians 2:7? He **EMPTIED Himself** to help and save us. SELF DENIAL! SACRIFICE! LOVE! LOVE!! This is what God is leading us to. This is what will cleanse us of all sin. This is what

will prepare us for the time of trial ahead and make us ready for that holy, heavenly abode, where sin will never rise again.

James 4:17 says *"he that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin."* So if we come before God in fasting and prayer, while neglecting our Christian duties, then we are not truly fasting the way God calls us to and He will reject it. Just like He rejected the fasting of the Pharisees. This is why actual, regular fasting is necessary, **if we approach it in the correct way**, which is to come before God, examining and searching our hearts for any wrong. Any blot. Any sin. Ready to confess, repent and forsake that sin. When we do this in honesty and humility, God will accept us and give us grace to overcome and do what is right.

Leviticus 23:27 ...'Also on the tenth day of this seventh month there shall be a day of atonement: it shall be an holy convocation unto you; and ye shall afflict your souls, and offer an offering made by fire unto the Lord.'

The Israelites were commanded to afflict their souls on the typical day of atonement. Not a mere empty form of covering heads and spreading ashes, but truly seeking and searching their hearts for any sin that needed to be confessed and repented of. Any known duty neglected that needed to be made right. How much more should we, who are living, not just in the atypical day of atonement, but right at the very end, nearing the close of probation and earth's final crisis? Alas! Alas! Alas! For the day of the Lord is at hand. Will we faithfully and regularly enter our closets in fasting and prayer, seeking God with all our hearts, denying self, to put away all sin, ready to take up neglected duties towards God and our neighbour?

Oh I pray you can see the importance of this. I pray the warning and counsel of Joel has touched your heart to turn to God and give your all for Him. The time before us will try the souls of men to the uttermost. And only those who have made the necessary preparation, taking the necessary steps, according to the Word of God, will be ready. Draw near to God with all your heart, with fasting and prayer. And the more we draw near to God, the more He will draw near to us and make us ready.

"Get ready, get ready, get ready. Ye will have to die a greater death to the world than ye have ever yet died ... Get ready, get ready, get ready. Ye must have a greater preparation than ye now have, for the day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger, to lay the land desolate and to destroy the sinners thereof out of it. Sacrifice all to God. Lay all upon His altar." (Early Writings, P64-67)

Joel 2:12 ...'Therefore also now, saith the Lord, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning.'