

## Joel: A Call for God's People to Gather

The Lord has been gracious to His \_\_\_\_\_! Joel reveals the nature of God by saying, "Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster" (Joel 2:13). "The people of Judah had become prosperous and complacent. Taking God for granted, they turned to self-centeredness, idolatry, and sin. Joel warned them that this kind of life-style would inevitably bring down God's judgment." Our enemy would love for us to become complacent and take God's goodness for granted. The church is in spiritual trouble when the \_\_\_\_\_ becomes \_\_\_\_\_.

As we study God's Word, we know very little about Joel. However, he was \_\_\_\_\_ to speak a timely Word of warning. Joel is quoted in the books of \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. Joel 2:28-29 says, "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even on the male and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit." Joel 2:32 says, "And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

\_\_\_\_\_ were front and center in Joel's prophecy. "Swarms of them can darken the sky, sound like a fleet of approaching helicopters, weigh millions of tons, and consume every living plant in their path. They can obliterate a year's income and erase all hope of a bountiful harvest. They can appear overnight and be gone the following day, leaving utter devastation in their wake. They can travel hundreds of miles on a strong wind-with no preference for their final destination. In Old Testament days, a locust invasion was a death sentence for a crop." Locusts foreshadowed something yet to come. Joel 2:1 says, "Blow a trumpet in Zion; sound an alarm on my holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of the Lord is coming; it is near."

Joel called God's people to \_\_\_\_\_ and come together for a \_\_\_\_\_.

**Joel 1:14** - "Consecrate a fast; call a solemn assembly. Gather the elders and all the inhabitants of the land to the house of the Lord your God, and cry out to the Lord."

**Joel 2:15-16** - "Blow the trumpet in Zion; consecrate a fast; call a solemn assembly; gather the people. Consecrate the congregation; assemble the elders; gather the children, even nursing infants. Let the bridegroom leave his room, and the bride her chamber."

What does the \_\_\_\_\_ say about \_\_\_\_\_? Scripture describes three main forms of fasting. (1) The \_\_\_\_\_ fast. It involves the total abstinence of food. Jesus fasted from food but not from water (Lk. 4:2). (2) The \_\_\_\_\_ fast. This type of fast involves the abstinence of food and water and lasted (generally) no more than three days (Ezra 10:6; Esther 4:16; Acts 9:9). (3) The \_\_\_\_\_ fast. It

involves the restriction of diet rather than complete abstinence (Dan. 10:3). Fasting is \_\_\_\_\_ food, technology, media, relationships, entertainment, work, or anything else to seek to know God in a deeper experience. Fasting involves \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_. As the Early Church desired to know the mind of God, they prayed and fasted.

What does the \_\_\_\_\_ say about a \_\_\_\_\_? What is expected? It's about "God's people being called together to humble themselves, seek God's face, fast and pray, turn from their wicked ways, hear from God's Word, remove all things and practices from their lives that are displeasing to God, worship God with all their hearts, and make a solemn covenant with God to become His instruments to spread the gospel to all the world."

**Richard Owen Roberts** – "Most professing Christians have never heard of a solemn assembly. Of the relatively small number who have, a substantial portion consider it as merely an Old Testament practice of no particular relevance today."

"Throughout history God has used the solemn assembly as a means to bring revival. Of the twelve periods of renewal recorded in the Old Testament, the calling of a solemn assembly always preceded God's movement. The followers of Jesus gathered for what could be called a solemn assembly for several days before the outpouring of the Holy Spirit and the birth of the Church on the Day of Pentecost. In America, historical documents verify that before every major national revival, emphasis was placed upon fast days and solemn assemblies."

What \_\_\_\_\_ help today's church understand a solemn assembly?

- It's a time to cease from \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
- It's important to call the \_\_\_\_\_ to participate.
- It's imperative to \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ the Lord.
- It's an opportunity for God's people to sacrifice \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
- It's a call to \_\_\_\_\_.
- It's not a time to \_\_\_\_\_.
- It's an occasion for \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_ repentance.
- It's a time for Spirit-led \_\_\_\_\_ of God's Word.
- It's a witness to \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.
- It's a plea for God to \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_.

**2 Chronicles 7:14** – *"If my people who are called by my name humble themselves, and pray and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven and will forgive their sin and heal their land."*

**Joel 2:25** – *"I will restore to you the years that the swarming locust has eaten, the hopper, the destroyer, and the cutter, my great army, which I sent among you."*

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The Lord has been gracious to His **church**! Joel reveals the nature of God by saying, *"Return to the Lord your God, for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love; and he relents over disaster"* (Joel 2:13). "The people of Judah had become prosperous and complacent. Taking God for granted, they turned to self-centeredness, idolatry, and sin. Joel warned them that this kind of lifestyle would inevitably bring down God's judgment." Our enemy would love for us to become complacent and take God's goodness for granted. The church is in spiritual trouble when the **holy** becomes **common**.

As we study God's Word, we know very little about Joel. However, he was **God's prophet** to speak a timely Word of warning. Joel is quoted in the books of **Acts** and **Romans**. Joel 2:28-29 says, *"And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even on the male and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit."* Joel 2:32 says, *"And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."*

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What does the **Bible** say about **fasting**? Scripture describes three main forms of fasting. (1) The **normal** fast. It involves the total abstinence of food. Jesus fasted from food but not from water (Lk. 4:2). (2) The **absolute** fast. This type of fast involves the abstinence of food and water and lasted (generally) no more than three days (Ezra 10:6; Esther 4:16; Acts 9:9). (3) The **partial** fast. It involves the

restriction of diet rather than complete abstinence (Dan. 10:3). Fasting is **laying aside** food, technology, media, relationships, entertainment, work, or anything else to seek to know God in a deeper experience. Fasting involves **prayer, worship, solitude, confession, and surrender**. As the Early Church desired to know the mind of God, they prayed and fasted.

What does the **Bible** say about a **solemn assembly**? What is expected? It's about "God's people being called together to humble themselves, seek God's face, fast and pray, turn from their wicked ways, hear from God's Word, remove all things and practices from their lives that are displeasing to God, worship God with all their hearts, and make a solemn covenant with God to become His instruments to spread the gospel to all the world."

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What **practical insights** help today's church understand a solemn assembly?

- It's a time to cease from **activity** and **work**.
- It's important to call the **entire church** to participate.
- It's imperative to **fast** and **seek** the Lord.
- It's an opportunity for God's people to sacrifice **time** and **resources**.
- It's a call to **earnest prayer**.
- It's not a time to **watch the clock**.
- It's an occasion for **personal** and **corporate** repentance.
- It's a time for Spirit-led **preaching** of God's Word.
- It's a witness to **children** and **youth**.
- It's a plea for God to **forgive sin** and **change lives**.

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