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Turning Around

CAPITOL BIBLE STUDY

*monthly (interim) schedule
first Tuesdays of the month*

TUESDAY, 1 NOVEMBER 2016

12 NOON in 123 CAP

Capitol Commission (interim) Bible Studies are held **first Tuesdays of each month at 12 Noon**, in accordance with the Public Service Commission devotional at 9:55am. **The monthly Bible study is nonpartisan and non-denominational.** Until the start of the 2017 legislative session, our Bible study (chapter-by-chapter, verse-by-verse) will be in the Old Testament book of Joel.

I pray that this study will be edifying to you. My sole intent in this ministry is to serve you, and to be a resource to you for pastoral care, counsel, and prayer. **Please accept my study in the Word of God, as evidence of my desire to serve you.**

– Dr. Ron J. Bigalke, Georgia State Minister, Capitol Commission

Capitol Commission (interim) Bible Study

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Tuesday, 1 November 2016

Joel 2 – “Turning Around”

A report exists regarding a town called Wabush, which is located in a remote area of Labrador, Canada, which “was completely isolated for some time. But recently a road was cut through the wilderness to reach it. Wabush now has one road leading into it, and thus, only one road leading out. If someone would travel the unpaved road for six to eight hours to get into Wabush, there is only one way he or she could leave — by turning around.”

“Each of us, by birth, arrives in a town called Sin. As in Wabush, there is only one way out — a road built by God himself. But in order to take that road, one must first turn around. That complete about face is what the Bible calls repentance, and without it, there’s no way out of town” (Brian Weatherdon, as quoted in *Leadership*, Vol. 8, No. 2).

The Hebrew word for repentance, *shûwb* (שׁוּב), indicates a change in direction of the entire person. When the prophets used the word in the context of God’s covenant with Israel (Gen 12:1-3; Deut 28—30), it denoted returning to God with covenantal loyalty. Some biblical texts demand repentance (Acts 2:38); others emphasize the necessity of faith (16:31); and, some texts reveal that salvation

comprises both faith and repentance (20:21). Faith and repentance are not synonymous, yet both actions form a consistent relationship that cannot be separated in the application and appropriation of salvation by God’s grace.

Isaiah 30:18 – Therefore the LORD longs to be gracious to you, and therefore He waits on high to have compassion on you. For the LORD is a God of justice; how blessed are all those who long for Him.

Repentance changes the manner in which a person copes with life, relates to others, and experiences a relationship with God. In his proclamation on 12 July 1863, for a day of national thanksgiving, Abraham Lincoln exhibited his continuous dependence upon God. His repeated prayer was that both he and America “should be on the Lord’s side” (John Wesley Hill, *Abraham Lincoln: Man of God* [New York and London: G. P. Putnam’s Sons, 1920] 330). Lincoln proclaimed:

We have been the recipients of the choicest bounties of heaven; we have been preserved these many years, in peace and prosperity; we have grown in numbers, wealth, and power, as no other nation has ever grown. But we have forgotten God. We have forgotten the gracious hand which preserved us in peace and multiplied and enriched and strengthened us; and we have vainly imagined, in the deceitfulness of our hearts, that all these blessings were produced by some superior wisdom and virtue of our own. Intoxicated with unbroken success we have become too self-sufficient to feel the necessity of *redeeming and preserving grace*, too proud to pray to God who made us.

It behooves us, then, to humble ourselves before the offended Power, to confess our National sins, and to pray for clemency and forgiveness [ibid. 336].

**HIS REPEATED PRAYER WAS THAT BOTH HE AND AMERICA
“SHOULD BE ON THE LORD’S SIDE...”**

The person who believes in God needs to repent at crucial moments, then identify new behaviors and thoughts, and consciously turn *from sin* to God. Divine calamity is the natural consequence for an unrepentant people. The prophet Joel invited people to manifest repentance as they endured the Day of the Lord.

THE PROPHECY

(*Joel 2:1-11*) Joel 1 prophesied an imminent plague of locusts that would be fulfilled historically. Chapter 2 is dependent upon that imagery in describing an invading army. Some believe that chapter 2, like the previous chapter, also describes an historical plague. The problem with such an understanding is the description in chapter 2 encompasses more than a locust plague. For instance, the invaders are called “a great and mighty people” (2:2) and the Lord’s “army” (v. 11). The locusts were God’s army (vv. 11, 20, 25), and the time was “the day of the LORD.”

Capitol Commission (interim) Bible Study

First Tuesdays (1st of November) from 12 Noon – 12:45pm, 123 CAP

lunch provided from ministry partnership by Capitol Commission donors



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Joel's audience perceived that attack was imminent, and would not have been surprised by the prophet sounding the alarm. What was startling was the reason for trembling. The battle was not ordinary for the day of the Lord was coming. The actuality that the locusts were God's army is a sobering truth, yet also it is comforting because the Lord who wounds also heals (Hos 6:1; cf. 2 Sam 24:14).

In the Ancient Near East (ANE), the imagery of a locust plague frequently symbolized advancing soldiers that would swarm over a land and plunder its resources. The best understanding of Joel 2:1-11 is to regard the section as a prophecy of an invading army in latter days. The remainder of the chapter verifies this explanation.

THE INVITATION

(Joel 2:12-17) Another invitation for returning to God is given in verses 12-17, as it is not too late for the people to repent. God is "gracious and compassionate, slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness and relenting of evil" (v. 13). Repentance must be authentic, which necessitates an inner rending of the heart, and not a mere outward rending of one's garments.

GOD IS "GRACIOUS AND COMPASSIONATE, SLOW TO ANGER, ABOUNDING IN LOVINGKINDNESS AND RELENTING OF EVIL. . ."

Joel appealed to the people for them to return wholeheartedly to God "with fasting, weeping and mourning" (v. 12), which would be evidence of their sincerity. If the people would return to God, then He would return to them (Mal 3:7). In our prayers, we should not only be mindful for how to magnify the glory of God (Joel 2:17), but also to escape the suffering that results from sin (cf. Eccl 7:14).

THE COMFORT

(Joel 2:18-27) Verses 18-27 reveal the Lord's answer and comforting words in response to the people's private and public repentance. God is "zealous for His land" and "His people" (v. 18). Even if people do not respond now, there is a day coming in which God will intervene for the sake of his people (vv. 18-32). God will scatter the invaders (vv. 18-20) and make the land productive (vv. 21-27).

"ALL THINGS ARE POSSIBLE TO [THE ONE WHO] BELIEVES."

God promised, "Then I will make up to you for the years that the swarming locust has eaten" (v. 25). The years that the locust had eaten refer to the produce or yield of those years. God will replace the invading armies (v. 20) with "great things" (v. 21), resulting in joy and gladness rather than fear. Unrepentant lifestyles lead to consequences, yet repentance results in the Lord's blessing. In a sermon entitled "Truth Stranger than Fiction" (30 May 1886), Charles Spurgeon explained this verse as follows:

Lost years can never be restored literally. Time once past is gone forever. . . . You cannot have back your time. But there is a strange and wonderful way in which God can give back to you the wasted blessings, the unripened fruits of years over which you mourned. The fruits of wasted years may yet be yours. It is a pity that they should

have been eaten by your folly and negligence. But if they have been so, be not hopeless concerning them. "All things are possible to him that believes." There is a power which is beyond all things and can work great marvels."

THE OUTPOURING

(Joel 2:28-32) In latter days, God will outpour his "Spirit on all mankind" (v. 28). Having returned the fields to normal with rain, God will transform his people through the work of the Holy Spirit. Joel used traditional language to express how God would empower and help his people. The prophecy depicts the Lord's new promise not only to leaders (who would receive the Holy Spirit upon being anointed, cf. 1 Sam 16:13-14) but also for all people.

Peter quoted the last prophecy mentioned (vv. 28-32) on the day of Pentecost. Peter explained, "but this is what was spoken of through the prophet Joel" (Acts 2:16). The promise of the Holy Spirit in Joel 2 was outpoured upon the incipient church on the day of Pentecost. God always fulfills his Word precisely (cf. Matt 5:18), yet not all the signs that Joel mentioned appeared at the time of Acts 2 (e.g. the sun darkened, the moon turned into blood, etc.).

The answer to the apparent dilemma is to regard the prophecy as unfulfilled in Acts 2, and thus Peter was only making an analogy between Joel 2 and what occurred on Pentecost. Therefore, the complete fulfillment awaits the future. However, one could also affirm that the day of Pentecost was one fulfillment of the Joel 2 prophecy because there was not a national response of faith in Jesus Christ (cf. Zech 12—14; John 19:37). Appropriation of the provision of the Holy Spirit will not occur until the coming of Messiah. The phenomena in the heavens will occur when the Lord appears, in addition to the other factors that were absent in Acts 2.

In the present time (leading to the Lord's coming), Scripture gives the wonderful promise, "whoever calls on the name of the LORD will be delivered" (Joel 2:32). Romans 10:13 quotes Joel 2:32 to further emphasize that God's salvation is available for people of all nations and races. The expression "calls on the name" is not a reference to a cry of desperation (e.g. Ps 79:5-6; 105:1; 116:4-5); rather, it is the inward response to the one true God as He has revealed Himself in Scripture, the Holy Bible (Rom 10:9).

Why not ask God to deliver you from whatever challenges you encounter today? Depend upon God for your life's daily needs. Rejoice in his blessings! Ask the Lord to have the Holy Spirit reveal his will to you through the appropriation of God's truth, the Bible.

Thank you for allowing Capitol Commission the nobility in providing Bible studies to you. If we can serve you in any manner, please talk with us, or contact by email or phone.

About Capitol Commission

Capitol Commission state ministers are pastors-missionaries who teach weekly verse-by-verse Bible studies for legislators, lobbyists, and staff members. The Bible studies are hand-distributed to each legislative office, emailed, and made available throughout the Capitol community. Capitol Commission is a ministry of the church seeking to proclaim the gospel message, and to help believers mature through verse-by-verse Bible teaching. In the Bible, we see God's love for the world, especially those who have been placed in authority. This is the foundation for our ministry to you.



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NEXT CAPITOL COMMISSION (INTERIM) BIBLE STUDY
Tuesday, 6th of December @ 12 Noon in 123 CAP
(First Tuesdays of each month, during interim)