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"Blow Ye The Trumpet In Zion"

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"Blow ye the trumpet in Zion." (Joel 2:1).

The first application of the text is doubtless to the Jewish people. Its first message is addressed to them, but it does not end with them. Joel's prophecy is not only a foretelling, it is forthtelling. It is not only a prophesying of future events, it is a wonderful treatise on the all important theme of spiritual revival. It discusses it thoroughly. The conditions necessitating a revival, the call to seek a revival, the way to obtain a revival, the true meaning of such an awakening, and the results of its coming, are all dealt with by the prophet in his message. It is his presentation of this theme I wish you to consider with me.

Note first, THE PLACE OF TRUMPET SOUNDING. "Blow ye the trumpet in Zion." The place of trumpet sounding then, is in Zion, and Zion stands for the Church. You will notice the thought is not that Zion is to be the trumpet messenger, but that the trumpet message is to be delivered to her. "Blow ye the trumpet in Zion."

That was not only the need in Joel's day, it is the urgent need of this day in which we live. The Church again needs to hear God's voice and God's message. A spiritual awakening will never be produced simply by trumpeting the gospel to the unsaved. The trumpet must be sounded in Zion. Hence the need first, of those who have "ears to hear what the Spirit saith to the churches."

Consider next, THE PURPOSE OF TRUMPET SOUNDING. "Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain."

The first reason for blowing the trumpet is to sound an alarm. But why be alarmed? The prophet continues: "For the day of the Lord cometh;—A day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness." In other words, a day of chastening and judgment.

Sad things are pictured as taking place. In the first chapter the prophet tells of a plague of locusts which swept over the land, leaving famine and want in its trail. The state of affairs is described further as the prophet speaks of the meat being cut off, the seed rotting under the clods, the garners being desolate, the barns broken down, the corn withered, the beasts groaning, the cattle perplexed, and the flocks desolate. This sad condition of things is interpreted by the prophet as an act of God. He calls the plague, God's army. He understands it to be God's voice, and appeals to the people to acknowledge it

to be so. He also speaks of such sad conditions as being but a forerunner of further impending danger and judgment.

The reason for the material famine was a spiritual famine. Perhaps what the prophet Amos called "a famine of hearing the word of the Lord." Certainly the absence of that moral and spiritual fruit, the spiritual harvest required by God. The people were forgetting and disregarding God. And it was because of this serious twofold condition that the word of the Lord came to Joel to blow the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm. The truth is, spiritual declension always has its serious consequences. "Righteousness exalts a nation," but for the people who forget God, sad and serious are the results. Perhaps that may help to somewhat explain the happenings of the past years, and the sad and serious world situation in the present. Such things do not come by chance. They are the outcome of a sad moral and spiritual condition. They are the results of a serious spiritual drift and declension, and to some of us, they are the voice of God. The tragedy is that so few people, even in the Church seem to have "ears to hear." Surely this sad spiritual condition, with its accompanying results and impending dangers, calls for the blowing of the trumpet in Zion, and the sounding of an alarm.

A second reason given for the trumpet sounding is to issue an appeal. "Therefore . . . saith the Lord, turn ye even unto 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." Such is the message in verses 12 and 13, and it is an appeal for a genuine repentance, and returning to God. Something more than a shallow spiritual attitude, or profession of regret, implied by the rending of the garments, is necessary. God demands reality. A true sorrow for sin, leading to a permanent discontinuance of all that is wrong and questionable, will alone satisfy the divine requirements, and bring pardon and blessing.

A further reason for the trumpet blowing is given by the prophet: "Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, sanctify a fast, call a solemn assembly: Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders. Let the priests, the ministers of the Lord weep between the porch and the altar, and let them say, Spare thy people, O Lord."

The blowing of the trumpet here, is a Call. It is a call to sanctification, and a call to supplication. It is a call to Zion, the Church, to separate herself from sin and the world, and definitely set herself apart to seek God's mercy and deliverance.

The present situation will never be rightly changed if the Church does not definitely seek the face of God concerning it. A spiritual awakening with its accompanying results will never come through the routine of our religious or Church activities. We must sanctify ourselves, set ourselves apart, and give ourselves definitely, solemnly, and if need be with fasting, to seek the Lord regarding this matter.

Then, there is the call to supplication. To both ministers and people is the strong appeal of the prophet made. Even the children are to be gathered in the sanctuary, as priests and people plead for divine help.

The need then is to pray. The Rev. John Wesley said: "Give me one hundred preachers who fear nothing but sin, and desire nothing but God, and I care not a straw whether they be clergymen or laymen; such alone will shake the gates of hell and set up the Kingdom of God on earth. God does nothing but in answer to prayer." God Himself says, "If My people who are called by My name, shall humble themselves, and pray, and seek my face, and turn from their wicked ways, then will I hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land." We need then a revival of supplication to have a revival that saves. An urgent need is more prayer.

Finally, this trumpet sounding is the proclaiming of a Covenant, a two-fold covenant. First, there is the promise of restoration. It is given in verses 21 to 27. Great things are here promised of the Lord. Fruitfulness in the place of famine, the former and the latter rain, an abundance of wheat, and an overflow of wine and oil. Comprehensively it is summed up in verse 25: "And I will restore to you the years that the locusts have eaten . . . my great army which I sent among you. And ye shall eat in plenty and be satisfied, and praise the name of the Lord your God."

A spiritual and material restoration is here promised; the spiritual leading to the material. That is always God's way. Continual material prosperity is always conditional to the moral and spiritual state of the people. This spiritual restoration implies the forgiveness of sin, the healing of back-sliding, and a restoration to the favour and blessing of God. The material blessing is the outcome.

Then in this covenant there is the promise of sanctification. Thus we read in verse 28: "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh." The day of Pentecost saw the fulfilment of that promise, as Peter was bold to declare, and all the blessings received by the Church, and the boundless benefits received by the world, from God, through the Church, to a great extent

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