

SECTION 1

SOLEMN ASSEMBLY

SOLEMN ASSEMBLY MOVEMENT GROWS

By P. Douglas Small

The usual response is "Call a what?" when someone suggests that the church call a Solemn Assembly. It seems remarkable that the idea of Solemn Assembly, so prominent in biblical history, is almost an unknown concept for the typical church member.

What is the Solemn Assembly? It is a corporate time given to soul-searching and self-examination. Though all services should involve those components, the Solemn Assembly is expressly for that purpose. It is a time of repentance and confession, not simply for individual sin, but for corporate sin. Corporate sin can only be confessed and repented of when the corporate body comes together to ask God for forgiveness. Fasting is required. Contrition of heart is expected. Genuine humility before God is essential.

The Solemn Assembly is also a time for the church to act in its priestly role toward the world in which it confesses for the cities and the nations, sins against God which could invite his wrath and judgment. As the church stands in the gap for its cities, God sends revival and visits the unrighteous on behalf of the righteous.

Avery Willis, a southern Baptist minister who has done extensive work on the Solemn Assembly, notes our national plight: God "is letting us experience the consequences for our sins and our choices to leave Him out of our lives and our nation. He has allowed the enemy to come in like a flood. Look at the occult and its growth. They claim a plan to take over the USA by 2000. He has allowed other nations to control our money and even buy much of our property and companies. He has let us be humiliated in Vietnam and Iran and Lebanon. He has let our families fall apart because of our hard hearts. He has let a large percentage of our people become addicted to drugs, and then in order to afford them, terrorize the rest of us. He has let criminals multiply until they overcrowd our jails X the prison population has doubled in 8 years. He has let our school system fall far below that of other western nations. He has allowed our courts through legal abortion to kill over one million (babies) a year. He has let us get so far in debt as a nation that at anytime with change of oil prices or other fluctuations we could be bankrupt." Willis continues, "The urgency of the hour is that the Day of the Lord is upon us!" (Source: Lecture notes by Willis given at New Orleans Baptist Seminary, National Prayer Conference on Solemn Assembly, June 7-9, 1991.)

America, many charge, was raised up as a last days nation to aid in the evangelization of the world. We have impacted the world. Other than Israel during the Old Testament period, no other nation has come as close to being a theocracy. But in the end, unless we see a revival we may become more hostile to the Christian faith than any nation on earth. We had our chance as a nation to be God's instrument for kingdom change in the earth. Willis says, "We would not send missionaries by the

thousands, and (so we) have sent our soldiers in wars by the millions and have lost hundreds of thousands in battle. Think how that many missionaries and that much money could have changed this world if we had done it God's way!" (Source: Lecture notes by Willis given at New Orleans Baptist Seminary, National Prayer Conference on Solemn Assembly, June 7-9, 1991.)

America does need to repent. But America, like Sodom and Gomorrah, won't repent. So the church, like Abraham, has to pray the priestly prayer for her. Listen to Abraham plead with God, "*If fifty righteous be found, will you spare the city? ... forty? ... thirty? ... twenty? ... ten?*" (Genesis 18:23-32). The church can no longer be held hostage by the sin of the nation and the world. We are in a nation that is worthy of the wrath of God. We, like Abraham, must pray the priestly prayer for the that sees God act in a merciful outpouring of conviction and love upon the entire nation X an act that spares us and sees revival come.

Willis says, God "is calling us back to what it means to be a Christian. If we refuse to be used, then He will leave us and go to someone else. If the church will become purified and get right with God, multitudes of non-Christians will begin to seek Christ." Willis predicts "disaster if Christians do not repent and if they turn away from God's call to Solemn Assembly." (Willis, quoted in the Baptist Press by Terri Lackey, release date: 9-25-89).

Don Miller, Director of Bible Based Ministries of Fort Worth, Texas challenged his peers with imagery from the prophet Amos, declaring, "I believe that our Holy Father is saying to the church today, 'I have placed a plumbline in your midst. I'll not bother with you until you're straight again.'"

Richard Niebuhr notes in his book *The Social Sources of Denominationalism* that God calls us in the Gospel to leave Egypt and cross in baptism to be His people X His church. We are to reflect His glory. The revival becomes the sect, the sect becomes the church, and seminaries are built to preserve the traditions. Then the church becomes an institution, which becomes an end in itself and things close down and petrify.

One major church study notes that 34% of the world's population is Christian, another 41% is evangelized X though not Christian, and 26% is still completely unevangelized. Nevertheless, the church continues to spend 99% of its money on itself. In Europe and America, 1,820,500 persons openly defect from Christian churches, but 2,776,100 cease to be practicing Christians. Beginning in 1984, the rate of conversions to atheism and agnosticism accelerated to 8,500,000 persons a year. Membership in false religions and cults is increasing dramatically. (Source: *Developing a Prayer Plan For Your Church*, by T.W. Hunt; published in the National Conference on Prayer and the Solemn Assembly, Page 102)

Pastor Terry Teykl, a United Methodist pastor who has produced a booklet on the Solemn Assembly, says, "The preservation of the institution becomes the highest goal and programs become our products without anyone daring to alter the institutionally approved staple product or program."

Teykl continues, "Risk takers are pushed out. Visions and dreams are discouraged unless sanctioned by headquarters. Pastors become spiritual clones trained to keep the machinery running smoothly" (Teykl, Solemn Assembly For United Methodist, page 3-4).

Challenging the Methodist church, Teykl declares, "The time is now X never in our history have we ever had such a call in the Methodist movement. We are overdue. Any other solution, without prayer and repentance, is like shifting the chairs around on the deck of a sinking Titanic. We may change the appearance, but the ship is still going down! We need something radical!" (Teykl, Solemn Assembly For United Methodist, page 5).

Indeed we do! To quote one major denominational editorial, "Our petty bickerings are but straw in the wind compared to the needs of the lost world. Let the great awakening come. In fact, pray for it."

Continuing, the editorial notes, "Prayer will convict recalcitrant Baptists (and all the rest of us too, we might add!) ... of our slovenly habits of backbiting and self-indulgence under the guise of piety. When we can earnestly pray for, and put in front of our own desires, the welfare of others, we will cross a mighty barrier." Concluding, the editorialists notes, "The Great Awakening will come when we recognize that personal white flags of surrender have to be raised by all of us." (Publication: Baptist and Reflector, Editorial, 9-6-89).

In 1905, the great Wales revival, like most significant revivals, began with intense prayer. People gathered at night, praying typically from 7 p.m. until 11 p.m., sometimes into the early morning hours, and a tremendous spiritual awakening followed. Lives were visibly and radically changed. Miners were saved X so obviously different after their conversion that the mules did not recognize them. Work mules who had learned to respond to the expletive-loaded language of the miners didn't know what they were being told to do after the miners stopped cursing. They had to be retrained! Crime decreased measurably. Judges began to wear white gloves as an indication of case load decrease and the social transformation. If Wales could be touched by a revival, then America can too!

On January 21, 1993, 300 prayer leaders met in Colorado Springs, Colorado. From a variety of denominations, these prayer warriors melted their hearts together, a sign of the growing and indisputable evidence that God is raising up a generation of people who are seeking his face as never before in modern history.

Henry Blackaby stated in an article appearing in the *Indiana Baptist*, "God is pleading with us to seek his face because there is so much he wants us to do." (Publication: Indiana Baptist; Article: "Humility and Prayer Needed For Healing, Renewal X Southern Baptists urged to get in step with God" Date: 9-26-89.)

In 1991, the Southern Baptist met in Atlanta for a three-hour Solemn Assembly. They repented for denominational sins. They humbled themselves and poured out their hearts to God. In June, they conducted a National Prayer Conference on the Solemn Assembly at their New Orleans Baptist Theological Seminary.

T. W. Hunt, of the Southern Baptist discipleship training department, said of his experience in a Solemn Assembly, they "are not like anything I have ever seen before. Confession times are very, very serious." And, Hunt also observed a "stunning type of silence that comes across the group. Sometimes after we dismiss with final prayer, nobody moves. They just sit there. God is doing something different than anything I have ever seen in my life." (Source: Daily News, BSSB, March 12, 1990)

Thirty denominational leaders have committed themselves to meet at least once a year to share with each other the latest prayer plans of their denominations.

New forums for cross-denominational prayer are being birthed. Prayer walks, multi-church and interdenominational concerts of prayer, are being conducted. Prayer rooms are being created and manned X some 24 hours a day. Prayer has become fashionable!

Teykl declares, "Denominational pride also tends to build walls between us and other churches X even Methodist churches. It turns our guns on one another, and prevents networking and collaboration efforts to win cities to Christ." He continues urging his denomination to combine hearts and resources with other organizations to reach the world in a shared vision. "No single denomination can evangelize the world," he declares, "therefore we should humble ourselves, repent of competitiveness and exclusive attitudes ..."

And, so should all the rest of us!

The genuine Solemn Assembly often involves times of intense grief and conviction over sin, in the church and in the world. Open weeping may take place, and appropriately so, by leaders as well as participants. It involves fasting, prayer that refuses time constraints, the public reading of the Word, the public renouncing of attitudes and actions displeasing to God, a passion to both love God (expressed in worship) and to serve God (manifest as a burden for the lost world). It involves crying unto God for mercy and grace, and then reaffirmation of covenant with God X the profession of faith and exaltation of God as the primary love of our lives.

Solemn Assemblies do not happen spontaneously. They are called by leadership. The reason for that feature in Biblical literature is that the primary root of our sin appears to be a rejection of godly authority. So, when godly leaders sense the need to return to God, to experience revival, they, in submission to God's call and conviction on their lives, call the corporate body for which they are responsible to repentance and to a return to Biblical order.

Henry Blackaby, a specialist with the Southern Baptist on Prayer Ministries says, "The corner is turned and God is moving like we've never seen." He declares that we are in for "one of the greatest movings of God" in human history. One editorial declared the renewal over the past few years in the Baptist Church like "the first fresh aura, like a spring rain that approaches a dry and arid land, developing into a flood of blessed, life-giving rain."

Rain does come after solemn assemblies X literally! The little town of Cameron, Texas with a population of 6,000 people was in the midst of a drought, critically in need of rain. The community had seen some real setbacks. Its only hospital had closed. A major employer had implemented a layoffs of workers. The schools were underfunded, and the agricultural industry was desperate for rain. Pastor James Pool had attended a Solemn Assembly workshop. He took the information about the Solemn Assembly back to his local ministerial association. They decided to call a city-wide Solemn Assembly. Local radio stations summoned the townsfolk to a day of fasting and invited them to attend the evening for prayer and repentance. Six ministers, representatives from eleven churches, and 250 members showed up at the public school cafeteria for the meeting. Pool said, "We sensed the Father bringing remedial judgment on us as a city."

At the Solemn Assembly Pool declared, "Concern for the city brought us together, and denominational tags dropped off at the door. It was a special time. People became very open in confessing sins, and the Lord took control. The walls of pride began to come down, and the Holy Spirit had an awesome power to convict us of sin."

The next day a quarter of an inch of rain came. And, the city got a bonus. One of the two suppliers of pornography suddenly removed the materials from its shelves. After a second meeting, rain fell in more abundance and it has been falling ever since. The farmers are rejoicing. Water storage tanks are now full for the first time in several years. Even more powerful is the spiritual rain that has begun to fall. Pool declares, "People that we have been praying for just all of a sudden appear in our services now." (Source: Baptist Press; by Mark Wingfield, April 4, 1990.)

In New Mexico, Pastor Kirby Kennedy led his church through a Solemn Assembly. The result was the conviction and repentance of two staff members who testified of God's work in their lives and rose to ask the congregation to forgive them of their wrongs. Kennedy says, "All across the sanctuary, people were sobbing as they were touched by God's spirit. Soon the entire front of the sanctuary was filled with people on their knees, sobbing and crying out to God in repentance. The aisles were filled with people going to one another asking for forgiveness and also forgiving. Never before have I seen an entire church body cleansed in one service, but that is what happened." (Source: Baptist Press; by Mark Wingfield, April 4, 1990.)

The 500 member True Vine Church in Oakland, California is located adjacent to the Acorn Housing Project. The housing project is far too typical of unstable communities where violence reigns. The buildings in the project are riddled with bullet holes. Drug deals transpire openly on the streets. The

750 apartments in the project are reserved exclusively for single black women with children. Pastor Newton Carey says, "The police didn't even come in here at night." The church became burdened for its community and decided to give one Saturday night a month to door-to-door evangelism. Before the invasion, the pastors wife felt the need to pray for the success of the effort. She led a prayer walk around the community, stopping at strategic points to prayer and claim the neighborhood. Nothing appeared to happen. So, the group marched around the neighborhood seven more times, praying for a miracle. Then, they held a block party for the project's residents, and things begin to change! 1250 people have already been saved. People are coming to Christ so fast that records are hard to maintain. At the Sunday morning service, the aisles are filled, the platform is packed with people and others stand outside the door unable to get inside. Pastor Carey declares, "If you don't come by 10:30, don't come; there's no room." A Friday night service was started to relieve the congestion of the sanctuary, but says Pastor Carey, "We never saw the vacant seats."

Now, the revival has touched the housing project officials, who have opened up a community room in the project twice a week for a special outreach to the project children who come for a warm meal and a Bible study. Home missionary Bill Simms says, "The housing project is a different place. If you could only see the children's faces. It's like a 100% change."

That's what we need in America X a 100% change. Maybe all of us need to take a prayer walk around our community, claim it for Christ, and take faith where fear now reigns. If we do it for no other reason, we should do it for the children X children now hostage to fear, living without love or the fresh knowledge of Jesus, and the God who loves them. The Bible stories that were such a comfort to us aren't known among them, because it is illegal or offensive to share them!

E. Stanley Jones tells about the daughter of a missionary who he heard pray, "God bless Mama and Papa, my brothers and sisters, and all my friends. And now, God, do take care of Yourself, for if anything should happen to You, we would be in the soup." We are "in the soup" and the children of our nation are there too because we haven't taken care of God's honor and His rightful place in our midst. Sin and self have crowded him out. We must repent. We must clean house. We must invite God to come and dwell among us again. We must have a Solemn Assembly in America again. We must hold them in every city and every church. At least, we should do it for the children.

THE MEANING OF SOLEMN ASSEMBLY

By Dr. Robert E. Fisher

One of the most important principles evident in the course of history is the periodic need for renewal and restoration. This principle can be observed in nature, business, politics and religion. It is sensed most strongly, however, in the spiritual realm where the purity, openness and commitment of one's relationship with God can become so quickly and easily beclouded by human frailties and sins.

God recognized and warned against this tendency toward spiritual indifference, compromise and backsliding. When such a falling away occurs, His command is clear; "Repent and return to your first love." He also makes it clear that failure to obey this command will result in His judgment.

The nation of Israel is a classic example of this tendency of God's people to fall back into their old ways. At least seven times in the Old Testament, the same cycle was repeated: blessing, disobedience, warning, judgment, repentance. But God finally left Israel to their own devices and allowed them to be conquered and carried away captive by their enemies X the tragic result of not just their sins, but their failure to confess and forsake those sins.

A REPEATED PATTERN

Biblical history is replete with examples of man's proclivity to become so enamored with his own abilities and successes until he neglects his relationship with God and loses sight of his desperate need for divine help. Unfortunately, so often neglect of that relationship grows into indifference and ultimately results in rebellion and even outright rejection. From the first record of man's alienation from God in the book of Genesis to the vision of final judgment in the book of Revelation, the theme of the Bible is God's plan to bring back to Himself his wayward sons and daughters. Whether dealing with nations, churches or individuals, God always speaks of reconciliation and restoration before He speaks of judgment.

In the Old Testament, it was the nation of Israel who heard God's message. "Therefore, O house of Israel, I will judge you, each one according to his ways, declares the Sovereign Lord. Repent! Turn away from all your offenses; then sin will not be your downfall. Rid yourselves of all the offenses you have committed, and get a new heart and a new spirit" (Ezekiel 18:30, 31, *NIV*). In the New Testament the message was the same, only now it was spoken to the churches. "I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm X neither hot nor cold X I am about to spit you out of my mouth. You say, 'I am rich; I

have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see" (Revelation 3:15-18, *NIV*).

In modern times, churches have become denominations, but tragically the pattern of spiritual declension continues. Richard Niebuhr in his book, *The Social Sources of Denominationalism*, states that denominations tend to follow a course of spiritual decline. The movement is born in revival; the revival becomes a sect; the sect becomes a church; the church becomes an institution and functions primarily to perpetuate itself. Maintenance and self-preservation become the order of the day. Everything exists for the sake of the institution. Unless there is repentance and revival, the denomination will become spiritually irrelevant and eventually will die.

Referring to this pattern in his own denomination, the United Methodist Church, Terry Teykl states his conviction: "The time is now X never in our history have we had such a call in the Methodist movement. We are overdue. Any other solution, without prayer and repentance, is like shifting the chairs around on the deck of a sinking Titanic. We may change the appearance but the ship is still going down. We need something radical X as radical as accepting our sins and making a decision to seek God as Wesley did after his Aldersgate experience."

What about the Church of God? For over ten years the Lord has been speaking to us about the need for corporate repentance and renewal. It has been difficult for us to acknowledge that we have done anything wrong. Just recently the Lord spoke to us that we were to "own" our sins and to admit our hurts so that He could forgive us and comfort us. I believe the Church of God is ready to heed these divine admonitions.

THE SOLEMN ASSEMBLY

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 every one was preceded by the calling of a solemn assembly. The followers of Jesus gathered for what could be called a solemn assembly for several days before the outpouring of the Holy Ghost 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.

Solemn assemblies were called during times of spiritual crisis, usually a crisis precipitated by the righteous judgment of God upon the sins of the people. It was an emergency action X a desperate plea to withhold further judgment. The words of the Prophet Joel demonstrate this kind of urgency: "*Consecrate a fast, proclaim 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...Blow a trumpet in Zion and sound an alarm on my holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble" (Joel 1:14, 2:1a).

God's call to solemn assembly is probably summarized best in the classic passage found in 2 Chronicles 7:14: *"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 heal their land."*

A CALL TO THE PEOPLE OF GOD

It is important to note that the call to solemn assembly is not issued to sinners, but to God's people ("If **my** people..."). In fact, the first order is given to the leaders X the ministers. *"Guard yourselves and lament, you priests; wail, you who minister before the altar; come, lie all night in sackcloth, you who minister to my God" (Joel 1:13).*

Every one of God's people, including young people and children, is called to participate. *"Gather the people, sanctify the congregation, assemble the elders, gather the children and the nursing babes" (Joel 2:16).* In keeping with this command, it is important that we involve the entire constituency of the Church of God worldwide X leaders, ministers and laity X in the solemn assembly process.

A CALL TO THE CHURCH OF GOD

In this call God gets even more specific: He says, "If **my** people, who are called by **my** name...." We call ourselves the Church of God. We believe that is a scriptural name. While we claim no exclusive right to be called God's church, neither do we count as insignificant the name we have been given. We are the Church of God X **His** people called by **His** name X and we accept the challenge and responsibility that this command of God implies. We are prepared to follow God's plan to bring revival to our denomination.

A CALL TO HUMILITY

One of the greatest hindrances to personal and corporate revival is spiritual pride. This subtle sin manifests itself in an attitude displayed in the Revelation passage already noted: *"I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing" (Revelation 3:17).* The image is one of smugness, self-sufficiency and superiority.

Unfortunately, this is an attitude that is pervasive in the church today. We do not recognize our true spiritual condition. Like the church at Laodecia, we may well find ourselves to be "wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked." Rather than crying out to the Lord in humility and contriteness of spirit, we

harden our hearts and become "too righteous to repent." We need to heed the admonition of Joel: *"Now, therefore, says the Lord, turn to me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning. So rend your heart and not your garment"* (Joel 2:12, 13).

A CALL TO PRAYER

Since 1986 the Church of God has placed a renewed emphasis on prayer. Thousands of persons across the church, including several hundred retired ministers, have made a commitment to prayer on a regular basis on behalf of the harvest. At the 1994 General Assembly a new worldwide prayer chain entitled, "Meet the Son at Sunrise" was introduced which will ensure that prayer will be ascending from Church of God people in all time zones 24 hours a day.

This specific focus on prayer is making a positive difference in our church. However, the prayer called for in 2 Chronicles 7:14 is even more intense and pleading. It involves not just tears, but wailing, mourning, trembling and crying out to the Lord. It is the desperate plea of God's people for forgiveness and for the hand of judgment to be stayed. It is very serious business.

A CALL TO SEEK GOD

A clear indication of the apostasy of the contemporary church and of its need to repent is the emphasis on money and material possessions. Popular preachers and teachers tell us that God is obligated to prosper us not just spiritually, but financially as well. The inference is that to be a successful Christian and to be happy, we must not only keep up with the Jones, but we must leave them in the dust. The glitzy sets for Christian television programs, the elaborate clothes and the affluent lifestyle of many Christian leaders model this philosophy. The admonition to "set your affection on things above" and to "seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness" seems to have gotten lost in the shuffle.

In our effort to seek wealth, power, gifts, and blessing, we may well have overlooked the most basic spiritual need X to seek the face of God. It is interesting that the Lord admonishes us to seek His **face**. That means we should know Him intimately, look into His eyes, and listen for His voice. Jesus declared that the greatest of all commandments is to *"love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind"* (Matthew 22:37). To seek God in this way is one of the prime purposes of the solemn assembly.

A CALL TO REPENTANCE

Finally, the people of God are called upon to "turn from their wicked ways." Confession and repentance are key factors in the solemn assembly. Many Christians are offended when it is suggested that they may need to repent. However, one has only to look at the spiritual condition of the nation and also the church to agree that there is need for corporate as well as personal repentance.

We would do well to consider the following list (compiled by other Evangelicals) of ways the church is incurring the displeasure of God:

1. His people have disregarded His Lordship for their own selfish desires and self-serving practices (Matthew 7:21-27; Luke 6:46).
2. His people have not honored His holiness and are not becoming holy as He is Holy (1 Peter 16-17).
3. His standards and commandments in His Word are not being used to determine right and wrong (Isaiah 5:20).
4. His people are disoriented to Him and apathetic to His voice and activities (Luke 19:41-46).
5. His Bride has prostituted herself with worldly values, priorities and methods and is not preparing herself for the wedding feast at Christ's second coming (Ephesians 5:25-26).
6. His warnings have been ignored again and again (Romans 10:21; Ezekiel. 12:21-28).
7. His house is not known as a "house of prayer for all nations," and He is displeased with much of the religious activity and worship of His people (Matthew 21:13).
8. Many leaders remain in personal sin and disobedience and have not lead His people to corporate repentance (Jeremiah 23).

In the Church of God it is vital that we "own" our sins as the Spirit has admonished us. We must be bold enough, yet humble enough, to name those sins X sins such as legalism, racial prejudice and bigotry, hardness of heart, materialism, competitiveness, moral laxity and denominational elitism and exclusivity.

May the Lord help us to have the spiritual grace and strength not only to acknowledge our spiritual needs, but in contriteness of spirit to ask for His mercy and forgiveness.

THE PROMISE OF GOD

When God's people respond to His call to "humble themselves and pray, and seek my face and turn from their wicked ways," then He has promised that He would in turn, "hear from heaven and will forgive their sin, and will heal their land."

It is our belief that as the Church of God obeys the voice of God in the calling of a solemn assembly that God will keep His promise to send revival X true revival X life-transforming, denomination-changing revival. The action to call our people to solemn assembly could be the most important and far-reaching decision ever made by Church of God leaders.

THE BACKGROUND FOR SOLEMN ASSEMBLY

By P. Douglas Small

INTRODUCTION

A first step for understanding Solemn Assembly is consensus of opinion on a definition. What is a Solemn Assembly as we understand it from Scripture and in terms of this manual? Let us begin with the following considerations.

Solemn Assembly is the sober summons by one in ecclesiastical authority to all the laity he or she leads to unite for the purpose of:

- ! fasting and praying
- ! hearing God's Word read
- ! humbling before God by literally bowing with faces to the ground
- ! removing all things that defile, whether those things be material or ideological, occasional or habitual, actions or attitudes
- ! renewing a desire to please the Father
- ! restoring covenant with God in the most solemn devotion
- ! seeking God's face and not merely His hand or a blessing
- ! turning from sinful patterns of living
- ! worshipping God with whole heart and soul
- ! developing a world consciousness that leads to being God's living epistles for announcing to the whole world that Christ has come to save all.

WHY A SOLEMN ASSEMBLY

Once we have agreed on a definition of what Solemn Assembly is, we then must understand why we must respond to our leader's call for a solemn assembly. There are many reasons, but for our purposes here we share the following:

We should respond to the call for Solemn Assembly because:

- ! the scriptures give us a pattern of regular solemn assemblies, called for the purpose of soul-searching, repentance, and personal purification
 - ! the world is not yet evangelized
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- ! the condition of our world demands God's divine assistance, without which we are totally inadequate for the task before us
- ! there is a growing tolerance of worldliness in the church
- ! there is a sense of God's judgment on His people
- ! we desperately need a renewal of the Holy Spirit
- ! we need a refreshing and restoration of His revelation in His Word
- ! we sense God calling the church to a renewal of prayer and purity, of repentance and renewal in the Holy Ghost
- ! without mandated times of reflection, we tend to avoid the painful but necessary task of self-examination and self-crucifixion.

WHO INITIATES THE CALL? WHO PARTICIPATES?

In the history of Israel, the Solemn Assembly was always a call ultimately to all the people, by the leadership X the king (or civil leaders), the prophet or the priest. Sometimes they acted together. At other times one of the triad of leadership acted alone. At times the call went out to a small circle of leaders and then enlarged to include the whole nation. Every solemn assembly in scripture began with leadership and ended in a national assembly in which the whole community repented and sought a renewal of covenant with God.

The solemn assemblies recorded in Scripture are noted in the following chart:

Scripture	Called by	Office
2 Chronicles 12:1-8	Rehoboam Shemaia	King Prophet
2 Chronicles 15:1-19	Asa Azariah	King Prophet
2 Chronicles 20:1-29	Jehoshaphat	King
2 Chronicles 29-31	Hezekiah	King
2 Chronicles 34	Josiah Huldah	King Prophetess
Ezra 10:7-9	Ezra	Priest
Nehemiah 8-9	Nehemiah Ezra	Governor Priest
Joel 1-2	Joel	Prophet

Solemn Assemblies should be called by leadership. Those called should be the people for whom the respective leader is responsible. The call to Solemn Assembly could be for a family, a work or social group, a church or a group of churches, an association, a state convention of any sort, a national convention of churches, civic or governmental groups. Indeed, the whole nation should be called to Solemn Assembly.

WHEN SHOULD A LEADER CALL A SOLEMN ASSEMBLY?

When God directs him, a Solemn Assembly should be called and as soon as possible! Or, when there is a sense that God's people are under His judgment, a summons for national or organizationally wide repentance should be issued.

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, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God? (Joel 2:15-17).

Such sovereignly called Solemn Assemblies, or those urged by judgment, should not preclude regular Solemn Assemblies as demonstrated in the feast days.

WHAT RESULTS SHOULD EMERGE FROM THE SOLEMN ASSEMBLY?

When and if the Solemn Assembly is ordered and directed of God's Holy Spirit, a number of results should be expected.

1. *We should expect pacts of prayer.*

Enter into an agreement with others to pray for spiritual awakening in your church, your association, your district or convention. Consider a renewal of the covenant at the end of the first year. Many pacts of prayer should be established between individuals, in families, and in small prayer clusters. Solemn Assembly, if it is successful, should intensify the ministry of intercession.

2. *We should expect public alliance*

Establish a definite time and location for your prayer cluster to meet on a habitual basis. Make the meeting a top priority. The meeting should be for at least an hour. On occasion, half or full day sessions should be held for longer seasons of fasting and prayer. This alliance should be an open alliance, avidly public. It is a declaration of our corporate commitment to be God's yielded vessels in the Kingdom work.

3. *We should expect passionate prayer.*

Make the prayer exceptional by requesting that God do "exceedingly, abundantly, above all we can even ask or think." Pray at exceptional times X through the night, at dawn, at midnight, or during events that represent significant windows of opportunity for either the kingdom of God or Satan. Pray at exceptional places. Consider prayer walks for your group, or prayer stake-outs, or prayer drives. Pray at buildings of note and importance, places of historical significance, or places with views of the city. Pray with exceptional passion, with tears and the tearing of the heart. Pray, trusting in the sovereignty of God and the exceptional power of the Holy Ghost.

4. *We should expect purity.*

The encounter one has with God in a Solemn Assembly should result in lifestyle changes evidenced by holiness of heart and life, increased passion for the causes of the Kingdom, and an intensifying of dedication.

5. *We should expect proclamation.*

The Solemn Assembly is not intended to be a conference on evangelism. Yet, the result of our seeking God and submitting ourselves to His will always brings us back to His

purposes, included the Great Commission to carry the name of Christ into all the world until everyone has heard. So a renewed passion for evangelism should be a byproduct of the Solemn Assembly.

BIBLICAL CONSIDERATIONS IN CONDUCTING A SOLEMN ASSEMBLY

By P. Douglas Small

SOLEMN ASSEMBLY AND THE PASSOVER

Here are some of the key scriptural passages to the Solemn Assembly:

Observe the month of Abib, and keep the passover unto the Lord thy God: for in the month of Abib the Lord thy God brought thee forth out of Egypt by night (Deuteronomy 16:1).

Thou shalt eat no leavened bread with it; seven days shalt thou eat unleavened bread therewith, even the bread of affliction: for thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt in haste: that thou mayest remember the day when thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt all the days of thy life (Deuteronomy 16:3).

Six days thou shalt eat unleavened bread: and on the seventh day shall be a Solemn Assembly to the Lord thy God: thou shalt do no work therein (Deuteronomy 16:8).

An Annual Solemn Assembly was to be conducted on the first day of the Feast of the Passover (15th day of the first month) and at the close of the seventh day of every Passover feast (21st day of the first month). The seventh day (Tishri 21) was a solemn day that exempted the people from all work. This was not intended to be a freedom from work as much as it was designed to be a freedom to God. Work was eliminated to dispense with the typical daily distractions and allow the people to focus more completely on their relationship with God. This then is responsible freedom.

The day also involved a mandated assembly. The themes of that Solemn Assembly following Passover might have included:

- ! a time for commemorating the emancipation from Egypt, the formation of Israel as a people or the redefinition of who Israel was
 - ! the salvation of the firstborn from the 10th plague
 - ! Israel=s gracious exemption from the consequences of the plagues
 - ! the power of the lamb=s blood to cover their homes and to protect their families from judgment.
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Unlike the first Passover which was celebrated in the homes, this Solemn Assembly was to be conducted openly, shared corporately before God.

Passover celebrated Israel=s exodus from Egypt and our liberation from sin.

SOLEMN ASSEMBLY AND THE FEAST DAYS

God gave specific instructions as to how Israel was to celebrate certain feast days, calling them His feasts:

And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, Concerning the feasts of the Lord, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations, even these are my feasts (Leviticus 23:1-2).

1. The Feast of Unleavened Bread (Leviticus 23:6-14)

The Feast of Unleavened Bread celebrated the commencement of the journey out of Egypt and the provision of God=s bread for the journey X unleavened (leaven being a type of sin) bread. For us, the Feast of Unleavened Bread points to the resurrection of Christ. Here we reap an abundant harvest of grace and forgiveness, for which we have not labored. We are also reminded that at His resurrection, many of those who slept were awakened and walked the streets of Jerusalem, tasting the first fruits of resurrection life.

2. The Feast of Pentecost (Leviticus 23:15-21)

The Feast of Pentecost celebrated the full harvest, not just the first fruits. It also commemorated the giving of the law. For us, it marks the coming of the Holy Spirit upon the church and the resulting harvest of souls. It also marks a renewal of the Holy Spirit in our hearts, wherein He writes God=s laws upon the tablets our hearts.

3. The Feast of Trumpets (Leviticus 23:24-25)

The Feast of Trumpets was prelude to the Day of Atonement. It began a period of soul-searching and self-examination. For us, it emphasizes the work and ministry of the Holy Spirit in the earth, the voice of God speaking to our world as the voice of a prophetic trumpet. It embraces the coming trumpets of judgment upon the earth, as well as the sound of the trumpet that calls the church to a grand assembly, at the door or heaven=s tabernacle.

4. *The Feast of Atonement* (Leviticus 23:26-32)

The Feast of Atonement is a feast of judgment, a day of reckoning with God, a reminder that all men will have to face God as the high priest faced Him annually, but only representatively. Only by the blood of Christ can one enter boldly into His presence with assurance of salvation.

5. *The Feast of Tabernacles* (Leviticus 23:33-38)

All six feast days included at least one day for the Solemn Assembly. The Feast of Tabernacles as well as the Feast of Passover included a Solemn Assembly on the first and last day of each feast. The Feast of Tabernacles is a reminder that, just as Israel wandered through the wilderness awaiting entrance to their promised land, we too are now a sojourning people X a band of pilgrims who are not at home in this world. One day, we will be at home with God and He will tabernacle with us, and we with Him.

6. *The Feast of First fruits*

This feast celebrated the harvest promised upon entry into the new land X a harvest from fields where they had not labored.

Four elements emerge from a quick reading of these passages:

1. All involved an assembly, a corporate event
2. Most involved sacrifices by fire, the means of renewing or celebrating the covenant relationship we have with God, both individually and corporately
3. All designated the convocation as holy, a time for separation, reconsecration, and healing, especially of broken relationships
4. These feast days are celebrations of the various elements of our salvation history, from Passover to the anticipated folding of our tabernacles when we are at home with God.

Obviously, the feast days allowed Israel, as they allow us today, to annually celebrate the various dimensions to their faith X their salvation history. The Solemn Assembly was a time for personal and corporate meditation upon the meanings and implications of these various feast days.

SOLEMN ASSEMBLY, A SOVEREIGN CALL TO NATIONAL REPENTANCE

In the first chapter of Joel, the events of the day are recognized as the hand of God in judgment (Joel 1:1-15), forcing the nation to repentance. These events are described as incomparable to any in recent history.

Two different sets of circumstances have converged. First, the failure of the crops in an agriculturally based economy spell famine and deprivation of all kinds. Second, a hostile enemy has arisen from without and threatens the nation. In this graphic passage, the land is pictured as mourning. It is as if nature has discerned the sin before the people of God are willing to recognize their covenant violations. The plight is desperate. Offerings at the Temple are so scarce that the sacrifices have ceased. The prophet calls for the priests to clothe themselves for lamentation, to spend an evening and a night prostrate before God in behalf of the empty altar. This all-night prayer meeting is to be followed by a declared fast day and a Solemn Assembly involving both the elders and the common people at the Temple.

The focus of this Solemn Assembly is not the commemoration of some aspect of a feast, but a specific time of repentance for whatever sin or sins may have precipitated the present judgment of God upon the nation.

In Chapter 2 we have a look at personal response to a sovereignly called Solemn Assembly (Joel 2:1-14). It is:

1. A time of turning, of soul-searching, of repentance, of life-change, of new direction.
 2. An intense and most personal encounter with God, at the level of one=s heart, at the innermost core of one=s being.
 3. A time of fasting, of retraining the appetites to prefer the spiritual over the carnal.
 4. A time of emotion and passion that involves contrition to the point of tears, of weeping before God and of mourning over that which may have almost died X righteousness, or joy, or a sense of communion with God, or national holiness.
 5. An encounter with God that must go beyond symbolic action, as in the rending of the garment, to the core meaning behind the symbol X the baring of a broken heart before God, broken due to recognition of how one has failed Him.
 6. A time of seeking the favor of God and a reprieve from the judgment now so imminent.
 7. A time of reminding ourselves that though our sin deserves the judgment of God, that if we will pour ourselves out before him as a drink offering is poured out, and redirect our energies to the sacred by offering to God the vitality of our being and our talents, as symbolized in the meat or grain offering X God will hear us. He will show us His tender and compassionate nature. Instead of making us victims of His judgment, He will turn from the intended judgment and leave in its place a blessing.
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THE SOLEMN ASSEMBLY, A TIME OF NATIONAL REPENTANCE

In 2 Chronicles 15:2-19 the King calls a Solemn Assembly at the urging of the prophet Obed. A number of unique features rise out of this Solemn Assembly. The idolatrous condition of Israel is traced directly to the absence of teaching priests, thus ignorance of the law. A sensitive king and prophet come together to correct the damage done due to the absence of moral direction in the people.

Perhaps the one characteristic so telling here is an absence of peace among the people, a lack of rest. The king first orders a putting away of idols and a renewing of the altar in the Temple. He then calls for a Solemn Assembly.

Note these significant and specific elements of the call:

1. The Assembly is at Jerusalem, at the Temple.
2. It involves enormous sacrifices X 700 oxen and 7,000 sheep.
3. It urged the sincere seeking of God by every participant X the element of inner consecration.
4. It included an emphasis upon the covenant, the law, and a renewed commitment to honor that law.
5. It reaffirmed Israel's exclusive devotion to God and a sound rejection of religious pluralism: *A Whosoever would not seek the Lord God of Israel should be put to death, whether small or great, whether man or woman.*≡
6. It involved a restatement of the oath to God, a verbal pledge by all. This elaborate oath ceremony involved the repetition of elements of the law laced with jubilant shouts and the sounding of trumpets. This was an oath reaffirmation marked with joy.
7. It resulted in rest, a sense of peace that had been missing before.

Though the purpose of the Solemn Assembly was national restoration and purification from idolatry, there was resistance to the idea and a continued practice of idolatry. Asa's mother, the queen, refused to renounce her idolatry. Asa did two things: he destroyed the idol and he removed her from her honored position as queen.

As for the continued practice of idolatry in the high places, Asa also reacted in two specific ways: he kept his own heart pure before God, and he made gifts to the Temple, underscoring the exclusive and exalted position the Temple held as the central and unifying place of God's manifest glory.

As a result the nation entered into a period of prolonged international rest: no war.

SOLEMN ASSEMBLY, A TIME OF REFORMATION

Hezekiah began to reign when he was 25 years old, and he reigned 29 years. He did that which was right in the sight of the Lord. In the first year of his reign, he opened the doors of the house of the Lord, and repaired them. He brought in the priests and the Levites, admonished them to sanctify themselves, and sanctify the house of the Lord by carrying all filthiness out of the holy place.

Hezekiah acknowledged the sins of his fathers who had trespassed and done that which was evil. They had ignored the habitation of the Lord. They had shut the doors of the porch, and put out the lamps, and had not burned incense nor offered burnt offerings in the holy place. Because of this, Hezekiah declared that the wrath of the Lord was upon Judah and Jerusalem.

Fully determined to renew the covenant with the Lord God of Israel, and avoid His wrath, Hezekiah called upon the priests to assemble and sanctify themselves.

The priests cleansed the house of the Lord and all the vessels. They made repairs and prepared the temple for the ministry for which it had been designed.

Upon learning that the priests had completed their role, Hezekiah then called the rulers of the city to the house of the Lord. The rulers with the priests offered sacrifices for sin and for the reconsecration of the temple. Then Ahe set the Levites in the house of the Lord with cymbals, with psalteries, and with harps, according to the commandment of David.≡ With the offering of the burnt offering X the offering of total consecration to God X the trumpets played.

Here=s how the Bible records it: *And all the congregation worshipped, and the singers sang, and the trumpeters sounded: and all this continued until the burnt offering was finished. And when they had made an end of offering, the king and all that were present with him bowed themselves, and worshipped*≡ (2 Chronicles 29:28-29).

Following the consecration of the leaders, the congregation brought in sacrifices and thank offerings numbering 70 bulls, 100 rams, and 200 lambs, all for a burnt offering to the Lord. Additional sacrificial offerings totaled 600 oxen and 3,000 sheep. There were too few priests to flay all the burned offerings, so the Levites helped the priests until the work was ended.

Hezekiah then summoned the entire nation to attend the Passover, which had a Solemn Assembly dimension as we discovered earlier (2 Chronicles 30:13-27).

THE SOLEMN ASSEMBLY, GENERATED BY THE LEADER=S EXAMPLE AND CONTRITION

After the captivity Ezra returned from Babylon to Jerusalem with 1,754 Jews. Later, 38 Levites and 220 temple servants would join him. When he arrived, he discovered that Israel had intermarried with the pagans. In response, he called for a day of fasting and weeping, concluding with fervent prayer at the evening sacrifice. A part of the resulting Solemn Assembly was purification of the family and restoration of temple and sabbath observances.

Now when Ezra had prayed, and when he had confessed, weeping and casting himself down before the house of God, there assembled unto him out of Israel a very great congregation of men and women and children: for the people wept very sore. And Shechaniah the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam, answered and said unto Ezra, AWe have trespassed against our God, and have taken strange wives of the people of the land: yet now there is hope in Israel concerning this thing. Now therefore let us make a covenant with our God to put away all the wives, and such as are born of them, according to the counsel of my lord, and of those that tremble at the commandment of our God; and let it be done according to the law. Arise; for this matter belongeth unto thee: we also will be with thee: be of good courage, and do it. Then arose Ezra, and made the chief priests, the Levites, and all Israel, to swear that they should do according to this word. And they sware= (Ezra 10:1-5).

Following this spontaneous period of repentance and reconsecration, sparked by the broken heart of Ezra over the sin of the people, a more formal proclamation calls for the assembly of the whole nation in Jerusalem for the purpose of repentance (Ezra 10:7-12).

There are several characteristics of these Old Testament revivals worth noting here.

1. They came in response to periods of high wickedness. Restoration was urgent for the people of God.
 2. They were attended by many different leaders. The priest Jehoiada met with King Josash; King Hezekiah with the Priest Azariah; the prophets Isaiah, Hosea, and Michah with King Josiah; the Priest Hilkiah with the prophetess Huldah (possibly including the prophet Jeremiah).
 3. The initiative originated with top leadership and then moved downward and outward.
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4. The renewals were word-centered, often involving the reciting of long passages of scripture, the reaffirmation of oaths or repentance in the light of scripture reading. Great respect for the word was exhibited.
5. Old values and standards were restored, including the destruction of idols, the cleansing of the temple, and so forth.
6. Worship was restored to a primary place. Incense and sacrifices, which had been neglected, were again restored. Worship was often fervent, joyful. Always, the renewal of worship involved a restoration of worship from the heart.
7. The temple and the people were purified.

Though the Solemn Assembly was a leader-initiated assembly, scriptural evidence indicates that if established leaders will not assume their God-given responsibility in revival, then God will produce new leaders sometimes by a major social upheaval. After Ahab succeeded in squelching the Mt. Carmel revival, his royal house was destroyed and replaced by the house of Jehu.

Other scriptures that might be considered as models for the Solemn Assembly include:

- ! 2 Chronicles 20:1-4, the reforms of Jehosaphat
- ! 2 Chronicles 33, Josiah
- ! Nehemiah 8-9, the restoration of Jerusalem
- ! 2 Chronicles 6-7
- ! 2 Chronicles 15, Asa's reforms
- ! Numbers 10:1-10, instructions of the sounding of the trumpets, the call to assembly.

SOLEMN ASSEMBLIES IN THE NEW TESTAMENT (Acts 2; 4; 15)

Revivals were spontaneously generated by the work of the Holy Spirit. They may have come through the office of the prophet, the teaching of the priest, or the leadership of the king. But Solemn Assemblies were not spontaneously initiated by the people. They were called by leadership.

Revivals could happen in the most remote location and then spread through the nation. But, the Solemn Assembly required a gathering in one place, typically the temple, or some other significant spiritual site. Revivals were about renewal. Solemn Assemblies began with contrition and brokenness. This repentance was done openly, verbally, by leaders with others following the example in a corporate setting. When judgment was obvious, then a fast was mandated.

The Solemn Assembly was not complete until a sense of covenant renewal had been accomplished. Such a covenant renewal would be followed by the favor of God=s blessings, and it signaled a sense of God=s hand upon them before the watching nations.

BIBLICAL ROOTS OF THE SOLEMN ASSEMBLY

What is a Solemn Assembly? Scripturally, the term solemn assembly and holy convocation appear to refer to the same event. Moses recorded,

"Seven days ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the Lord: on the eighth day shall be an holy convocation unto you; and ye shall offer an offering made by fire unto the Lord: it is a solemn assembly; and ye shall do no servile work therein" (Leviticus 23:36).

TERMS

The term *holy convocation* focuses on the summons, or the call to the meeting. It is a sacred gathering.

The Hebrew word used in reference to the *solemn assembly* is *'atsarah* (pronounced ats-aw-raw). It generally means an assembly, especially one held on a festival or holiday, but specifically it means a solemn assembly. It is translated solemn assembly in nine of its eleven occurrences. In the other two cases it is called *solemn meeting* (Isaiah 1:13); and *an assembly* (Jeremiah 9:12).

The word *mow'ed* is also translated solemn days or solemn feasts or even solemnity. But that word is used more in reference to the fact that certain days were appointed as special days for assembly than the nature of the meeting itself X fixed or appointed time or season, specifically a festival. By implication, it also means an assembly as convened for a definite purpose. Technically, *mow'ed* can mean the congregation and by extension even the place of the meeting or the signal as appointed beforehand for the meeting.

In addition, the word *chagag* is sometimes used to refer to the activity of the meeting. It includes the idea of a processional. It implies a circle dance or march. It conveys the idea that solemnity was not always motionless or silent, but involved symbolic action of a corporate nature.

TYPES OF SOLEMN ASSEMBLIES

There appear to be three types of Solemn Assemblies in scripture. First, there were seven annual days associated with the feast on which there was to be a solemn assembly. These seven annual solemn assemblies were required observances for the Old Testament covenant people. They are noted in Leviticus 23 and Numbers 28-29.

1. Seven Annual Days for Solemn Assembly

- A. Fifteen days of the first month Nisan (March).
- B. Seventh day of the first month Nisan (Falling in March - April).
- C. Feast of the First fruits, also called Pentecost X fifty days after Passover (Sivan, our May).
- D. First day of the seventh month Tishri, on which the Feast of Trumpets was celebrated (September).
- E. Tenth day of the seventh month Tishri, on which the Day of Atonement was observed (September).
- F. First day of the Feast of Tabernacles, also the fifteen day of the Jewish month of Tishri (September - October).
- G. Eighth day of the Feast of Tabernacles, also the twenty-second day of the seventh month Tishri (October).

During the seven days mentioned above, the solemn assembly was to be a focal point of the day.

2. New Moons and Sabbaths

The calendar we typically use does not coincide with the Biblical calendar. That is because the Jewish or Old Testament calendar is tied to the lunar calendar X the arrival of the new moon. Every new moon, or Rosh Hodesh, was an occasion for prayer and celebration among the Jewish people X a time for special supplication to God for the time of the new moon.

Both the Rosh Hodesh, or new moon, and the Sabbath, also had a holy convocation dimension to them.

3. The Sovereign Solemn Assembly

In addition to these days X the solemn assemblies observed in the weekly, monthly, and annual rhythm of the Jewish year X there appear to be eight times in the Old Testament where there is a God-called solemn assembly. This is a time when God sovereignly summons the nation to repent, through leadership that is moved by his spirit to lead the

nation in repentance and reform. These may have occurred on the mandated solemn assembly days, but there was an extra special urgency about these sovereignly called days.

These eight occasions are recorded in:

- ! 2 Chronicles 12:1-8.
- ! 2 Chronicles 15:1-19.
- ! 2 Chronicles 20:1-29.
- ! 2 Chronicles 29 - 31.
- ! 2 Chronicles 34.
- ! Ezra 10:7-9.
- ! Nehemiah 8-9.
- ! Joel 1-2.

These solemn assemblies were called by a king (or in his place a civil leader), a priest or a prophet. The solemn assembly is not like a revival in the sense that a revival can begin with any one man or woman. The solemn assembly affects some corporate entity and the authorities that preside over that entity. Therefore, the solemn assembly must be called by leadership. In fact, the solemn assembly is about submission to leadership. First it requires submission to the leadership of God X and that may require open repentance from all that, "we have rebelled, or acted with stubbornness, and have not always followed You, Your word to us, or Your delegated leadership, God." Second, it involves a setting back in order of those things that are disordered. That requires reconsecration to God, his word and his ways by all. It also requires reconsecration to godly leadership. Those who have backslidden, or gone astray, or rebelled against God and his ways, must submit themselves and find themselves again in His order. They must take their place, and fulfill their responsibilities in His kingdom.

God had created the solemn assembly as a time of national soul-searching. It was to be a demonstration of sensitivity to His law and obedience to Him. It was to be a day in which His nature as a holy God was acknowledged, and therefore, our nature as a set-apart people was confirmed. It was to be a time of personal and corporate readjustment, the confirming by attitudes and actions, that we were walking in His ways. So, repentance and confession of sin was to be common on this day.

This day was to be characterized by:

1. No work X a day for reflection, praise and prayer (Numbers 29:35; Deuteronomy 16:8)
 2. Reading from the Word (Nehemiah 8:18)
 3. Fasting (Joel 2:15)
 4. A Corporate Assembly X a gathering of the people demonstrating their compliance to the summons of God to assemble together (Zephaniah 3:18; Leviticus 23:35; Joel 2:16).
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Additional symbolic action might have included the wearing of sackcloth, the placing of earth on one's head, the rending of garments, and the prostrating of oneself before God.

THE FAILURE OF SOLEMN ASSEMBLIES

As noble as the idea was, the regular solemn assemblies eventually became fruitless times which were only ceremonially observed. To that, the prophet Isaiah speaks with forceful condemnation: *"Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting"* (Isaiah 1:13).

The calling of the regular solemn assemblies had become meaningless. The people were going through the motions, inclusive of symbolic action, but their hearts were not being changed. The attitudes and actions of the people were unaffected by the rituals: *"To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats"* (Isaiah 1:11).

God asked, "What meaningful outcome is occurring as a result of your sacrifices?" The answer, "None!" What God wanted from the solemn assembly was lifestyle change, attitude and action reformation: *"Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil"* (Isaiah 1:16).

The Solemn Assembly is to have a direct bearing upon godly behavior. It is to sensitize us to our relationship responsibilities for the disenfranchised sectors of society. God tells us the outcome that he wants: *"Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow"* (Isaiah 1:17).

God pleads with Israel to have a reconciliation meeting: *"Come now, and let us reason together, saith the Lord: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool"* (Isaiah 1:18). It is a formal plea couched in a notice of divorce. God is pleading with Israel that unless her behavior changes He must divorce her. She is being summoned to appear at a hearing for reconciliation. However, she is not open to the meeting. She is in denial, completely resistant to the proposal.

God is saying to Israel, "You are sick with sin. You say, 'it is only a small inflammation, a slight meaningless marking, an irrelevant consideration, something not even worthy of taking seriously.' But it is a sickness unto death. It will get worse unless you are healed! You are in denial. You don't recognize how sick and near death you really are!"

How like the church today. We too are in denial. We do not realize how sick we really are, how far below the Biblical model we have fallen. We minimize sin. We reclassify sin as a mistake, a

misjudgment, a character flaw, a family trait, a little quirk, a limitation, a blind spot, a personality defect, a fatal attraction, a phobia, an obsession, an oppression, something rising out of depression, the debilitating residue of life-trauma, the result of multiple personalities, a compulsion, a complex X anything but sin!

Joel declares that we are to "rend our hearts and not our garments." At a solemn assembly, something on the inside of us should change, not merely the external. Symbolic action is meaningful only if it reflects the obedience of the heart.

THE SOLEMN ASSEMBLY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

The early church continued to use the Jewish calendar. We know that Jesus took note of the feast days and attended them, as did Paul. We should not think it strange that these are not put in the forefront of discussion in the New Testament. After all, it was the principles behind the Holy Days that God was wanting to impart to the church, not merely the legalistic observance of those days.

Two solemn assemblies were observed in the Book of Acts.

- ! ***Pentecost was a Solemn Assembly.*** During the Solemn Assembly of Pentecost X a time of soul-searching and probably repentance on behalf of their own people for the crucifixion of Jesus X God broke through the awful judgment that could have come on Jerusalem for its rejection of the Christ and sent the outpouring of His Holy Spirit.

- ! ***The Feast of Unleavened Bread*** was a day on which the solemn assembly was conducted. Peter had been arrested by Herod and was threatened with execution. The church gathered together in the evening for a solemn assembly. The result was God's deliverance of Peter and His execution of Herod (Acts 12).

THE SOLEMN ASSEMBLY TODAY

Surely in a certain sense the church *should* and *does* observe solemn assembly every Sunday when we gather in the name of the Lord. This is a time of reflection, soul-searching and repentance in light of God's Holy Word.

However, Solemn Assemblies are also called by a sovereign God as He births conviction and repentance in organizational leaders who, from their offices, call their people together.

Who then should observe Solemn Assembly?

Every corporate group that wants to get right with God X families, churches, associations, cities, counties, states, and the nation itself.

Preaching to the Jerusalem Jews Peter declared, *"Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord"* (Acts 3:19). The interesting imagery is that sin blocks the waters of spiritual refreshing. Through ungodly acts or lack of responsible Biblical action, or failure to be moved sufficiently to pray for the sins of our world, we ourselves may be holding back the flood waters of revival.

THE SOLEMN ASSEMBLY: CRISIS AND REFORMATION

In the Old Testament, the solemn assembly was observed during times of crises and needed national reformation: *"Also day by day, from the first day unto the last day, he read in the book of the law of God. And they kept the feast seven days; and on the eighth day was a solemn assembly, according unto the manner"* (Nehemiah 8:18).

The last national day of solemn assembly here in the United States was called by Abraham Lincoln. Our nation is long overdue for a time of repentance before God. In fact, God's word to the church now is:

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, and give not thine heritage to reproach, that the heathen should rule over them: wherefore should they say among the people, Where is their God? Then will the LORD be jealous for his land, and pity his people (Joel 2:15-18).

Let's look at this passage.

1. "Blow the Trumpet in Zion, sound an alarm in my Holy mountain!" Send forth the sound of the spirit X a sound of alarm among my people.
 2. "Sanctify a fast." Declare a day of exalting your spiritual needs over the needs of the flesh.
 3. "Gather the people and set apart the congregation." This setting apart is to be both unto God, marking us as his distinct people, and from the world, denoting that our behavior is to be different than that of the world around us because we are the people of God.
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4. The Solemn Assembly is not a selective assembly. It is for elders and children, for the leaders and followers, for the wise and taught, and the yet uninitiated but promised generation. All in between are to attend as well. The nursing mother is not given exemption, nor is the betrothed couple, who were normally excused even from conscripted service. All are summoned by God to come, to stand before Him in solemnness, to know who He is and to humble ourselves before Him.

The actions at the Solemn Assembly are dramatic and emotional. Brokenness and transparency should rule. Priests and ministers are to weep in the area of the porch, or the approach to the altar. At the place where the lamb died for our sin, there must be brokenness at the reality of what sin does. It destroys. It ministers death. It is a killer, a life waster. It inflicts needless pain. It spills blood. It makes us ministers of death, and not of life. We must weep over our sin, the sins of our people, and the sins of the nation. We must weep over the dead lamb, the innocent Christ who has been killed at the hands of sinful man. Two-thousand years later, the world has not repented of this terrible deed. On the contrary, our sins increase.

Priests, who are the bridge builders X those who stand in for others X weep in the place of a nation that has committed itself to sin.

- o We weep for the murdered babies.
 - o We weep for 30 years of public school education without a Bible. We weep in the face of rising teen suicide, pregnancies, and drug addiction.
 - o We weep over our increasingly hostile and violent society.
 - o We weep over our shamelessness, the loss of our ability to blush at sin.
 - o We weep over the plague of pornography, a symbol of our national search for satisfying love.
 - o We weep over the hollowness of commitment and displaced children, wounded by the divorce of their parents.
 - o We weep over the absence of fathers X godly men who would dare to be boldly Christ-like.
 - o We weep over the moral vacuum of our nation, the silence, if not the absence, of godly leaders in government who have the moral courage to call us back to our roots.
 - o We weep over the rewriting of history, to script out the existence of Christ and the influence of God and the Bible in our early American history.
 - o We weep over the lie.
 - o We weep over the loss of a Creator God, and the replacement of a godless philosophy called evolution that reduces our value by making us a product of chance, when we were a special creation of God.
 - o We weep over the banning of the Bible and the repression of Christian speech.
 - o We weep over the rise of cultists and astrologists, over the concept of pluralism, when Christ himself proclaimed that He was the only way.
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- o We weep over the spirit of deception that grows more powerful each day, whose tentacles seem to threaten the church itself.
- o We weep over the demise of the traditional family.
- o We weep over homosexuals and lesbians, whose pain is manifest in anger at those who remind them that the scripture calls homosexual behavior sin.
- o We weep over those who have innocently, and not so innocently, contracted AIDS.
- o We weep over what might been, over what was at one time, over what is threatened, unless God sends a powerful national revival. We weep over America, many nations, divided and bitterly torn, without a shared consensus of values, no longer under obedience to God and his word.

We weep! And, we pray - "Spare thy people!"

We are the salt and the light. If there is decay and darkness, we must accept the blame. We have failed. We have not been the people of God that we need to be. Judgment must begin in the house of the Lord. It is the church that must repent for the condition of the nation.

We pray that we will not be a reproach and the nations will not reign over us. We pray that they will not say, "Where is their God?"

The church is in danger of becoming a reproach. And, we are more influenced than we are influencers. What is the last trend you can remember that began in the church? We should be setting the tone, adjusting the thermostat of the nation. We are not. The God who does exploits wants to manifests himself through us again. He wants to leave no doubt in the minds of a watching world that he lives, that his Christ rose from the dead. But, the prerequisite for spiritual power is repentance.

Let's call a Solemn Assembly. Let's get right with God.

A Sample Weekend Schedule for a Solemn Assembly in a Multi-Congregational Setting

THURSDAY

- 7:00 p.m. Quiet Time X Silent Prayer
- 7:15 p.m. Blowing of the Shofar
Call to Prayer
Scripture
Singing
- 7:30 p.m. A time of Reflection X Personal Prayer
- 8:00 p.m. What the weekend holds X Reflections on the Solemn Assembly: A Panel
- 8:30 p.m. Group Prayer, Focus: Protection, direction and discernment for the weekend, ears to hear the voice of God, courage to obey.
- 9:00 p.m. Dismissal
Private Prayer may continue
Altars are open for seekers to tarry until ...

FRIDAY

- 8:30 a.m. Quiet Time X Silent Prayer
- 9:00 a.m. Scripture
Music
- 9:15 a.m. Address: *The Exigency of the Times X The Need for Solemn Assembly*
- 9:45 a.m. Prayer Focus: We weep for America, Her Broken Cities, Her Godless Direction, Her Lost Children
- 10:30 a.m. Break
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10:45 a.m. Worship by Music

11:00 a.m. Address: *The Critical Role of the Church in the Earth X Need for Solemn Assembly*

11:30 a.m. Prayer Focus: We Weep Over the Condition of the Church, the Shifting Away From Biblical Values, Encroaching Worldliness, Life-threatening Lukewarmness and Prayerless Celebrations that Offer the Illusion of Spiritual Life

Noon Lunch

1:30 p.m. STUDY GROUPS

Models for Prayer in the Solemn Assembly Experience
 Understanding the Biblical Roots of the Solemn Assembly
 Freeing the Agenda: Leadership in the Solemn Assembly Verses Spirit Direction
 Leading the Church Toward a Solemn Assembly Weekend

2:25 p.m. BREAK

2:35 p.m. STUDY GROUPS (Repeat of selected groups above, PLUS)

Launching a Vigorous Prayer Ministry out of the Solemn Assembly
 Spiritual Mapping, On Site Prayer, Target Prayer X Idea exchange

3:30 p.m. End of the Sessions

7:00 p.m. Silent Prayer X Time for Reflection

7:15 p.m. Music

7:20 p.m. Address: *THE SOLEMN ASSEMBLY X A Time to Repent*

8:00 p.m. TIME OF REPENTANCE

We Weep for the Sins of Our World
 We Weep for the Sins of Our Nation
 We Weep for the Sins of Our State and Local Governments
 We Weep for the Sins of Our National Past
 Racism
 Slavery
 The Division of the States X the Broken spirit of the South
 Indian Wars and the Broken Covenants

- Exploitation of Third World Nations
 - Sending More Soldiers Than Missionaries
 - We Weep for the Sins of Our National Present
 - Abortion
 - Divorce and Family Disintegration
 - Division of Races in the Church
 - Drugs and Alcoholism
 - An Anti-Christian Sentiment
 - Adultery and Fornication, Homosexuality Other Sexual Sins
 - Greed and Covetousness, Self-Centered Living as Opposed to Sacrificial Commitment
 - Insensitivity to the Poor, the Orphan and the Widow, the Socially Disadvantaged
 - We Weep for the Sins of Our Churches
 - Pride
 - Division
 - Lukewarmness
 - A Self-Serving Perspective
 - A Lack of Submission to Leadership
 - A Lack of Passion in Leadership
 - A Sanction of Sin
 - A Lack of Discipline
 - A Coolness in Evangelism
 - A Drift Toward Syncretism
 - We Weep for the Sins of Our Pastors
 - A Lack of Passion in Leadership
 - Compromise of Principle for Numerical Success
 - Divorce Among Clergy Families
 - Bruised Families Who Suffered From Neglect Due to Church Demands
 - Failure to Preach the Pure Word
 - Fear of Rejection
 - Prayerlessness
 - Too Little Time in the Word
 - We Weep for the Sins of Our People
 - A Departure From the Absolute Standards of the Word
 - Encroaching Worldliness
 - Love of Money
 - Prayerlessness
 - Failure to Evangelize
 - Rebellion Against leaders
 - Division, and Our Lack of Unity
 - Sins of the Tongue
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Failure to Bring the Tithe and Offerings
 Crippled Animals and the Giving of Our Left-Over Time and Resources, Rather
 Than Our First and Best
 Failure to Lead Our Families in Times of Worship and Prayer
 Failure to Bless Our Mate and Our Children, Daily
 Lack of Courage in Living Out What We Believe in Our Heart

COMMUNION SERVICE

Emphasis: Reflection of our past and present sin(s) and reconsecration of our self and our future.

Nailing it to the cross: Have a large cross brought into the assembly hall as the communion elements are set up. Distribute paper. Allow for a time of self-examination and personal reflection. Allow individuals to both write issues they desire to crucify with Christ, and things they want to see touched by his resurrection power X both the negative past and the promising future X upon a piece of paper.

Have the people come forward, as they desire and nail (or tack) those burdens and commitments to the cross. After they have done so, provide a place where they can kneel and receive communion at the altar.

WORSHIP

Celebration in Song
 Celebration by Sharing X Testimonies and Personal Reflections

SATURDAY

9:00 a.m. Music and Scripture

9:15 a.m. Adapting Solemn Assembly to Various Settings X A Panel Discussion

Solemn Assembly in a City-Wide Gathering
 Solemn Assembly in a Denominational State or District Gathering,
 Multi-Denominational or Single Denomination.
 Solemn Assembly in a Business
 Solemn Assembly as a Family

Solemn Assembly in a Local Church

10:00 a.m. Break

10:30 a.m. Music

10:40 a.m. Address: *A World Full of Walking Dead Men: Reaching the Last Generation*

11:15 a.m. Intercession for the Unsaved

Praying for the Lost X The World

Praying for a Revival in America

Praying for the Poor, the Brokenhearted, Those in Prison, the Blind, the Captives

Praying for the Salvation of America's Leaders

Praying for the Salvation of Lost Loved Ones

NOON Dismissal

A Sample Weekend Schedule for a Solemn Assembly in a Local Church

FRIDAY NIGHT X Personal Repentance

1. Leadership Meeting (5:30-6:30 p.m.)
2. Fellowship Dinner (6:30-7:30 p.m.)
3. Session One (7:30-8:00 p.m.)
 - a. Worship
 - b. Introducing the idea of the Solemn Assembly
 - c. Scripture
 - 1) 2 Chronicles 7:14
 - 2) Model: Repentance, Confession, and Prayer
 - d. Examples of Revival Emerging From Solemn Assemblies in Other Cities or Churches
 - e. Prayer
4. Small Group Prayer (8:00-9:00 p.m.)

Questions: What Are Some of Our Most Common Besetting Sins as Christians?
Prayer for Deliverance from Sin

5. General Session (9:00-9:30 p.m.)
 - a. Testimonies
 - b. Prayer for Revival

SATURDAY MORNING X Personal Repentance and Fasting

1. Leadership Meeting (8:00-9:30 a.m.)
 2. Session Two (9:30-10:45 a.m.)
 - a. Praise
 - b. Testimonies
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- c. The Biblical Mandate for Private and Public Confession of Sin
 - d. "Am I His Disciple Indeed?" X A Personal Spiritual Evaluation Led by the Weekend Coordinator
 - e. Prayer for Conviction of Sin
3. Juice Break (10:45-11:00 a.m.)
4. Small Sharing Groups (11:00 a.m. until)
- a. "My Heart, Christ's Home" X A Personal Spiritual Evaluation led by the Team Members
 - b. Prayer for Deliverance from Sin

SATURDAY AFTERNOON X Personal Repentance and Fasting

- 1. Rest and Personal Reflection for Church Members
- 2. Team Prayer Meeting (1:00-3:30 p.m.)

SATURDAY EVENING X Corporate repentance and fasting

- 1. Team Prayer Meeting (5:30-6:45 p.m.)
- 2. Solemn Assembly (7:00 p.m. until)

SUNDAY MORNING X Prayer

- 1. Team Meeting/Church Prayer Meeting (8:30-9:30 a.m.)
 - 2. Worship (9:30-12:00 Noon)
 - a. Praise Time
 - b. Testimonies by All
 - c. Altar Call for Confession and Prayer for Revival
 - o Team Luncheon and Evaluation Time (After Morning Service)
 - o Team Members Depart for Home
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SUNDAY EVENING X Commitment

1. Church Evaluation Time (6:00 p.m. until)
2. Prayer for Revival



THE SOLEMN ASSEMBLY WEEKEND

USING LAY MEN AND WOMEN FROM A SISTER CHURCH

As you consider conducting a Solemn Assembly in your church, you may wish to include a visiting team from a sister church which has already experienced a successful Solemn Assembly. Invite these experienced and seasoned Christians to join your people in seeking the face of God for your church, your families, and your city.

Great revivals of the past were always helped along by laymen who spread the blaze of renewal from one fellowship of believers to another. With this in mind, a Solemn Assembly weekend can be conducted as a Lay Ministry weekend. Lay men and women who have experienced heartfelt spiritual renewal and are willing to become prayer warriors for the local host church are encouraged to join a visiting Lay Ministry team member. The visiting team and team leader works with local leaders in furnishing leadership for the weekend experience, and the local church provides housing and meals for the visiting team members.

FRIDAY EVENING

Visiting Team meets and travels to the Solemn Assembly site. The host pastor welcomes the visiting team. They lead the first session, focusing on the principles and promises of revival found in Scripture. One common passage is: *"If I shut up heaven that there be no rain, or if I command the locusts to devour the land, or if I send pestilence among my people; If my people, which 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"* (2 Chronicles 7:13-14).

The importance of personal and corporate repentance cannot be overemphasized. That is the heart of the Solemn Assembly. Team members can share testimonies and lead the church constituents to begin searching their hearts. Utilize small groups to maximize participation. Encourage all to see the importance of identifying, acknowledging, and turning away from national, community, congregational, family, and personal sins. Information is also gathered from the church family during these evening sessions which can be used in preparing for Saturday night's Solemn Assembly.

SATURDAY MORNING

After breakfast, all those who take part in the weekend are encouraged to fast until after the conclusion of the Solemn Assembly that evening. Be careful not to embarrass those who are unable to participate due to medical reasons. The focus of the Saturday morning sessions is the importance of confession, and on the recognition of sin and personal repentance.

SATURDAY AFTERNOON

The church family is released for an afternoon of solitude and introspection.

SATURDAY EVENING

On Saturday evening, the people return for the Solemn Assembly. The goal for this meeting is corporate repentance. Team members serve as prayer warriors, and the Solemn Assembly is led by the pastor or local church leadership.

The activities of the assembly might include a review of the categorized listing of sins, the reading of biblical texts pertaining to each category of sin, and a call to repentance. Members are asked to respond to each category of sin by praying prayers of confession or by praying for deliverance.

Note: This service can be quite long; therefore, the spiritual leadership must be extremely sensitive to the Holy Spirit in discerning when to conclude each period of prayer.

SUNDAY MORNING

The focus is again primarily on personal repentance. Team and church members alike are encouraged to share personal testimonies. Praying for revival is also a major thrust of these sessions.

Note: Throughout the weekend, and especially during the Sunday services, church members are given the opportunity to privately or publicly confess their sins or ask for prayer. The church is asked to set up a prayer room for the weekend so that whenever the Spirit of God begins to deal with an individual's heart, he will have some place to go in order to quietly listen to God's voice. Counseling in the prayer room will be provided by the team members. The pastor or spiritual leadership for the congregation will again be expected to coordinate any public sharing or confession of sin made by members of the church family, leading the rest of the church family to respond properly to each individual.

The activities of the Solemn Assembly weekend are very demanding in that they encourage all those who participate to be very humble and open before God and one another. Spiritual brokenness and the open confession of sin are not usually considered normal activities for most of today's congregations; therefore, both the spiritual leaders and the church family alike are asked to demonstrate flexibility by participating in services that are different than usual. The goal which must be kept in mind is that the Father is to be allowed the freedom to accomplish everything He desires to do in touching and cleansing the hearts of His children.

Personal and corporate repentance, the two main goals of the Solemn Assembly weekend, are extremely important to the Father; therefore, such a weekend event must not be entered into lightly. Everyone must be encouraged to participate. The church calendar must be cleared and preparations diligently carried out in order to bring as many church members as possible into the convicting, yet cleansing presence of the Father.

FOLLOW-UP

Just as the preparation events which take place before the weekend are extremely important, the activities which follow the weekend are vital to the ongoing movement of God among the people of each church.

Every individual is encouraged to continue seeking the father's face so as to determine His ongoing will for their personal lives, their families, and the life of the church.

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS FOR CONDUCTING A SOLEMN ASSEMBLY WEEKEND

By P. Douglas Small

The following are recommendations and are not offered as an unalterable set of guidelines. Rather, they are intended as gleanings from principles rooted in biblical accounts. In conducting a Solemn Assembly:

I. MAKE THE BIBLE YOUR PRIMARY RESOURCE BOOK

- A. Study the accounts of solemn assembly in the Biblical text and follow the leading of the Holy Spirit for application to your situation.
- B. Read publicly, and aloud, passages from the Word, remembering that such corporate attention to the Word is a major component of the solemn assemblies in scripture.
- C. Emphasize the Word, the uncompromising authority of the Bible, the necessity of our reordering our lives according to its revelation. Read it publicly, responsively, silently, from different versions, repetitiously X but read it.
- D. Make the preaching and teaching brief. Remember the focus is action based on the Word. The times for discussion and debate are over. God has spoken. He has called us to repentance, to total surrender, to a renewal of covenant with him. It is time to act.
- E. The Word may be used in any of the following elements.

II. KEEP THE EMPHASIS ON PRAYER

A dialectic of sorts will take place in the Solemn Assembly. Bite-size nuggets from the word will inspire prayer and repentance for a season dictated by the Holy Spirit. That can and should be followed by another bite size moment of exhortation from the Word. So, we respond to the Word with repentance and a head and heart poised toward obedience. Then we come back to the Word, and upon discovering another issue that we need apply to our lives with greater care, we again by prayer and repentance commit ourselves to obedience. Thus, we move back and forth from the Word to prayer, then to the Word and back to prayer.

As you pray:

- A. Use a variety of prayer modes.
 - 1. Pray individually.
 - 2. Pray in pairs or sets of three.
 - 3. Form spontaneous groups out of the corporate setting for specific prayers or exercises.
 - 4. Use the pastoral or priestly prayer pattern, where one individual prays and others listen, agreeing with appropriate "amen's."
 - 5. You may consider allowing a microphone to be placed in the congregation for laymen to use for prayers and confessions directed by the Spirit.
 - 6. Read prayers from the Bible, especially those that appear in the solemn assembly sections of scripture.
 - 7. Pray in concert.
 - 8. Pray in unison, repeating well known scripture passages or prayers, such as the Disciple's Prayer that Jesus taught us.
 - 9. Offer prayerful songs to the Lord as corporate prayers.

- B. Use Scripture to drive the prayer times, moving back and forth between God's Word to us in Scripture and our response to Him in prayer.

III. CONFESSION OF SIN(S)

- A. Solemn Assembly that does not break forth into contrition of heart, and brokenness before God and His holiness, represents unfinished business with God. To have a successful Solemn Assembly, there must be confession. We must agree with God about who He is and what He says about us and our sin. The tired rationalizations must cease.

- B. Allow time for private confession in prayer. Open the altars. Invite people to kneel at their seats. Set aside a prayer room for anyone needing the assistance of prayer counselors.

Have such counselors ready to pray with anyone who needs their assistance. While caution is wise, don't preclude public confession of sin if someone feels that God is leading them to ask forgiveness of the church body for some sinful act or attitude. Such open and pure confessions are sometimes the fountainheads from which a breakthrough emerges.

IV. REAFFIRM THE CONCEPT OF SACRIFICIAL COMMITMENT

- A. The meeting place of man and God in the Old Testament was the altar. There two things had to die:
1. Sin X through the sin and trespass offering.
 2. Self X through the burnt, meal and peace offerings.
- B. The meeting place of man and God in the New Testament is the cross. There two things must die:
1. Sin X through the sacrifice of Christ for us.
 2. Self X through our surrender to His will.
- C. The heart of our faith is about sacrifice and the surrender of self. The new gospel of recent years that places man at the center, and cast God in the role of servant, has produced an pale, spiritless, and anemic Christian with an aversion to anything that requires self sacrifice of him. True faith demands our attendance at the altar of sacrifice that burns with the fire of God. Ours must always be a religion of blood and fire.
- D. Keep in mind the outline of the Old Testament Sacrifices recorded in Leviticus 1-5.
1. Offerings of Reparation
 - a) Sin, Leviticus 4:1-5:13
 - b) Trespass, Leviticus 5:14-19
 2. Offerings of Consecration
 - a) Burnt offering: The total surrender of Self, Leviticus 1
 - b) Meat or Meal Offering: The consecration of my abilities, my labor, my time in God's harvest field
 - c) Peace or Fellowship Offering: The consecration and celebration of my relationships both with God and with man

Note: Remember, the offerings for consecration mean nothing without the offerings of Reparation. (See Amos 5:21-24; 4:4-5)

V. ALLOW CONTRITION AND COVENANT RENEWAL TO MELT INTO CELEBRATION AND PRAISE TO GOD

- A. Upon completing a season of self-examination, followed by confession and recommitment, move into praise toward God.
1. Praise him with song, with shouts of triumph, and Scripture and testimony.
 2. Praise him spontaneously, joyfully, tearfully passionately.
 3. Praise him for his mercy, his tenderness, his compassion, his forgiveness, his notice of you, his making of you significant by entering into covenant with you.
 4. Consider Key Praise scriptures for this moment: Psalms 32; 103; 145; Romans 8:34-39; 11:33-36; Ephesians 3:14-21; Revelation 4:11; 5:9-14; 7:10-12.
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PERSONAL REFLECTION

Reference: Luke 11:39-52

The following questions are designed to help individuals evaluate if they need revival. Read the question and the Scripture with an open heart, asking God if you need revival. Obey the leading of the Holy Spirit.

1. Am I more concerned about what others think of me than what God thinks?

And the Lord said unto him, Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness. Ye fools, did not he that made that which is without make that which is within also? (Luke 11:39-40).

2. Do I keep the letter of the law and not the Spirit?

But woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone (Luke 11:42).

3. Has personal recognition become a priority for me?

Woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye love the uppermost seats in the synagogues, and greetings in the markets (Luke 11:43).

4. Do I concentrate on disguising my spiritual deadness?

Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are as graves which appear not, and the men that walk over them are not aware of them (Luke 11:44).

5. Do I talk a stronger faith than I am willing to live?

And he said, Woe unto you also, ye lawyers! for ye lade men with burdens grievous to be borne, and ye yourselves touch not the burdens with one of your fingers (Luke 11:46).

6. Do I continue to foster the bitter antagonisms of days gone by?

Woe unto you! for ye build the sepulchres of the prophets, and your fathers killed them. Truly ye bear witness that ye allow the deeds of your fathers: for they indeed killed them, and ye build their sepulchres. Therefore also said the wisdom of God, I will send them prophets and apostles, and some of them they shall slay and persecute: That the blood of all the prophets, which was shed from the foundation of the world, may be required of this generation; From the blood of Abel unto the blood of Zacharias, which perished between the altar and the temple: verily I say unto you, It shall be required of this generation. (Luke 11:47-51)

7. Am I more concerned about what I think that what God says?

Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered (Luke 11:52).

RESPONSIVE READING

(Minister reads the item for which the congregation is repenting.)

(Congregation responds by reading the appropriate Scripture.)

1. Minister: Father, with humble and sincere hearts we repent for ... Neglecting Church Attendance

Congregation: *Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another* (Hebrews 10:25).

2. ... Withholding Offerings

On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income (1 Corinthians 16:2).

3. ... Prayerlessness

I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone (1 Timothy 2:1).

4. ... Living for Self When You Lived For Us

He died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again (2 Corinthians 5:15).

5. ... Going Our Individual Way and Violating the Principle of Unity

I appeal to you brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought (1 Corinthians 1:10).

6. ... Trusting in Our Strength and Not Leaning on the Power of the Spirit

Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord Almighty (Zechariah 4:6).

7. ... Leaving Our First Love and Becoming Lukewarm

Yet I hold this against you: you have forsaken your first love. Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first (Revelation 2:4-5).

8. ... Halfheartedness and a Lack of Passion for You as Well as Our Unfulfilled Mission in the Earth

I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm X neither hot nor cold X I am about to spit you out of my mouth (Revelation 3:15-16).

9. ... Accusing and Complaining

Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen (Ephesians 4:29).

10. ... Withholding Love to All Other Believers

We are not withholding our affection from you, but you are withholding yours from us (2 Corinthians 6:12).

11. ... Not Giving Due Praise to You, God

God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in spirit and in truth (John 4:24).

12. ... Not Keeping Close Communications With Our Head

My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me (John 10:27).

13. ... Disunity

Make every effort to keep the unit of the Spirit through the bond of peace. There is one body and one Spirit (Ephesians 4:3-4).

14. ... Being Content Without the Manifest Presence of God

For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them (Matthew 18:20).

15. ... Being Disappointed in You, God

You have said, AlIt is futile to serve God. What did we gain by carrying out his requirements?≡ (Malachi 3:14).

16. ... Not Working Together

We are God's fellow workers (1 Corinthians 3:9).



SIGNS OF SPIRITUAL COLDNESS

1. Absence of passion about my faith and my worship.
 2. Bible reading is hard, perhaps even neglected. There is no real delight in reading the Bible.
 3. Comfortable in the world.
 4. Church attendance is out of duty, or for the kids or the spouse X rather than a hunger to seek God and grow in grace.
 5. Doubts and frustrations cloud my thinking about God and my faith.
 6. Entertaining thoughts that I know are sinful, and I am not fighting them. Sometimes I am inviting them.
 7. Enjoyment in life is unrelated to my faith and my relationship with God. It is rooted in fishing, hunting, swimming, golfing, tennis, hiking, hobbies, wealth and so forth.
 8. Faith has become more of a burden than a liberating adventure with God.
 9. Fearful of becoming a religious fanatic. I value church attendance but have no intention of becoming a radical Christian.
 10. Feel like something is wrong spiritually, or that something is missing from my life.
 11. Gifts of the Holy Spirit that once operated in my life are no longer active.
 12. Give offerings, but not with joy.
 13. Guarded in my relationship with other Christians. I try to maintain the AChristian image≡ when I am with them, but that is sometimes difficult.
 14. Having a problem trusting Christian leaders, pastors and ministers. I am increasingly suspicious of them.
 15. Have increasing doubts about the credibility of the Bible.
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16. Have hurts that have not healed, wounds from bad experiences with other Christians that seem to take the life out of me. The Holy Spirit is no longer real to me. I can't sense His presence. I feel far away from God.
 17. Indifferent to the lost, even to family members whom I know are not Christians. I do not regularly pray for their salvation or watch for opportunities to either witness to them or influence them toward Christ and godliness.
 18. Just going through the Sunday-to-Sunday motions.
 19. Kindness to others, sensitivity in relationships and general Christian graces are increasingly easy to ignore.
 20. Missing church or prayer times more frequently and more easily.
 21. Not hungry for God, or His Word, or for a fresh encounter in the Holy Spirit.
 22. Not looking for the Lord to return today! I am not praying, A Come quickly, Lord Jesus.≡
 23. Operating my life in less than a Christ-centered way.
 24. Prayerlessness. It is uncomfortable to talk with God for more than a few moments.
 25. Prayers are not being answered, at least that is how I feel. As a result I am disappointed with God.
 26. Powerless over sin and the will of the flesh. I find yielding to temptation easier and easier.
 27. Quite a while since I had a good cry over my faith, my love for the Lord, or some new insight I had gained.
 28. Rationalization reigns over repentance.
 29. Recent tragedy has made me doubt God's goodness, or even His existence.
 30. Relationships are conflict and anger infested. I can't seem to resolve conflicts and settle differences. I am increasingly defensive and self-protecting.
 31. Remember a time when my relationship with God was better, fresher, newer and more exciting. Something is missing. But even though I know that, I am not making any efforts to get back to where I once was with God.
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32. Sacrificial giving is not where my heart is. My giving is sporadic or out of duty.
 33. Turn to God as a last rather than first resort in times of crisis.
 34. Turned off by invitations to attend religious seminars, read Christian books, listen to tapes, or watch Christian television.
 35. Unmoved by most church services, reading the Bible or talking with other Christians.
 36. Uncomfortable around Christians that are Aon fire≅ for the Lord.
 37. Very unclear about what God=s will is for me or my life.
 38. Worship is ritualistic, empty and joyless.
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DISCERNING THE HAND OF GOD IN JUDGMENT

By P. Douglas Small

The purpose of the believer, in the time-space world in which we now live, is to glorify God and do so boldly. Our life is to be lived in such a way as to offer praise to Him, to honor Him. As such, our entire life is a testimony to God. At the end of his life, Jesus was able to say, "*Father, I have glorified you on the earth: I have finished the work which you gave me to do*" (John 17:4). His prayer for us was that "*the glory which you (Father) gave me, I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one ... that the world may know that you have sent me, and have loved them, as you have loved me*" (John 17:22-23). The glory of the Father which was revealed in Christ is now to be revealed in us. And that glory is to so transform our relationships that we will experience a oneness so profound, so powerful the world will know we are loved by God. The evidence of God's love for us will be revealed in the changed manner in which we relate to one another.

So important is this idea of carrying the glory of God in the earth with honor, and giving God the glory due his name, that Malachi observed that his generation was under a curse because they had not properly related to their role as the burden-bearers of his glory. Though the covenant gave them blessings, their behavior had eclipsed those blessings, or cursed them, as Malachi expressed it (Malachi 2:2).

Malachi notes that this curse is traceable to the absence of a passion in worship, the lack of an abandoned devotion to God that would have caused the people to give God their best. In the absence of such a mindset, they could not glorify God. Their worship was not honoring to Him. They offered crippled animals. Their worship and service to God was less than whole, less than their best.

In fact, they gave God their leftovers. God promised them in return his judgment (Malachi 2:3-5; 3:5-6). The only solution was repentance demonstrated behaviorally (Malachi 3:7-12).

Haggai stands before his generation with a similar plight. He calls for self-examination. He notes that the people have sown much, and bring in little. They have food, but not enough to satisfy their hunger. They have drink, but not enough to fill satisfy their thirst. They have clothes but not enough to keep them warm. They have jobs, but when they bring their money home it is as if the funds go into "a bag with holes" (Haggai 1:6). Haggai moves to an immediate solution: Do the things that will glorify God (Haggai 1:7). What are those things? The people had to reorder their priorities and give first place in their lives to building the house of the Lord.

Haggai declares that God is behind the meager harvest.

You looked for much, and lo, it came to little; and when you brought it home, I did blow upon it. Why? Because of mine house that is waste ... Therefore the heaven is stayed from dew, and the earth is stayed from her fruit. And I called for a drought upon the land ... the mountains ... the corn ... the new wine upon men, and upon cattle, and upon all the labor of the hands (Haggai 1:9-11).

In short, nothing "the hands" do will be blessed until they are obedient to God, and involved in his work. The nation is under judgment. Haggai notes later that the curse was reversed "*from the day that the foundation of the Lord's temple was laid*" (Haggai 2:18).

How do we know whether our families, our cities or our nation may be experiencing the Judgment of God?

In scripture, we note that nature often signaled the displeasure of God. But many other signs also indicated the dealings of God upon his people. Here is a list of indicators of the dealings of God:

1. Broken human relationships X Deuteronomy 26:26; Matthew 24:38.
 2. Business failure X Deuteronomy 28:18, 20, 24; Deuteronomy 26:22.
 3. Cities Become Waste Places X Leviticus 26:31, 33.
 4. Confusion and Disorientation X Deuteronomy 28:19, 29.
 5. Defeat X Deuteronomy 28:25; Leviticus 26:25; Numbers 14:41-45; Joshua 7:1-5; Judges 10:6-8.
 6. Drought and Famine X Haggai 1:9-11; Deuteronomy 11:16-17; 1 Kings 17:1-7; 2 Kings 8:1; Deuteronomy 28:16, 24; Leviticus 26:16, 20, 26, 29; Mark 13:8.
 7. Earthquakes and Volcanic Eruptions X Genesis 19:24; Matthew 24:7; Jeremiah 10:10; Numbers 16:30-34.
 8. Fierce Storms X Jonah 2
 9. Economic collapse X Deuteronomy 26:26.
 10. Failure of our Supplies and Resources X Deuteronomy 28:17; Haggai 1:9.
 11. Fear and phobias X Deuteronomy 26:36.
 12. Fever X Deuteronomy 28:22.
 13. Foreign Control of the National Money Supply X Deuteronomy 28:43-44.
 14. Foreign or Imported Illnesses and Disease X Deuteronomy 28:27.
 15. Increase in Social Disease, Mental Illness X Deuteronomy 28:28-29; Romans 1:28.
 16. Increase in wickedness X Matthew 24:12; Romans 1:24, 29, 32.
 17. Insect raids X Deuteronomy 28:38-39; Joel 2.
 18. Impotence and Sterility X Deuteronomy 28:18.
 19. Loss of Safety for our Children X Leviticus 26:22, 29.
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20. Loss of Significant Relationships X Deuteronomy 28:32, 41.
21. Multiple Deaths by Lightning X Numbers 16:35.
21. Plagues X Leviticus 26:21; Numbers 16:44-50; 25:4-9; Revelation 11:6.
22. Repossession of Property X Deuteronomy 28:30-31.
23. Social Power Shift of In Favor of Foreigners and Immigrants X Deuteronomy 28:43.
24. Unshakable Pestilence and Sickness X Deuteronomy 28:21-22, 35; Leviticus 26:16, 25.
25. Unusually Severe Weather X Deuteronomy 28:22-24.
26. War and Destruction X Leviticus 26:33; Matthew 24:6-7.

Not all sickness or natural disasters are the hand of God in judgment; but it is clear from scripture that consideration needs to be given to the possibility that life's negative experiences carry with them a message from God.

Following a community disaster or a series of debilitating events, Solemn Assembly is a proper context for soul searching. It is always appropriate to search our hearts and seek to be our best before God. If there is behavior which is obviously sinful, it should be confronted.

Repentance should be offered and restoration accomplished. No assignment of guilt or condemnation is necessary. A hostile atmosphere of blame and fault-finding is always non-productive. Rather, we come openly to God asking that He show us anything in our lives that needs repair. If there is any connection between our lives and the disaster that we have just experienced, we ask that God forgive us, heal us and restore us. And He will!

Regarding His role as Judge, we should always remember that God's judgments are true and righteous. (Psalms 51:4; 96:10; Revelation 19:2).

His judgment is pervasive and unlimited. He is not a territorial judge. (Genesis 18:25; 2 Timothy 4:8). His judgments are comprehensive and all inclusive. Every deed, even hidden things, will come to light (Ecclesiastes 12:24; Romans 2:16). God's judgment toward His children is an activity of correction rooted in love (Hebrews 12:5-11). It is God's purpose to call forth repentance and redirection, as well as a renewal of our fellowship with Him. (Revelation 3:19-20).

When we ignore the lighter touches of His hand, and the gentle calls to return to Him, the consequences for our sin and rebellion increase in severity until He has our attention. (Leviticus 26:14-35). Our choice is to recognize His dealings and break before Him, or become hard and hostile which will eventually bring His wrath (Romans 3:18; 2:5-8).

Nothing God does is out of a desire to see us perish. Every interaction that He has with us is designed to do us good, or call us away from life patterns that result in death and back to Him through repentance (2 Peter 3:9).

For those in a covenant relationship with God, the dealings of God are tender expressions of His love for us, His children. He calls us and cares for us. But when we fail to give heed to His voice and rebel, He honors his covenant with us and refuses to abandon us to our own destructive desires. He disciplines us, if necessary with increased severity, until we repent and turn from death to life.

We need to learn to recognize God's dealings early and surrender to God any impurities or perverse attitudes that He may be after in us. If we will listen, the Holy Spirit will speak to us about sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 14:8). Thus, whenever we experience unfavorable events, we should instantly go to God and inquire of Him whether the circumstance is an act of spiritual discipline, a specific attack of the enemy, or neither. We must remember that some things happen because we live in a less than perfect world, a world under judgment, which is already experiencing the birth pangs of the coming Kingdom. Difficulties in life are not always due to sin, or even to Satan's attacks upon us as Christians. If God intends to get our attention for the purpose of discipline, the sensitive church and Christian will hear Him. And, He surely will bring to light the sin that prompted the discipline. Apart from a word of knowledge or a prophetic insight, only the Holy Spirit can penetrate the heart and disclose to a believer whether he or she is experiencing God's judgment.

OUR LIFE FOR PURITY

There are multiple ways that an individual can violate his relationship with God. A number of terms in scripture apply to what we commonly call "sin." When we sin against God, we may so thoroughly lose our sense of moral direction that we do not recognize our behavior as sinful.

This compilation may help us examine behaviors that the Bible makes clear as being sinful. As we discover actions or patterns that God calls sin in our lives, we must never be happy with anything but the complete eradication of such behavior. It is not enough to repent, even tearfully, if we do not change. God does not want us to accept feelings of guilt as acceptable substitutes for our changelessness.

DEUTERONOMY 27:15-26 X SINS BANNED BY THE LAW OF GOD

A curse upon the man who carves an image or casts an idol, dishonors his father or mother, moves his neighbor's boundary stone, leads the blind astray, withholds justice from the alien, the fatherless, or the widow, sleeps with his father's wife, has sexual relations with an animal, sleeps with his sister, sleeps with his mother-in-law, kills his neighbor secretly, accepts a bribe to kill an innocent person, does not uphold the words of this law by carrying them out.

PROVERBS 6:16-19 X SINS SPECIFICALLY NOTED AS DISDAINED BY GOD

Haughty eyes, a lying tongue, hands that shed innocent blood, a heart that devises wicked schemes, feet that are quick to rush into evil, a false witness, a man who stirs up dissension among brothers.

EZEKIEL 18 X SINS OF A STRAYING NATION

Those who would defile his neighbor's wife, oppresses the poor and needy, commits robbery, lends at usury and takes excessive interest.

EZEKIEL 34:4 X SINS OF SPIRITUAL LEADERS

Failure to: strengthen the weak, heal the sick, bind up the injured, bring back the strays, search for the lost, rule the people with justice.

MATTHEW 5:21-37 X SINS OF SOCIETY

Murder, unresolved anger with a brother without cause, adultery, lustful eyes, frivolous divorce, adultery by marrying a divorced woman, violation of our promises, a lack of respect for oaths.

MARK 7:21-23 X SINS OF SOCIETY

Evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance, folly.

1 CORINTHIANS 10:1-13 X SINS IN THE CHURCH

Examples from the history of Israel: setting our hearts on corrupt and perishable things; idolatry; sexual immorality; testing the Lord; murmuring, particularly against church leadership.

EPHESIANS 5:3-6 X IDOLATRY OF THE HEART (EZEKIEL 14:1-3)

Sexual immorality, personal impurity, lust (greed).

EPHESIANS 5:3-6 X INAPPROPRIATE LANGUAGE

Obscenity, foolish talk, coarse joking.

2 TIMOTHY 3:1-5 X SINS OF MEN IN THE LAST DAYS

Lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, without love, unforgiving, slanderous, without self-control, brutal, not lovers of good, treacherous, rash, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, having a form of godliness but denying its power.

JAMES 4:11 X RELATIONSHIP SINS

Slander of one another (brothers), speaking against a brother, judging a brother.

JAMES 5:1-9 X SOCIAL SINS

Hoarding personal riches, failing to pay workers adequate wages, allowing innocent individuals to be condemned especially when we somehow benefit from their removal, grumbling against others.

2 PETER 3:3-4 X SINS IN THE LAST DAYS CHURCH

Scoffers, skeptics of the second coming, men who follow their own evil desires.

REVELATION 2 THROUGH 3 X SINS OF THE CHURCHES

Churches that have forsaken their first love (2:4); entice others to sin through idolatry and immorality (2:14); tolerate those who practice immorality, idolatry, and false teaching (2:20-21); have the reputation of being alive but are dead (3:1); are neither cold nor hot (3:15); have allowed prosperity to blind them of their need for God (3:17).

OTHER SINS

- ! Betrayal of a confidence (Proverbs 11:13)
- ! Blasphemy of the Holy Spirit (Mark 3:29)
- ! Claiming that we have not sinned (1 John 1:8)
- ! Deception of a neighbor and the violation of a trust (Leviticus 5:4; 6: 1)
- ! Dishonesty through use of inaccurate weights and measures (Deuteronomy 25:14,16)
- ! Divorce and remarriage (Mark 10:11-12)
- ! Environmental Sin X Allowing the world to contaminate me; Touching the unclean (Leviticus 5:2; Romans 1:24; 2 Corinthians 12:21; Galatians 5:19-21; Colossians 3:5)
- ! Pride (Proverbs 11:2; 13:10; 29:23; I Tim. 3:6; I John 2:16)
- ! False Prophets who prophesy peace when there is no peace (Ezekiel 13)
- ! False teaching/doctrine (2 Peter 2:1)
- ! Friendship with the world (James. 4:4-5)
- ! Fornication (1 Corinthians 10:8; 6:9-11)
- ! Honoring God with the lips while the heart is far from God (Mark 7:6)
- ! Idolatry (1 Corinthians 10:7, 14; 2 Corinthians 10:3-5)
- ! Injustice (Psalm 58:2)
- ! Letting go of the commands of God and holding to the traditions of man (Mark 7:8)
- ! Partaking of the Lord's supper without due repentance and personal purification (1 Corinthians 11:27)

- ! Presuming on the will of God without a word from God (Numbers 14:44)
 - ! Rebellion (1 Samuel 15:23; Proverbs 17:11; Isaiah 1:20)
 - ! Refusing to submit to one another (Galatians 5:13; Ephesians 5:21-22; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 2:13; 5:5)
 - ! Refusing to follow God wholeheartedly (Numbers 32:11)
 - ! Religious leaders who do not practice what they preach X they put heavy loads on men's shoulders and are not willing to lift a finger to move them (Matthew 23:3-4)
 - ! Robbing God of the tithe (Malachi 3:6-9)
 - ! Social irresponsibility, a failure to stand up for truth regarding something (Leviticus 5:1)
 - ! Trying to take God's glory for oneself (Isaiah 48:11; 1 Corinthians 10:31)
 - ! Unbelief (Hebrews 3:12; 4:11)
 - ! Unbridled Desire (Numbers 11:1-4; 1 Corinthians 10:6; James 1:14-16)
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OUR SOLEMN COMMITMENT

We have been raised with Christ, Therefore:

We will set our hearts on things above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God. We will set our minds on things above, not on earthly things. For we have died, and our life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life appears, then we also will appear with Him in Glory. Therefore:

We will put to death whatever belongs to our earthly nature: anger, rage, malice, slander and filthy language from our lips. We will not lie to each other since we have taken off our old self with its practices and have put on the new self. We are the people of God, He loves us and has chosen us for His own. Therefore:

We will put on compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. We will accept one another's differences and will forgive each other in the same way that the Lord has forgiven us. We will add to all these things love, which binds us all together in perfect unity. We are members of one body, called to peace. Therefore:

We will let the peace of Christ rule in our hearts. We will let the Word of Christ dwell in us richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs, singing with gratitude in our hearts to God. And whatever we do, in word or deed, we will do it all in the Name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him.

Now, Father, You alone are able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that is at work within us. Unto You be glory in this church by Christ Jesus throughout all the ages, world without end, forever and ever. Amen

Based on Colossians 3:1-17 and Ephesians 3:20-21.

Name _____ Date _____

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