

## THE SOLEMN ASSEMBLY

by Richard Owen Roberts

### Practical Suggestions

**1. A Solemn Assembly is to be a time when all normal daily work is set aside.** This is clearly the instruction of Leviticus 23:34-36, Numbers 29:35 and Deuteronomy 16:8. While the overwhelming teaching of Scripture is in favor of hard work, it is absolutely clear that all work must be subjugated to spiritual concerns. Just as man is to labor six days, and six days only, and then rest on the seventh, so also man is to labor in times of spiritual and moral advance; but he is to set aside this normal daily work in order to seek the face of God during times of righteous judgment.

**2. A Solemn Assembly is a time when the entire body of people affected by the righteous judgment is required to be in attendance.** This is clear in the several passages on Old Testament revivals noted above, but nowhere more clear than in Joel where even the honeymooners had their honeymoon revoked, and the mother with an infant at her breast was required to be present (Joel 2:16). Part of the corporate sin that must be put away is that spirit of rebellion that exists in many professed Christians that causes them to believe that no spiritual leader can order them about. Such wicked sinners would do well to observe the severity of the denunciations against rebellion and stubbornness recorded in I Samuel 15:23.

**3. A Solemn Assembly is a time of fasting.** Rather than wondering concerning the physical significance of fasting, professed Christians would do well to face squarely the immediate spiritual importance. On a normal basis we realize that the care of our bodies is a proper responsibility we assume before God. The care of ourselves is part of our normal service to God. But there are issues vastly more important than the care of our bodies. In fasting, a believing people acknowledge to God that the urgent concerns of the spiritual take precedence over the normal concerns of the physical. In short, fasting is an outward means of demonstrating that humility before God which acknowledges that the discovery of all those sins that have provoked His judgment and putting away of them in an orderly corporate manner is of vastly greater consequence than the feeding of the body. There are times when the bodies of believers must be brought into subjection so that the overwhelming necessities of the spiritual may receive their due attention.

**4. A Solemn Assembly is a time for sacrifice.** Numerous Old Testament passages dealing with the Solemn Assembly make this clear (including Numbers 10:10 and 15:3). One of the greatest blessings God has given to mankind is the gift of time. What sacrifice could be more significant than the sacrifice of time in order to participate fully in God's commanded method of reversing a righteous judgment against a church or nation?

**5. A Solemn Assembly is of protracted duration.** While most professed Christians may content themselves with hour-long "worship" services, the call to a Solemn Assembly is a call to a greatly elongated meeting. In many of the passages where Solemn Assemblies are described, the assembly met for days on end - even as long as seven or fourteen days. On other occasions, however, it would appear that a full day was sufficient. In 2 Chronicles 7:8-9 it is noted that the feast was observed for seven days and then on the eighth day a Solemn Assembly was observed.

It was at this Solemn Assembly that God said, "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" (verse 14). **No Solemn Assembly would be worth the name that did not allow at least an entire day for the great tasks of humiliation, prayer, repentance and seeking God's face.**

**6. A Solemn Assembly is a season of earnest prayer.** Churches in general allot altogether too little time for prayer. Enough time may be taken to present requests to God but precious little time is given corporately for God to present requests to men. But not only should much time be given to prayer at a Solemn Assembly, much time in prayer should be given in preparation for a Solemn Assembly. If the Solemn Assembly is to be held throughout the day on Saturday, the people of a church would do well to give considerable time to prayer throughout each day of the preceding week in preparation for the day itself.

**7. A Solemn Assembly is a mandatory occasion for corporate repentance.** In preparation for this, a catalogue of sins to be corporately confessed and put away should be prepared in advance. Some churches have solicited the involvement of the entire congregation in this catalogue. Various entities within the fellowship have been asked to prepare lists of the offenses against both God and man that they know the church has never corporately put away. The leaders have then gone over these lists and compiled them into a catalogue. The intent is not to manufacture wrongs but to seriously investigate any and all matters that might have contributed to the righteous judgment.

**8. A Solemn Assembly is an opportunity for Spirit-anointed preaching of the searching truths of Scripture to deeply touch afresh the lives of God's people.** In Solemn Assemblies where only a single day is devoted, it is not uncommon to have at least one or possibly two such sermons specifically aimed at the issues of the day and assisting the people in fulfillment of the responsibilities and grasping the opportunities the day presents.

**9. A Solemn Assembly is a most wonderful opportunity for children to see their parents and elders demonstrating Christianity at its deepest corporate levels.** Since the entire family is summoned, the youth and older children have a very special privilege of being deeply touched by the solemnities of the day. In some churches, outside baby-sitters have been hired to look after infants and the smallest children so that parents can devote their full attention to the work of the day.

**10. A Solemn Assembly gives God an opportunity to respond to His people at a level He cannot possibly do when they are living in neglect of His Word or in direct violation of His commandments.** Historically, God has responded to Solemn Assemblies by sending fresh waves of blessings into both the personal and corporate lives of believers and on some occasions even, glorious revivals have resulted. One of the most amazing instances of this is the Revival of the General Assembly in the Church of Scotland in 1596.