



“Cultivate”

ASH WEDNESDAY BIBLE STUDY

6:30PM

A group of people, mostly of African descent, are shown from the chest up, sitting in a circle. They have their hands raised in a gesture of prayer or meditation. The background is softly blurred, showing more people in the same setting. The lighting is natural and soft, creating a serene atmosphere.

Ash Wednesday

WHAT ARE SPIRITUAL PRACTICES THAT YOU PARTICIPATE IN ON THIS DAY?

Joel 2:1-2, 12-17 (NIV)

1 Blow the trumpet in Zion;
 sound the alarm on my holy hill.

Let all who live in the land tremble,
 for the day of the LORD is coming.

It is close at hand—

² a day of darkness and gloom,
 a day of clouds and blackness.

Like dawn spreading across the mountains
 a large and mighty army comes,
such as never was in ancient times
 nor ever will be in ages to come.

Joel 2:1-2, 12-17 (NIV)

¹² “Even now,” declares the LORD,
“return to me with all your heart,
with fasting and weeping and mourning.”

¹³ Rend your heart
and not your garments.
Return to the LORD your God,
for he is gracious and compassionate,
slow to anger and abounding in love,
and he relents from sending calamity.

Joel 2:1-2, 12-17 (NIV)

¹⁴ Who knows? He may turn and relent
and leave behind a blessing—
grain offerings and drink offerings
for the LORD your God.

¹⁵ Blow the trumpet in Zion,
declare a holy fast,
call a sacred assembly.

¹⁶ Gather the people,
consecrate the assembly;
bring together the elders,
gather the children,

Joel 2:1-2, 12-17 (NIV)

those nursing at the breast.

Let the bridegroom leave his room
and the bride her chamber.

¹⁷ Let the priests, who minister before the LORD,
weep between the portico and the altar.

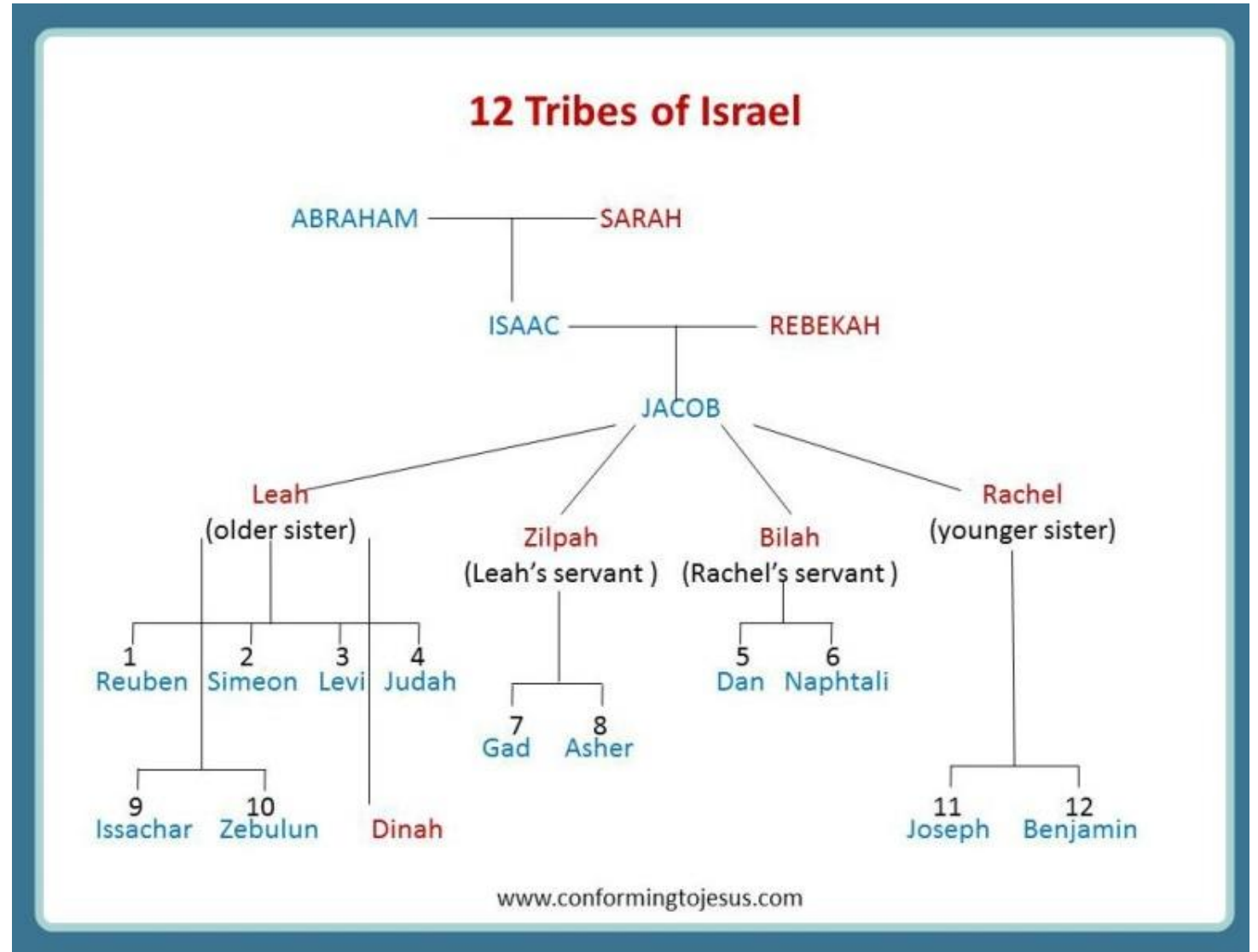
Let them say, "Spare your people, LORD.

Do not make your inheritance an object of scorn,
a byword among the nations.

Why should they say among the peoples,
'Where is their God?'"

Historical Context

- ❖ Prophet Joel is speaking to Judah during approximately 835-796 B.C.
- ❖ Kingdom has been separated into Southern and Northern Kingdoms
- ❖ Judah is the Northern Kingdom (Tribe of Benjamin and Judah) which stayed in the royal line of King David accepted Solomon's son Rehoboam as king.



Historical Context

- ❖ Judah was disobedient to God.
 - ❖ Self-centered
 - ❖ Idolatry
 - ❖ Taking God for granted
 - ❖ sin
- ❖ Joel warned Judah of God's impending judgement for their sins. At the beginning in chapter 1 Joel is describing the devastating effects of the locust plague and predicted that locust was the forerunner of a greater crisis if the people didn't turn from their sins.
- ❖ In Chapter 2- Joel calls the people to turn back to God in verse 12. (1. return to me with all your heart, 2. fasting, 3. weeping, 4. mourning/repentance (sackcloth and ashes)).

What is Ash Wednesday?

1. The beginning of Lent. Lent is a 40-day journey of fasting and prayer as we seek to draw near to the Lord.
2. A call to repentance, humility before God and confession.
3. Realization of our mortality and hope of eternal life in Christ.

Why Ashes?

Gen 3:19- you are dust and to dust you shall return.

Job 42:6- Therefore I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes.

Daniel 9:3- Then I turned my face to the Lord God, seeking him by prayer and supplications with fasting sackcloth and ashes.

Why Ashes?

An outward sign of an inward
journey with God.

Symbol

- Repentance
- Humility
- Mortality

Drawing near to God

Fasting

Matthew 6:16-18 (NIV)

¹⁶ “When you fast, do not look somber as the hypocrites do, for they disfigure their faces to show others they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward in full. ¹⁷ But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, ¹⁸ so that it will not be obvious to others that you are fasting, but only to your Father, who is unseen; and your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you.

What is fasting?

- Delighting in God
- Drawing our hearts, minds and souls closer to God through denying attention from one things to put it on God. (self denial)
- Surrendering our attention and intention for outside stimuli (social media, phones, sweets, coffee, tv.)
- Drawing closer to God with spiritual intention to flourish in your relationship with God
- A sacrifice to the point that in order to get through the fast you must seek and cling to God for strength
- It is a drawing of one's heart and mind deeper and deeper into awareness of God's

Examples

Esther 4:15-16- Then Esther sent this reply to Mordecai: “Go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maids will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the King, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish.”

Jonah 3: 6-10 ⁶When Jonah’s warning reached the king of Nineveh, he rose from his throne, took off his royal robes, covered himself with sackcloth and sat down in the dust. ⁷This is the proclamation he issued in Nineveh:

“By the decree of the king and his nobles:

Do not let people or animals, herds or flocks, taste anything; do not let them eat or drink. ⁸But let people and animals be covered with sackcloth. Let everyone call urgently on God. Let them give up their evil ways and their violence. ⁹Who knows? God may yet relent and with compassion turn from his fierce anger so that we will not perish.”

¹⁰When God saw what they did and how they turned from their evil ways, he relented and did not bring on them the destruction he had threatened.

Examples

Ezra 8:21-22- ²¹ Then I proclaimed a fast there at the river of Ahava, that we might humble ourselves before our God, to seek from Him the right way for us and our little ones and all our possessions. ²² For I was ashamed to request of the king an escort of soldiers and horsemen to help us against the enemy on the road, because we had spoken to the king, saying, “The hand of our God *is* upon all those for good who seek Him, but His power and His wrath *are* against all those who forsake Him.”

Daniel 1: 11-16- ¹¹ Daniel then said to the guard whom the chief official had appointed over Daniel, Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, ¹² “Please test your servants for ten days: Give us nothing but vegetables to eat and water to drink. ¹³ Then compare our appearance with that of the young men who eat the royal food, and treat your servants in accordance with what you see.” ¹⁴ So he agreed to this and tested them for ten days.

¹⁵ At the end of the ten days they looked healthier and better nourished than any of the young men who ate the royal food.

¹⁶ So the guard took away their choice food and the wine they were to drink and gave them vegetables instead.

Matthew 4:1-2- Then Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted^[a] by the devil. ² After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry.

What is your intention?

- What do you desire of the Lord?
- What do you need to let go of that will bring you closer to God?
- What do you need more of that will bring you closer to God?

- How do you want to use your time daily with God?

- **Intention = a goal, a focus, a plan**
 - Being in the presence of God regularly
 - Opening your heart to receive from God
 - Creating space in your schedule to commune with God.

Closing Meditation

