

**“If you will return, O Israel,” declares the Lord, “Then you should return to Me. And if you will put away your detested things from My presence, And will not waver, And you will swear, ‘As the Lord lives, In truth, in justice, and in righteousness; Then the nations will bless themselves in Him, and in Him they will glory.”**

Jeremiah 4:1, 2.

“Sorry” is a game manufactured by Parker Brothers that has been part of American family entertainment for more than 60 years. As each player advances on the board, he makes a distinct (and usually verbal) wish as the dice roll to absolutely demolish the other player by landing and sliding across the board and sending the poor guy back to a previous space where he has to work toward regaining his advantage. This deliberate attack is then mollified by an insincere and sappy “Sssssoooooorrrrry” accompanied by a ‘devilish’ grin. If you are the ‘victim’ of this type of purposeful attack, you know that the person is not really “Sorry”; in fact, they are not the least bit sorry and at the very next opportunity they are going to get you again.

So it is with understanding the difference between a Christian being sorry or truly repenting. If you sin and are sorry; odds are that you deliberately planned the sin (or had an opportunity to stop it). In likelihood, you may deliberately do it again even if you are really, really sorry. If you repent, you understand that you have sinned against God and will not only say you are sorry but you will turn away from the sin and not do it ever again. It’s not a game. Sorry isn’t enough. Your actions must reflect a change that restores honor to your commitment to God.

Repentance is an essential concept in achieving spiritual maturity. **Repentance is between God and us.** It is individual; it does not involve anyone else and **does not include the element of blame.** It is not simply saying I am sorry. It has a much deeper meaning.

Children learn at an early age to say, I’m sorry. This does not mean that they will not do it again; indeed, in most cases the offense is repeated. It primarily means that the child has been taught to apologize when they hurt someone or to say

‘I’m sorry’. Another way of saying I’m sorry, is to say I apologize, please accept my forgiveness. Sometimes when we apologize, we do it as a perfunctory gesture and other times we are deeply sorry. When we are deeply sorry we are expressing regret for hurting another. **Apologies are generally made between individuals or between groups.**

**Repentance on the other hand is primarily between each of us and God.** When we ask God for forgiveness we must do more than say, “I’m

sorry". It goes beyond the expression of regret because it recognizes that we **have committed a sin against God**. Committing a sin against God is the worst thing we can do. God requires more than the simple act of saying I'm sorry, he requires the shedding of blood to atone for sin. **The object of repenting is that you will turn away from sin and turn toward God**. It means not only that you are sorry and that you deeply regret the sin, but that you will turn away from the sin and not sin again. Please note that we should turn away from the sin not simply sin in general. God wants us to repent **individually for each sin** we commit.

That is why sacrifices or atonement was done over and over again. When the sin was repeated, repentance was once again necessary. In other words, a poor animal had to give up its life for the sin that was recommitted.

John the Baptist had one defining message. That message was **repent and be baptized**. John understood the importance of not only asking for forgiveness but of changing ones ways permanently. That is why when we baptize, we often use the words, "raised in newness of life." We bury the old self and we are raised (symbolically) as a new person.

Jesus appreciated John's message. Indeed, John was referred to as the messenger prophesied in Malachi 3:1; "Behold, I am going to send My messenger, and he will clear the way before Me." The messenger was John the Baptist as taught in Mark 1:1-4.

The importance of John's message was confirmed by Jesus when he stated in Luke 7:28; "I say to you, among those born of women, there is no one greater than John;" This confirms the importance of repentance.

In the OT two Greek words are translated 'repent.' These are **naham (be sorry, change one's mind)** and **sub (turn back, return)**. In the *New Bible Dictionary*, 2nd edition, Naham is used infrequently of man, (Exodus 13:17), but regularly of God, where it is often said that God 'repents of evil' proposed or initiated. This vigorous speech arises out of Israel's understanding of God's attitude to men in terms of personal relationship. The language of course did not imply anything fickle or arbitrary on God's side, but simply that the relationship was a changing one. In particular, **when man removes himself by his self-will from God's direction and care he finds that the God-willed consequence of his evil is more evil (Genesis 6:6f; 1 Samuel 15:11)**. But whoever repents, even at the eleventh hour, whoever turns (again) to God, finds a God of mercy and love not of judgment (Jeremiah 18:8; Jonah 3:9f).

The **call for repentance on the part of man is a call for him to return (sub) to his creaturely (and covenant) dependence on God**. Such calls are particularly frequent in the pre-exilic prophets. Amos 4:6-11 makes it clear that the evil that God intends as a consequence of Israel's sin is not malicious or vindictive, but rather is intended to bring Israel to repentance. **He who commits evil finds further evil willed by God. He who repents of his evil finds a God who repents of His evil (Hosea 6:1-3; 14:1-2)**.

This lesson precedes the lessons on prayer because repentance is fundamental to improving our prayer life. **Please note that in studying the OT the writers are dealing with the nation of Israel. In applying lessons given for the nation of Israel, substitute yourself for the nation and these lessons will provide you with individual applications.**

1. In preparation for this lesson, read Jeremiah 3:1 – 4:4. In the third and fourth chapters of Jeremiah, we can begin to understand what **repentance is in the OT** and the importance of the concept. The theme of these chapters is **A plea for Israel's repentance**.

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2. An excellent book to study OT repentance is the book of **Joel**. In the last lesson we learned; “Joel uses a present day plague to call God’s people to repentance. As he does this, Joel like the other prophets, **warns them of the coming day of the Lord** – a day that is as sure as the promises of God.” Joel’s name means the Lord (Yahweh) is God. Joel was probably a priest and a prophet of God. The events in Joel took place after the division of the kingdom. From *The Wycliffe Exegetical Commentary on Joel, Amos, Obadiah*, edited by Kenneth Barker, page 9, it states; “Joel moves his readers from horror and hopelessness to mourning and repentance, dread and awe, joy and assurance, hope and expectation. Though Joel the Lord promises dreams and visions with the coming of the Spirit, and already in the book itself one sees visions of locusts that are like lions and an invading army, a Temple that stands empty, a landscape stark as the surface of the moon, a darkness that overwhelms all light, a sky with perplexing signs, mountains with wine and milk pouring down their slopes, and a great judgment of nations in a large valley. Obviously one needs to approach the book with imagination and sensitivity for its poetic features.”
3. The basic message of Joel is; “The prophecy of Joel can be compared to two wheels turning on an axle. The wheels are history and eschatology (doctrine of the last things), while the axle is the Day of the Lord. Joel tells us in the first two chapters about a great locust plague and a consequent drought devastating the land of Judah. The effects were so severe that sacrifices could not be provided for the Temple. Was this a sign that God’s covenant with Israel had been broken? Did it mean that Judah herself would be swallowed up in the day of the Lord? Joel calls on the people to repent based on the covenant characteristics of the Lord – He is gracious, compassionate, slow to anger, abounding in loving kindness, ready to relent (2:13). If the Lord would relent, the people could hope for a replenishment of the discontinued grain offerings and libations. When the Lord responded to the people’s repentance, He renewed the covenant by promising restoration and future blessing.
4. The last part of the book (2:28-3:21) turns to a future time when the Lord will judge the nations and restore Judah and Jerusalem to great prosperity. The locust plague

had represented this future Day of the Lord as a type. By intertwining the concepts of judgment and the Lord's response to repentance, Joel stresses that, while that day will be utter blackness, God will hear those who call on Him. Thus, the response of the Lord to Judah's repentance during the locust plague also prefigures His response to all Israel in the last days. God will destroy the nations who have harmed Judah just as He destroyed the locust, and He will restore the fortunes of His people just as He made up for the devastation of the locusts.

5. Read Joel 1:1-14 Locusts in the Land.

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6. Read Joel 1:15-2:11 Judgment in the Land.

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7. Read Joel 2:12-27 Mercy in the Land.

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8. Read Joel 2:27-32 Wonders in the Earth.

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9. Read Joel 3:1-21 Judgment in the Earth.

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10. **New Testament.** In the words translated ‘repent’ are the Greek words ‘**metanoeo**’ and ‘**metamelomai**’. They mean to change one’s mind and also to **feel deep regret for ones’ actions. There is a feeling of sincere remorse.** The better translation of ‘**metanoeo**’ is to convert or to turn around.

10.1. Read 2 Corinthians 7:8-10. *“For though I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it; though I did regret it – for I see that that letter caused you sorrow, though only for a while /I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to the point of repentance; for you were made sorrowful according to the will of God, so that you might not suffer loss in anything through us./ For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death.*

11. Sometimes as Christians we get full of ourselves and don’t have the right attitude toward God and our neighbors. Read Luke 18:9-14. Jesus is telling this parable. He is teaching the attitude one should have in regards to repentance. *“And He also told this parable to some people who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and viewed others with contempt: /’Two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector./The Pharisee stood and was praying this to himself: “God, I thank You that I am not like other people: swindlers, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. /I fast twice a week; I pay tithes of all that I get.” /But the tax collector, standing some distance away, was even unwilling to lift up his eyes to heaven, but was beating his breast, saying, “God, be merciful to me, the sinner! /I tell you, this man went to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but he who humbles himself will be exalted.”*

11.1. What was the difference between the Pharisee and the tax-gatherer? \_\_\_\_\_

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11.2. Describe the tax-gatherer’s repentance. \_\_\_\_\_

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12. Repentance was so important to John the Baptist, the last prophet, **that he required a public ceremony to mark the event.** Baptism itself does not save us or change us, but it is a sign of obeying the will of God. It is an act of obedience. In Matthew 21:23-27 the chief priests tried to trick Jesus by asking him a difficult question.

12.1. Read Matthew 21:23-24 *“When He entered the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came to Him while He was teaching, and said, ‘By what authority are You doing these things, and who gave You this authority?’ /Jesus said to them, ‘I will also ask you one thing, which if you tell Me, I will also tell you by what authority I do these things.’”*

12.2. Jesus went on to tell the parable of the two sons. This parable teaches the unworthiness of these religious leaders, but is also an example of true repentance. Read Matthew 21:28-32 *“But what do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, ‘Son, go work today in the vineyard.’ /And he answered, ‘I will not’ but afterward he regretted it and went./The man came to the second and said the same thing; and he answered, ‘I will, sir’ but he did not go. /Which of the two did the will of his father? They said, ‘The first.’ Jesus said to them, “Truly I say to you that the tax collectors and prostitutes will get into the kingdom of God before you. / For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him; but the tax collectors and prostitutes did believe him; and you, seeing this, did not even feel remorse afterward so as to believe him.”*

12.2.1. What was the difference between the two sons? \_\_\_\_\_  
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13. Peter taught the first Christians to repent. Read Acts 2:38-42. \_\_\_\_\_  
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14. Paul teaches us in 2 Corinthians 7:1-12 many lessons about repentance and turning toward God. Read this section and record your thoughts. *“THEREFORE, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God. /Make room for us in your hearts; we wronged no one, we corrupted no one, we took advantage of no one./ I do not speak to condemn you, for I have said before that you are in our hearts to die together and to live together. /Great is my confidence in you; great is my boasting on your behalf. I am filled with comfort; I am overflowing with joy in all our affliction. /For even when we came into Macedonia our flesh had no rest, but we were afflicted on every side: conflicts without,*



*fears within. /But God, who comforts the depressed, comforted us by the coming of Titus; /and not only by his coming, but also by the comfort with which he was comforted in you, as he reported to us your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me; so that I rejoiced even more. /For though I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it; though I did regret it -- for I see that that letter caused you sorrow, though only for a while -- /I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to the point of repentance; for you were made sorrowful according to the will of God, so that you might not suffer loss in anything through us. /For the sorrow that is according to the will of God produces a repentance without regret, leading to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death. /For behold what earnestness this very thing, this godly sorrow, has produced in you: what vindication of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what avenging of wrong! In everything you demonstrated yourselves to be innocent in the matter. /So although I wrote to you, it was not for the sake of the offender nor for the sake of the one offended, but that your earnestness on our behalf might be made known to you in the sight of God.”*

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15. Lastly how should we respond when someone repents of his or her sin? Remember, repentance is primarily between God, and us, however, **if God can forgive, surely we can also.** Read Luke 17:3-4. \_\_\_\_\_

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16. **Summary:** Understanding the concept of repentance and successfully executing repentance is key to our relationship with God. We can spend many hours in prayer, however, when there is sin in our lives, or sin for which we have not made a serious effort to repent, our prayers can be hindered.

Studying the OT in seeing how God loves, judges and helps the nation of Israel can be applied to each of our individual lives. Substitute yourself for the nation of Israel in your study of the OT and see how this information can be applied to your life.



During the week read/sing the following song as a reminder of this lesson.

### One Holy Lamb - Phil Cross and Cindi Ballard

Atonement day, a shepherd cries, another spotless lamb must die, oh how could just one sacrifice, Jehovah God, satisfy? Year after year the blood would flow, but none could wash me white as snow, salvations day fulfilled the plan, the promise came One Holy Lamb.

Atonement Day, the Father cries, the spotless Son of Man must die, One final death for every man, one blood, one life One Holy Lamb. One Holy Lamb washed my sin away, one sacrifice paid a price I could not pay, One Holy Lamb, One Great I am, One seed of Abraham, One Holy Lamb washed my sin away.