

Judgment of Nations; Future Blessings for Israel

Joel 3:12-21

Joel 3:12-21 - *“Let the nations be wakened, and come up to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; for there I will sit to judge all the surrounding nations. ¹³ Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, go down; for the winepress is full, the vats overflow for their wickedness is great.” ¹⁴ Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision. ¹⁵ The sun and moon will grow dark, and the stars will diminish their brightness.*

¹⁶ The LORD also will roar from Zion, and utter His voice from Jerusalem; the heavens and earth will shake; but the LORD will be a shelter for His people, and the strength of the children of Israel. ¹⁷ “So you shall know that I am the LORD your God, dwelling in Zion My holy mountain. Then Jerusalem shall be holy, and no aliens shall ever pass through her again.” ¹⁸ And it will come to pass in that day that the mountains shall drip with new wine, The hills shall flow with milk, and all the brooks of Judah shall be flooded with water; A fountain shall flow from the house of the LORD And water the Valley of Acacias.

¹⁹ “Egypt shall be a desolation, and Edom a desolate wilderness, because of violence against the people of Judah, for they have shed innocent blood in their land.

²⁰ But Judah shall abide forever, and Jerusalem from generation to generation.

²¹ For I will acquit them of the guilt of bloodshed, whom I had not acquitted; for the LORD dwells in Zion.”

Background Notes

“The Day of the Lord” is a topic that is found frequently in the prophets of the Old Testament. In fact, it is found in half of the prophetic books of the Old Testament. “The Day of the Lord” is found in six of the minor prophets, and it is the theme of Zephaniah and Joel.

“The Day of the Lord” refers to any time that the Lord of Heaven intervenes in the affairs of man on earth, especially in reference to the nations. Some of the Day of the Lord prophecies in the Old Testament have been fulfilled in the past, but most of them await to be fulfilled in the End Times. However, whether the Day of the Lord prophecies were fulfilled in history or whether they will be fulfilled in the future, from the prophet’s point of view the Day of the Lord was *near*. Notice verse 14: *“For the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision.”*

Even though Joel’s “Day of the Lord prophecies” are yet to be fulfilled in the future, from the prophet’s point of view the Day of the Lord was imminent. The events could happen in the near future, but not necessarily - the prophet didn’t know exactly when it would take place. The prophets didn’t give a time schedule for their Day of the Lord prophecies. Only

now, in New Testament times, can we look back and sort out the Day of the Lord prophecies. We can now see what prophecies have been fulfilled, what prophecies have been partially fulfilled, and what is yet to be fulfilled.

Another point to keep in mind is that many times the historical fulfillment (or partial fulfillment) of the Day of the Lord prophecy was an illustration of how God will fulfill the future Day of the Lord prophecies.

The future Day of the Lord prophecies are divided into prophecies of judgment and prophecies of blessing. The prophecies of judgment will take place during the future Tribulation period, after the Rapture of the Church. The prophecies of blessing will take place during the future millennial kingdom of Christ, after the Tribulation. The last half of Joel 3 describes both the prophecies of judgment and the prophecies of blessing.

Doctrinal Points

1. The future day of the Lord will mean judgment for the nations (v1-16).

In the verses that we've just read continue what we studied earlier in the chapter - the judgment of the nations. Look back at verses 1-2: *"For behold, in those days and at that time, when I bring back the captives of Judah and Jerusalem, I will also gather all nations, and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; And I will enter into judgment with them there on account of My people, My heritage Israel."* And verse 12: *"Let the nations be wakened, and come up to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; For there I will sit to judge all the surrounding nations."*

This is the judgment of the nations that will follow the great "Battle of Armageddon," at the end of the seven-year Tribulation period. In Matthew 25, the Lord referred to this judgment of the nations as the "judgment of the sheep and the goats."

Notice that the Valley of Jehoshaphat, where this judgment will take place, is also called the "Valley of Decision." It is not called the "Valley of Decision" because those gathered there will have a second chance to make a decision. No! It's called the Valley of Decision because the Lord will decide whether the people gathered there are "sheep" or "goats," and whether they will enter Heaven or not.

This judgment will be based on how the people of these nations treated the Lord's chosen people, the Jewish people (see v2 and Matthew 25). This is not just about anti-Semitism. This has to do with their response to the believing Jewish remnant of the last days – especially their response to the message of that believing remnant of the Jewish people. Look at the last verse of Joel 2: *"For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be deliverance, as the LORD has said, among the remnant whom the LORD calls."*

Those who stand against the antichrist of the last days in order to help this believing Jewish remnant will be risking their lives. This will certainly be evidence of true faith. Notice that “*multitudes*” will be in the Valley of Decision (v14). This emphasizes that the sheep and the goats are not entire nations, but rather are individuals within the nations.

Notice how verses 15-16 fit in with how our Lord described His second coming in His Olivet Discourse, in Matthew 24:29-39: “*Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.*” The future day of the Lord will mean judgment for the nations.

2. The future day of the Lord will mean blessing for Israel.

In verses 17-21 we have a wonderful description of the millennial blessings that will come to the Land and the people of Israel in the future. The term “millennial kingdom” refers to the 1000-year reign of Christ on this earth, following the Tribulation period. The terms “Israel,” “Judah,” and “Jerusalem” refer to the **literal** nation of Israel, and the **literal** area of Judah, and the **literal** city of Jerusalem. These blessings are not to be taken from Israel and spiritualized away to the Church (as some Christians do). No! These are literal blessings for the believing nation of Israel during Christ’s future kingdom on earth.

Joel 3:17 says, “*then Jerusalem shall be holy and no alien shall ever pass through her again.*” This doesn’t mean that no Gentiles will be ever allowed to enter the New Jerusalem. It means that no foreigners will ever invade and overrun Jerusalem again. Jerusalem has been attacked and invaded many times throughout history – perhaps more than any other city on earth - but once the Lord returns and sets up His kingdom, that will never happen again! Egypt and Edom - and any other nation that opposes God’s plans for Israel - will reap what they have sown (v19).

Verse 18 describes the productivity of the land of Israel during the Lord’s millennial kingdom. Notice that water will flow from the Temple area in Jerusalem to irrigate the land. “*A fountain shall flow from the house of the Lord and water the Valley of Acacias.*”

Ezekiel 47 and Zechariah 14 also mention these waters. Zechariah 14:8, “*And in that day, it shall be that living waters shall flow from Jerusalem, half of them towards the eastern sea, (or the Dead Sea), and half of them toward the western sea, (or the Mediterranean Sea), in both summer and winter it shall occur.*”

Once again, these waters are **not** to be spiritualized away from Israel and made out to be “the gospel stream going out from the church today.” No! This prophecy is not describing the Church today. This water will be **literal water** flowing out from **literal Jerusalem** and making the **literal Judean wilderness** blossom like a rose! It is speaking of the future in the Land of Israel, when the Lord returns to set up His earthly kingdom, with His headquarters in the New Jerusalem. All these prophecies will **literally** take place at that future time.

Verse 21 has been translated several different ways in various translations. In view of the context, I think the point here is that God will avenge for all the wrong done to His people throughout history. The nations will be judged and Israel will be blessed. In the future Day of the Lord, there will be blessing for Israel.

Practical Application

Make your decision - before the Lord makes *His* decision.

Verse 14 once again: "*Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision.*"

The people gathered there will not be the ones making the decisions in the future "Valley of Decision." They will not be deciding whether or not they'll follow the Lord. No! At that time it will be too late for them to make that decision. The "decision" in the Valley of Decision will be the **Lord's** decision about which people in these multitudes will get into Heaven - and who won't. (Read Matthew 25:31 and following.)

Right now, the door of decision to follow the Lord Jesus is still open. 2 Corinthians 6:2 says, "*Now is the accepted time. Behold, now is the day of salvation.*" Is it possible that you're still not a believer? Maybe you think you have all the time in the world to make your decision – but you don't! Your life could end suddenly and unexpectedly. The Lord could come back at any time. Your heart could become hardened and unresponsive to the gospel message. There does come a time when it is **too late** - and there is no second chance!

When that future Valley of Decision takes place, you can be sure that it will be too late for the individuals gathered there to make a decision - or to change their decision. And it's just as sure that there will come a point in time when it's too late for you.

Make sure you decide now, while the door of decision is still open. Make your decision - before the Lord makes *His* decision!