

JOEL

Chapter 3

Introduction

You won't find the valley in chapter three on any maps of the Holy Land. It is not on any maps because it has yet to be formed! Bible commentators believe it will be formed at the Second Coming of Jesus, when He sets foot again on this earth. In Zechariah 14:4 you read,

Zechariah 14:4 And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, from east to west, *making* a very large valley; half of the mountain shall move toward the north and half of it toward the south.

It is twice in our text called "the Valley of Jehoshaphat," and twice called "the valley of decision." "Jehoshaphat" means *the Lord judges*. The valley formed by the return of Jesus to earth is where He will sit as Judge over the nations of the world and render His final decision. His decision will determine whether or not a person will enter into the kingdom He will establish on the earth after His Second Coming. The kingdom is described in verses seventeen through twenty-one.

You **do not** want to be in this valley of decision! Many will be condemned in that day. Jesus will say to them,

Matthew 25:41 "...Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels..."

True, there are also many to whom Jesus will say,

Matthew 25:34 "...Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world..."

These, however, will have to first survive the terror of the seven-year Great Tribulation on earth preceding the Second Coming of Jesus. So, either way, you **do not** want to be in the valley of decision.

The good news is that you don't need to be there! If you believe Jesus for your salvation today and are born-again, your destination is

heaven. You will be *resurrected* or *raptured* to heaven prior to the Great Tribulation.

Keep your destination in mind as we look at Joel chapter three. We'll organize our thoughts around two points: #1 The Lord Wants You To Determine Your Destination Before He Returns To The Valley Of Decision, and #2 The Lord Wants You To Delight In Your Destiny After He Returns To The Valley Of Decision.

#1 The Lord Wants You To Determine Your Destination Before He Returns To The Valley Of Decision (v1-16)

Joel was the prophet who introduced the theme of the Day of the Lord. The Day of the Lord is that future period of time prophesied in the Bible which begins with the Great Tribulation and includes the Second Coming of Jesus and the one thousand year kingdom of heaven on the earth.

As the chapter begins, you see how close we are to the return of Jesus to earth:

Joel 3:1 "For behold, in those days and at that time, when I bring back the captives of Judah and Jerusalem,"

The Lord specifies the "time." It is after the Jews have returned to their land. That statement should send shivers up your spine – either shivers of *delight* or of *doom*. The Jews **have** been brought back to their land! After nearly two thousand years of wandering through the world, with no home, and under intense and brutal persecution – the Jews returned to their land on May 14, 1948. It was a miraculous fulfillment of Bible prophecy.

God declares in the Bible that in the Last Days, before the return of their Messiah, Israel will have been scattered but will be regathered as a nation to their land. Let me quote just two of the many passages:

Ezekiel 20:33 "As I live," says the Lord GOD, "surely..."

Ezekiel 20:34 I will bring you out from the peoples and gather you out of the countries where you are scattered, with a mighty hand, with an outstretched arm, and with fury poured out..."

Isaiah 11:11 "It shall come to pass in that day *that* the Lord shall set His hand again the second time to recover the remnant of His people
Isaiah 11:12 "...And will assemble the outcasts of Israel, and gather together the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth."

Our passage further specifies the exact time when it says,

Joel 3:2 "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, whom they have scattered among the nations; they have also divided up My land."

The gathering of the nations of the world for judgment occurs after the Second Coming of Jesus to the earth. It is described in both Matthew twenty-five and Revelation nineteen.

Jesus will judge the nations based on their treatment of the Jews throughout history, and especially during the seven years of the Great Tribulation. This is one very practical reason why the United States should remain a friend to Israel.

Author Dave Hunt writes,

"It is indisputable that the hatred and persecution [against the Jews] which is universally known as anti-Semitism goes far beyond the brutalization and mistreatment (in its intensity, duration, and universality) experienced by any other... ethnic group."¹

There are a multitude of atrocities we could list. Verse three puts centuries of anti-Semitism into symbols:

Joel 3:3 "They have cast lots for My people, have given a boy *as payment* for a harlot, and sold a girl for wine, that they may drink."

Jews were treated as *property*, not *people*. Even Jewish children, innocent of any crime, were nothing more than objects to be bartered for the basest desires. Watch *Life is Beautiful* and you'll understand the symbolism in this verse.

In verses four through eight you are given a historical account of anti-Semitism:

Joel 3:4 "Indeed, what have you to do with Me, O Tyre and Sidon, and all the coasts of Philistia? Will you retaliate against Me? But if you retaliate against Me, swiftly and speedily I will return your retaliation upon your own head;

¹ *A Cup of Trembling*, p. 149.

Joel 3:5 Because you have taken My silver and My gold, and have carried into your temples My prized possessions.

Joel 3:6 Also the people of Judah and the people of Jerusalem you have sold to the Greeks, that you may remove them far from their borders.

Joel 3:7 "Behold, I will raise them out of the place to which you have sold them, and will return your retaliation upon your own head.

Joel 3:8 "I will sell your sons and your daughters into the hand of the people of Judah, and they will sell them to the Sabeans, to a people far off; for the LORD has spoken."

God's prophesied judgement against Tyre and Sidon was literally fulfilled. The slave trade of Jews happened in conjunction with the fall of Jerusalem to Babylon in the sixth century. In the fourth century the people of Sidon were themselves sold into slavery by Antiochus the Third, and the people of Tyre were enslaved by Alexander the Great.

These verses are interjected here to establish that the prophecies of the future valley of decision will likewise be literally fulfilled!

The Lord will return to judge the nations of the world. When He does, they will attempt to make war with Him. You know it as the Battle of Armageddon, and it is described in verses nine through eleven.

Joel 3:9 Proclaim this among the nations: "Prepare for war! Wake up the mighty men, let all the men of war draw near, let them come up.

Joel 3:10 Beat your plowshares into swords and your pruning hooks into spears; let the weak say, 'I *am* strong.'"

Joel 3:11 Assemble and come, all you nations, and gather together all around. Cause Your mighty ones to go down there, O LORD.

The closing months of the seven year Great Tribulation will feature great military activity on earth. There will be a series of battles in the Middle East. In Revelation chapter sixteen you read that God will supernaturally draw all of the armies of the world to Megiddo. Then, in Revelation chapter nineteen you have a description of the Second Coming of Jesus to earth.

Jesus will return with His Church in the midst of this great battle on earth. The armies of the world will be engaged against one another, but as Jesus returns, they will join forces to fight against Him.

Joel 3:12 "Let the nations be wakened, and come up to the Valley of Jehoshaphat; for there I will sit to judge all the surrounding nations.

Joel 3:13 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."

Joel 3:14 Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision.

Joel 3:15 The sun and moon will grow dark, and the stars will diminish their brightness.

Joel 3:16 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.

This is the Battle of Armageddon at the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. When Jesus comes back to earth, He will be accompanied by an army:

Revelation 19:11 Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war.

Revelation 19:12 His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself.

Revelation 19:13 He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God.

Revelation 19:14 And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses.

Revelation 19:15 Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God.

Revelation 19:16 ¹⁶And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.

Who is in the “armies in heaven?” It may include angels; but it certainly includes saints of the Church Age. The saints of the Church Age are described a few verses earlier in Revelation chapter nineteen as the bride of Jesus Christ, “arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints” (19:8).

Jesus comes **with** His army – **with** you and I – not **for** us. We are **not** on the earth at all during the Great Tribulation. Jesus will return to resurrect and rapture His bride from the earth to be with Him in heaven *prior* to the events of the seven year Great Tribulation on earth. **Then** He will return in His Second Coming with us at the end of the Great Tribulation to the Battle of Armageddon. **Then** He will judge the nations of the world in the valley of decision.

The details of His judgement are in Matthew 25:31-46. I need to read the entire passage to you.

Matthew 25:31 “When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory.

Matthew 25:32 All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides *his* sheep from the goats.

Matthew 25:33 And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left.

Matthew 25:34 Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:
Matthew 25:35 for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in;
Matthew 25:36 I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.'
Matthew 25:37 "Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink?
Matthew 25:38 When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You?
Matthew 25:39 Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?'
Matthew 25:40 And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did *it* to one of the least of these My brethren, you did *it* to Me.'
Matthew 25:41 "Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels:
Matthew 25:42 for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink;
Matthew 25:43 I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.'
Matthew 25:44 "Then they also will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?'
Matthew 25:45 Then He will answer them, saying, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do *it* to one of the least of these, you did not do *it* to Me.'
Matthew 25:46 And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life."

The judgement will be based upon how the nations, and the individuals in those nations, treated the Jews during the seven-year Great Tribulation. Those who survive the Tribulation and who pass this judgement will enter into the kingdom that Jesus establishes on the earth after this judgement. It is the Millennial Kingdom, the one thousand year reign of Jesus you read about in Revelation chapter twenty.

All of these details are clear and beyond doubt. You should see the importance of determining your destination **well before** the Lord returns to the Valley of Decision. You can determine it now.

If you believe Jesus for salvation and are born-again, your destination is heaven. If you die, you will be absent from your body and present with the Lord. When He comes to gather His Church to heaven, your body will be resurrected. If you are alive at His return for the Church, your body will be changed and you will be raptured.

If, however, you wait, and the rapture occurs... Then you must survive the intense persecution of the Great Tribulation in order to enter into the Kingdom of Heaven in your current body. While that will be glorious, it is unnecessary. You can know Jesus now, today.

The one-thousand year reign of Jesus on earth will be glorious:

#2 The Lord Wants You To Delight In Your Destiny
After He Returns To The Valley Of Decision
(v17-21)

You saw in Matthew twenty-five that after the judgement many entered into “the kingdom.” This is not heaven. It is a literal kingdom on the earth. You know it as the Millennium, which is Latin for “one thousand.” It is the one thousand year kingdom on earth of Revelation chapter twenty. The Old Testament is filled with references and descriptions of it. The Jews so expected it that, after His resurrection, the disciples of Jesus asked Him if He was immediately going to set-up His kingdom on the earth. It is a real, literal time during which Jesus Christ will rule the earth from Jerusalem.

Joel said,

Joel 3:17 “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.”

Joel 3:18 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.

These are real, literal promises. You know Joel was not describing heaven because he went on to say,

Joel 3:19 “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.

Joel 3:20 But Judah shall abide forever, and Jerusalem from generation to generation.”

This could not be heaven! This is earth during the Millennium. The nations of Egypt and Edom will be judged into the Millennium for their treatment of the Jews.

There is a growing trend among Christians today away from the clear biblical promises of a literal one thousand year kingdom on the earth. This trend first began in the third and fourth centuries, but it is gaining popularity today. There are those who see the millennium as a figure or allegory or symbol; for them, the millennium is right now, between the first and second comings of Jesus. Others teach that Jesus will return only after the Church has conquered the world and established

conditions on the earth that are like those promised in the millennial passages of Scripture.

I only want to say this about those beliefs: They ignore the nation of Israel and God's promises to His chosen people. If the basis of the Lord's judgement at His Second Coming is how you treated the Jews... *I'd hate to hold a position that ignored the Jews!*

There **will** be a one-thousand year reign of Jesus Christ on the earth. The Church **will** be resurrected and raptured to heaven; the seven year Great Tribulation **will** unfold, seal-by-seal and trumpet-by-trumpet and bowl-by-bowl. Jesus Christ, your Savior and Israel's Messiah, **will** return to earth in His Second Coming at the Battle of Armageddon. He **will** judge the nations in the Valley of Decision. There **will** be a kingdom on earth.

If you are a believer, your destiny is something to delight in!

Conclusion

Joel ends saying,

Joel 3:21 "For I will acquit them of the guilt of bloodshed, whom I had not acquitted; for the LORD dwells in Zion."

Bible commentators disagree on the exact meaning of this verse. It seems that the translation into English is difficult. The words can mean that God will avenge His people, Israel, against the nations of the world who have mistreated the Jews. It can also mean that God will clear Israel of their guilt of rejecting their Messiah and shedding His blood.

In making application of this, we could say that the Lord's blood was shed *by you and for you*:

1. His blood was shed by you. It was your sin that He took upon Himself on the Cross of Calvary.
2. His blood was shed for you. On the Cross He paid the penalty for your sin that you might be declared righteous by God and receive eternal life.

Determine your destination and begin to delight in your destiny!

