

Book of Joel

Chapter 3:1-21

The Setting of the Judgment

(Joel 3:1-2b – Gilliland)

¹*For behold, in those days and at that time, when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem,* ²*I will gather all the nations and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat. Then I will enter into judgment with them there on behalf of My people and My inheritance, Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations; and they have divided up My land.*

For > (Pusey) The prophet by the word, "for," shows that he is about to explain in detail, what he had before spoken of (Joel 2:18-31), in sum.

Hubbard > Like a photographer, Joel has used a wide-angle lens for the overall picture in Joel 2:30-32. Then he zooms in for a close look at the Day of the Lord, with its mixture of judgment and grace, in chapter three

Gilliland has the following outline of Joel 3:1-17 ... A Day of Retribution

- The Setting of the Judgment (Joel 3:1-2b)
- The Sins requiring Judgment (Joel 3:2c-8)
- The Summons to Judgment (Joel 3:9-12)
- The Sentence of Judgment (Joel 3:13-17).

Behold > (Precept Austin) What follows is of great import. In fact, what follows summarizes the judgment of the world as we know it, so it is worthy reading with utmost attention.

In those days and at that time > The ultimate "Day of the Lord"

Jeremiah 33:15 > ¹⁵ *In those days and at that time I will make a righteous Branch of David sprout; and He shall execute justice and righteousness on the earth.*

Jeremiah 50:4 > ⁴ *"In those days and at that time," declares the LORD, "the sons of Israel will come, they and the sons of Judah as well; they will go along weeping as they go, and it will be the LORD their God whom they will seek.*

Jeremiah 50:20 > ²⁰ *In those days and at that time,' declares the LORD, 'search will be made for the wrongdoing of Israel, but there will be none; and for the sins of Judah, but they will not be found; for I will forgive those whom I leave as a remnant.'*

Daniel 12:1 > *“Now at that time Michael, the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people, will arise. And there will be a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time; and at that time your people, everyone who is found written in the book, will be rescued.*

Zephaniah > 3:19-20 > *Behold, I am going to deal at that time with all your oppressors; I will save those who limp and gather the scattered, and I will turn their shame into praise and fame in all the earth. ²⁰ At that time I will bring you in, even at the time when I gather you together; indeed, I will make you famous and praiseworthy among all the peoples of the earth, when I restore your fortunes before your eyes,” says the LORD.*

Zechariah 8:23 > ²³ *The LORD of armies says this: ‘In those days ten people from all the nations will grasp the garment of a Jew, saying, “Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.”’*

Restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem > (Wiersbe) The phrase “bring again the captivity” (KJV ... 3:1) means “reverse the fortunes” or “restore the fortunes” (NIV).

Jehoshaphat > (Strong’s) “The LORD has judged”

Valley of Jehoshaphat > (Clarke) There is no such valley in the land of Judea; and hence the word must be symbolical.

Utley > I personally believe that this is not so much a geographical location related to King Jehoshaphat as it is a play on the word "Jehoshaphat."

Constable > When God would restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem in that future day (cf. Deuteronomy 30:3), He would gather the other nations to the valley of Jehoshaphat (lit. "Yahweh judges"). If this is a geographical location this is the only passage in Scripture that names the site of this judgment (cf. Zechariah 14:3-5). Its exact location is debatable since no valley by this name appears elsewhere in Scripture (cf. Joel 3:12; Joel 3:14). Many interpreters believe it is the valley of Jezreel just north and east of the Mt. Carmel range. Another view, which seems preferable to me, is that Joel was referring, in a more general sense, to the place where God will judge the nations.

The Sins Requiring Judgment

(Joel 3:2c-8 – Gilliland)

Enter into judgment > (Precept Austin) (The Hebrew word) is a verb that means to judge or govern and here means to execute justice, i.e., obtain justice and rightness to one who has been wronged, in this case the nation of Israel

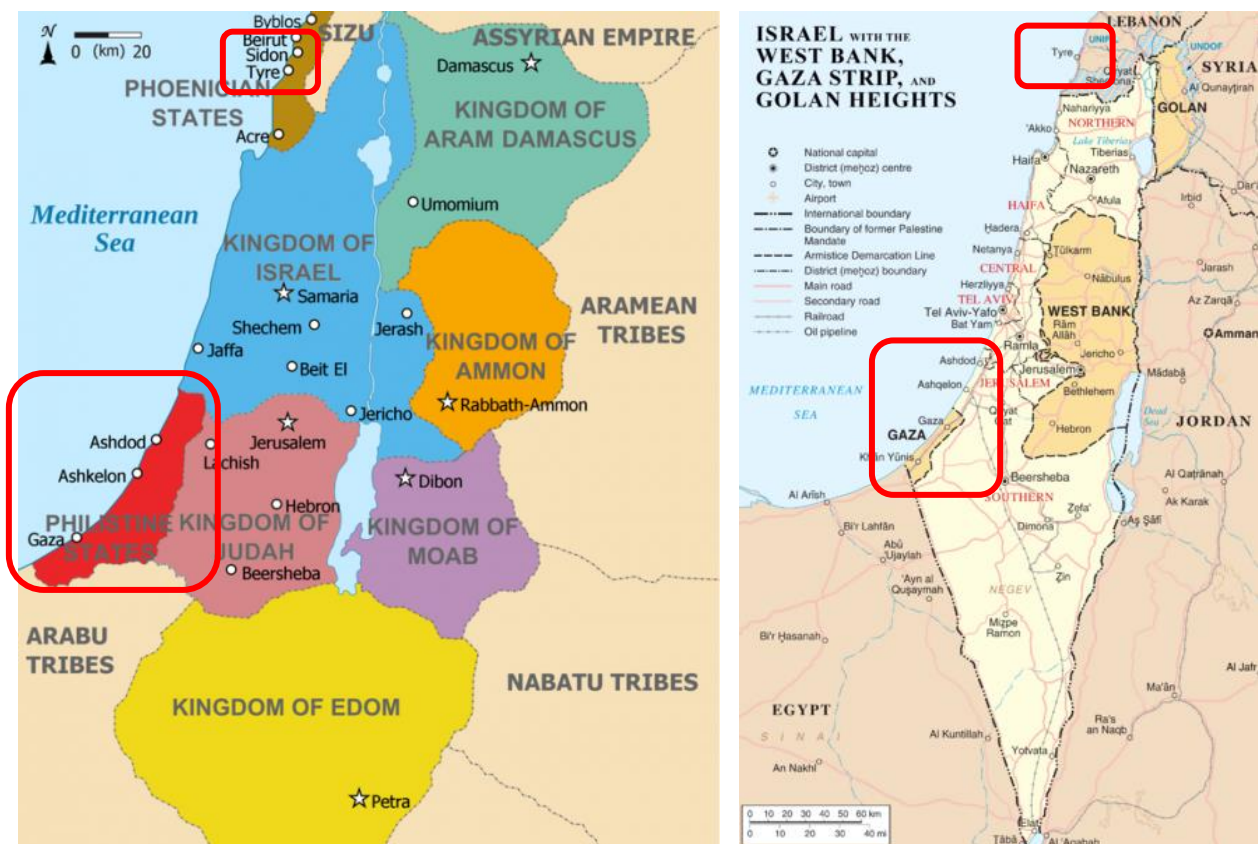
³ *They have also cast lots for My people, traded a boy for a prostitute, and sold a girl for wine so that they may drink.*

They have also cast lots ... > (NET Note) Joel vividly refers to a situation where innocent human life has little value; its only worth is its use in somehow satisfying selfish appetites of wicked people who have control over others (cf. Amos 2:6 and Amos 8:6)

⁴ *Moreover, what are you to Me, Tyre, Sidon, and all the regions of Philistia? Are you repaying Me with **retribution**? But if you are showing Me retribution, swiftly and speedily I will return your retribution on your head!*

Moreover, what are you to Me > (Barnes) Literally “and also, what are ye to Me?”

Retribution > (Strong’s) An act (of good or ill); by implication, service or requital



⁵ *Since you have taken **My silver and My gold**, brought **My precious treasures to your temples**, ⁶ **and sold the sons of Judah and Jerusalem to the Greeks in order to remove them far from their territory,***

Since you have taken My silver ... > (Precept Austin)

II Chronicles 21:16-17 > *and they came against Judah and invaded it, and carried away all the possessions found in the king’s house together with his sons and his wives, so that no son was left to him except Jehoahaz, the youngest of his sons.*

II Kings 12:18 > So Jehoash king of Judah took all the sacred offerings that Jehoshaphat, Jehoram, and Ahaziah, his fathers, kings of Judah, had consecrated, and his own sacred offerings, and all the gold that was found among the treasuries of the house of the LORD and of the king's house, and sent them to Hazael king of Aram.

II Kings 16:8 > ⁸ And Ahaz took the silver and gold that was found in the house of the LORD and in the treasuries of the king's house, and sent a gift to the king of Assyria.

II Kings 18:15-16 > So the king of Assyria imposed on Hezekiah king of Judah the payment of three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold. ¹⁵ Hezekiah then gave him all the silver that was found in the house of the LORD, and in the treasuries of the king's house.

And sold the sons of Judah ... > (Barnes) This sin of the Tyrians was probably old and inveterate. The Tyrians, as they were the great carriers of the world's traffic, so they were slave-dealers, and, in the earliest times, men-stealers ... The Tyrian merchants were "the" connecting link between Palestine and the coasts of Asia Minor ... In yet later times the Tyrian merchants followed, like vultures, on the rear of armies to make a prey of the living, as the vultures of the dead ... In the wars of the Maccabees, at Nicanor's proclamation, a thousand (2 Macc. 8:34) merchants gathered to the camp of Gorgias "with silver and gold, very much, to buy the children of Israel as slaves" (1 Macc. 3:41), and with chains, wherewith to secure them.

⁷ *behold, I am going to stir them up from the place where you have sold them and return your retribution on your head. **⁸I will also sell your sons and your daughters into the hand of the sons of Judah, and they will sell them to the Sabeans, to a distant nation,**" for the LORD has spoken.*

I will also sell your sons ... > (Clarke) When Alexander took Tyre, he reduced into slavery all the lower people, and the women. Arrian, lib. ii., says that thirty thousand of them were sold. Artaxerxes Ochus destroyed Sidon and subdued the other cities of Phoenicia. In all these wars, says Calmet, the Jews, who obeyed the Persians, did not neglect to purchase Phoenician slaves, whom they sold again to the Sabeans, or Arabs.

Sabeans > (Precept Austin) The Sabeans were an ancient people group mentioned in the Bible as coming from a nation far away from Israel (Joel 3:8). They were a people of stature (Isaiah 45:14) and a rival nation to Israel (Job 1:15). The Sabeans lived in the land of Sheba, which archeology suggests was a Semitic trading state that existed for 1,000 years in the area that is now **Yemen**. The capital of Sheba was called Marib (or Ma'rib), and the kingdom existed from 1200 BC to AD 275, trading primarily in spices.



The Summons to Judgment
(Joel 3:9-12– Gilliland)

⁹ *Proclaim this among the nations: Prepare for **holy war**; stir up the warriors! Have all the soldiers come forward, have them come up!*

Holy war > (Barnes) Literally, "hallow, war." To "hallow war" was to make it holy, either in appearance in truth, as the prophet bade them, "sanctify a fast," i. e., keep it holily.

Precept Austin > This is not just "**A war**," not just any war, but "**THE war**" of all wars, the last battle of human history, the Campaign of Armageddon.

Utley > This call to arms has several commands (Imperative mode in the Hebrew)

Proclaim (vs 9), **Prepare** (vs 9), **Rouse** (vs 9), **Let all the soldiers draw near** (vs 9), **Let them come up** (vs 9), **Beat your plowshares** (vs 10), **Let the weak say** (vs 10), **Hasten** (vs 10), **Come** (vs 11), **Gather yourselves there** (vs 11), **Bring down** (vs 11), **Let the nations be aroused** (vs 12), **Come up** (vs 12), **Put in the sickle** (vs 13), **Come** (vs 13), **Tread** (vs 13),

¹⁰ *Beat your **plowshares** into swords, and your pruning hooks into spears; let the weak man say, "I am a warrior."*

Plowshares > (Precept Austin) Instead of referring to the large plow as a whole, the plowshare is simply the metal tip which actually breaks the earth and cuts the furrow. (Ken - Have you ever watched "Forged in Fire"?)

¹¹ *Hurry and come, all you surrounding nations, and gather yourselves there. Bring down, LORD, Your warriors.*

¹² *Let the nations be awakened and come up to the Valley of Jehoshaphat, for there I will sit to judge all the surrounding nations.*

Let the nations be awakened ... > (Benson) After the prophet has given warning, in the way of irony, to the nations to provide for their defense by all possible means, and to assemble themselves together from all parts, that they might strive with their united force; he, in the conclusion of the verse, calls upon God to cause those to come whom he had appointed to overcome these nations.

Craigie > But, when the nations were assembled in the valley, fully equipped for battle, they would receive a shock; they would find there the Judge of all the nations, and in their hands they would be holding the incriminating evidence of their own history of violence."

The Sentence of Judgment
(Joel 3:13-17— Gilliland)

¹³ *Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe. Come, tread the grapes, for the wine press 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.***

Multitudes, multitudes > (Clarke) (The Hebrew words mean) crowds upon crowds

Benson > These are Joel's words, exclaiming, with prophetic warmth and agitation, *Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision!* — As though he had said, *See what astonishing numbers are brought together for their destruction!* The sentence, thus abrupt and broken, is very strong and emphatical.

Dillard > "Many preachers have appealed to Joel 3:14 for an evangelistic thrust; their audiences are addressed as "multitudes in the Valley of Decision" who must decide their fate. There is a problem with that use of this passage: in Joel the hordes do not gather to make a decision, but to hear one; they will not be deciding their fate, for God has already decreed it. The time for decisions is now past."

Decision > (Precept Austin) meaning to cut and then to decide. It is used only here.

¹⁵ *The sun and moon have become dark, and the stars have lost their brightness.*

The sun and moon have become dark ... > (Wiersbe) Frightening signs from the Lord will accompany this battle (Joel 3:15; see 2:10, 30–31), signs that Jesus mentioned in His prophetic discourse on the Mount of Olives (Matt. 24:29–31; Mark 13:19–27; Luke 21:25–28). Jesus taught that these signs would prepare the way for His personal coming to earth when He will defeat Israel's enemies, cleanse His people, and establish His kingdom (Zech. 12–14; Rev. 19:11ff.).

¹⁶ ***The LORD roars from Zion*** and utters His voice from Jerusalem, and the heavens and the earth quake. But the LORD is a refuge for His people, and a stronghold for the sons of Israel.

The LORD roars from Zion > (Chisholm) In the day of national restoration Israel will follow the LORD, who will lead the people back to their homes. His lion-like roar, often associated with judgment and destruction (cf. Hos 5:14; 13:7; Amos 1:2; 3:8), will become a summons to return from exile.

¹⁷ ***Then you will know that I am the LORD your God, dwelling on Zion, My holy mountain. So Jerusalem will be holy, and strangers will no longer pass through it.***

Know > (Precept Austin) (The Hebrew word) can speak of intimate knowing (as of a man "knowing" a woman) and in the Septuagint is translated with the (Greek verb) meaning to *know fully, to know with certainty, to become thoroughly acquainted with.*

Then you will know > (Constable) Yahweh's victory will demonstrate to His people that He is indeed Israel's covenant God, and that His special place of abode is Mt. Zion (cf. 2:27). After this battle, Jerusalem will truly be the holy city, set apart entirely for God's people and no longer defiled by pagan invaders.

My holy mountain > (Precept Austin) Literally, "the mountain of My holiness" and occurs 11 times mostly in the prophets denoting the place on earth distinguished and set apart by the presence of the Lord.

¹⁸ ***And on that day the mountains will drip with sweet wine, and the hills will flow with milk, and all the brooks of Judah will flow with water; and a spring will go out from the house of the LORD And water the Valley of Shittim.***

All the brooks of Judah will flow with water > (Constable) Instead of the wadis that have water in them only a few days each year, "all ... the streams of Judah" would "flow with" abundant, life-giving "water." All these descriptions recall conditions in paradise (cf. 1:5, 18, 20). A spring will flow out from the millennial temple that will water the valley of acacia trees ("Shittim"), evidently between Jerusalem and the Dead Sea (cf. Ezek. 47:1-12; Zech. 14:8).

Shittim > (Strong's) The same as the plural of *shittah*; acacia trees

Net Note > The exact location of the Valley of Acacia Trees is uncertain. The Hebrew word refers to a place where the acacia trees grow, which would be a very arid and dry place. The acacia tree can survive in such locations, whereas most other trees require more advantageous conditions. Joel's point is that the stream that has been mentioned will proceed to the driest and barren of locations in the vicinity of Jerusalem.

¹⁹ ***Egypt** will become a wasteland, and **Edom** will become a desolate wilderness, because of the violence done to the sons of Judah, in whose land they have shed innocent blood.*

Egypt ... Edom > (Barnes) "Egypt" and "Edom" represent each a different class of enemies of the people of God, and both together exhibit the lot of all. Egypt was the powerful oppressor, who kept Israel long time in hard bondage, and tried, by the murder of their male children, to extirpate them. Edom was, by birth, the nearest allied to them, but had, from the time of their approach to the promised land, been hostile to them, and showed a malicious joy in all their calamities ... Yet when Joel thus threatened Egypt, there were no human symptoms of its decay; the instruments of its successive overthrows were as yet wild hordes, (as the Chaldees, Persians, and Macedonians,) to be consolidated thereafter into powerful empires, or (as Rome) had not the beginnings of being. : "The continuous monumental history of Egypt" went back seven centuries before this, to about 1520 b.c.

²⁰ ***But Judah will be inhabited forever, and Jerusalem for all generations.***

Barnes > Not earthly Judah, nor earthly Jerusalem, for these must come to an end, together with the earth itself, of whose end the prophets well knew. It is then the one people of God, the true Judah, the people who praise God, the Israel, which is indeed Israel. Egypt and Edom and all the enemies of God should come to an end; but His people shall never come to an end.

²¹ *And I will **avenge** their blood which I have not **avenged**, for the LORD dwells in Zion.*

Avenge ... Avenged > (Strong's) A primitive root; to be (or make) clean (literally or figuratively); by implication (in an adverse sense) to be bare, i.e. Extirpated

Keil > (The Hebrew word) "means to wipe away or expunge blood-guiltiness by punishment." The idea in Joel 3:21 is to *avenge* and the Septuagint uses (a Greek word) which means helping someone secure justice, which would support the interpretation that God will redeem a remnant of Jews.

Keil and Delitzsch > Verse 21 does not contain the announcement of a still further punishment upon Egypt and Edom, but simply the thought with which the proclamation of the judgment closes - namely, that the eternal desolation of the world-kingdoms mentioned here will wipe out all the wrong which they have done to the people of God, and which has hitherto remained unpunished.

Kaiser > The prophecy of Joel unfolds in chronological sequence. It begins with reference to a severe locust invasion that had come as a judgment on the Judahites for their covenant unfaithfulness to Yahweh. Even though it is impossible to date this plague, it happened in the fairly recent past from Joel's perspective.

The Lord used this severe judgment to call His people, through His prophet, to anticipate an even worse devastation coming in the near future, not from insects but from foreign invaders. He called on the Jews to repent and promised that if they did, He would forgive them and save them from this invasion. This would be a day of deliverance in which they would learn that He was at work for them. This is what happened when the Assyrians under Sennacherib's leadership attacked Jerusalem unsuccessfully in 701 B.C. (cf 2 Kings 18-19; Isaiah 36-37). If this is the near invasion that Joel predicted, he must have written in the early pre-exilic period (ninth century B.C.). Yet another similar day was coming farther in the future in which they would again experience an invasion by foreigners who hated them (in the Tribulation). Nevertheless, Yahweh promised to deliver them in that day and to restore them to unprecedented blessing because He was their covenant-keeping God (in the Millennium).