ValleyOfDecision.pdf

In reading and studying the various thoughts about end time prophecies, about how the last days play out, how the chronological events may fit together as nearly as the biblical texts would let us understand; it is obvious that Godly students of the word have differing views and interpretations. The study is important, however, with the same importance that was apparent to Paul for the church in II Thessalonians. Thankfully, he wrote down what he had previously taught so that we have it today. A correct understanding of end time events for the church that lives in the final period of time needs to understand that God is in complete control and can be fully assured of this because "see, I have told you all things beforehand.[1]" Knowing from scripture what is unfolding at that time and the attendant warnings and promises will be enormously comforting within the believing church.

The following view is perhaps not an accepted view among bible readers and may not be correct at all. Nevertheless it satisfies a certain question and concern that this writer has pondered for a long time, especially after reading several accounts from those who found saving truth almost accidentally (yet providentially) having earlier been content with worldly philosophy or no belief at all. And like these, there are many who have no concern about end times at all. Joel's primary message is not changed but this hopefully fills in a gap that Joel alludes to in regard to calling upon the name of the Lord. Finally, this will not be popular with the pretribulational view of eschatology as it simply would not fit.

This discussion is prompted by the words of the prophet Joel: "Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! For the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision."[2] The context of Joel's message of warning includes statements such as "Alas for the day! For the day of the Lord is at hand; it shall come as destruction from the Almighty."(1:15), "Blow the trumpet in Zion, And sound an alarm in My holy mountain!...For the day of the Lord is coming, for it is at hand:"(2:1), "Let the bridegroom go out from his chamber, And the bride from her dressing room.(2:16), "The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord. And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."(2:31,32), "The sun and moon will grow dark, and the stars will diminish their brightness."(3:15). Here are warnings of pending wrath, a call to repentance, and words of prophecy. His "before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord" precedes the attendant and perhaps greater message regarding the conflict in the valley of Jehoshaphat where the armies of the world will gather to war against Christ and the armies from heaven.

The above quotes set the stage for the context alluding to many who may be in their own valley of decision. Joel's message appeals to repentance "For the day of the Lord is coming, For it is at hand." The day of the Lord that follows is a period of God's wrath on the earth to those who have been given every opportunity to obey God but have ignored His message and chosen to follow Satan. It is the unique period in time beginning immediately after the rapture of the saints as told in the New Testament scriptures.

However, before the time of the rapture and extending back through time, is the opportunity, the day of salvation, to repent and to "call on the name of the Lord" and be saved. The sound of the trumpet is a heavenly call to arms, as it were, along with

[1] Mark 13:23

[2] Joel 3:14

judgment being at hand. What is outstanding from Joel in chapter 2 following one of his appeals that "the Day of the Lord is coming, for it is at hand" are statements that might be taken as allegorical such as "Blow the trumpet in Zion", "Call a sacred assembly", "Gather the people", "Gather the children and nursing babes" and the interjection to "Let the bridegroom go out from his chamber and the bride from her dressing room". Allegorical teaching in the Old Testament is like New Testament teaching in parables. These would fit the sequential understanding of the period of great tribulation on Israel and the church, followed by the rapture (gathering) of the believers which precede the opening of the great and terrible day of the Lord. This interjection which might seem to be unrelated to Joel's central message comes at this point when the bride and bridegroom depart together even though the mystery of the church age was not yet revealed. Just as Daniel's prophecy holds key insight to future events and yet he did not understand, so it would be most probable that Joel wrote what was revealed to him without understanding its implications. Yet here it is, having come by the word of the Lord. This coming of the bridegroom for His bride will be "on the self same day" as the fall of wrath on the earth[3] and so was not withheld in the prophecy as it is a link between an individual's valley of decision and God's valley of judgment. And more in keeping with the focus on pending judgment to befall the nations that are gathered together is the narrative and timing of Revelation 19 where “the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready.” And then is Jesus, on a white horse, descending in judgment and “The armies in heaven were following him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean.” Thus has the bridegroom gone out and the bride from her chamber.

Joel's warning is in the same period of time that we would understand to be during Daniel's 70th week and most probably as late as during the great tribulation, following after when the antichrist is revealed in the middle of that final week, and just prior to the rapture of the church and the great and terrible day of the Lord. This very short period of time may serve to purify the church and for the bride to make herself ready when the end of the age is glaringly imminent, but is not for anyone to anticipate as his or her last chance to be saved. It would only benefit the unknowing, unreached individual that might be awakened and rescued as a lost sheep that the shepherd seeks out, even "Among the remnant whom the Lord calls." All others, having doubted, scoffed, rejected, ashamed or deluded will unexpectedly be left without hope as though by a thief in the night and will find themselves looking for a place to hide from the wrath about to fall.

But now we are assured by God's word to Joel that the final opportunity for salvation before God's wrath is open if any will call on the name of the Lord. At some time during their lifetime every person is given a time of decision. The time described here by Joel is a unique period in that the final warnings are being demonstrated by the darkening of the sun, moon and stars as clearly taught by Jesus Himself to the disciples. At this time may be demonstrated the loving mercy of God Who is not willing that any should perish. It is easy to visualize that in the time of the end many people have either been so deceived by their contemporaries, or lived a carefree life, or whose parents or schools or governments have completely shielded them from God's word such that they are given this stunning wake up event proclaimed by Joel. Picture a world that has been systematically taught by the educated wisdom that evolution is a fact, that the bible, like other mythology, is really irrelevant, that "religion" is an opiate for the superstitious, and on and on. Just like

[3] See SignOfHisComing.pdf: https://www.keepandshare.com/doc18/28059/signofhiscoming-pdf-63k?dn=y

Nineva where its peoples could not tell their left hand from their right, God had mercy on them and sent Jonah to warn them of their evil and God's pending overthrow if they did not repent. Likewise, here are many that are completely devoid of the realities of the hour or even of their guilty state. Here would be God's final call in mercy on a global scale; a demonstration of seeking for and rescuing the lost sheep who through carelessness or obliviousness are on the brink of destruction. It may even be that the alternatives demanded by the antichrist are the first indicators to some that a consequential decision of this import is being demanded of them.

At the point in time inferred from Joel for those in the valley of decision, a world leader has come on the scene with a binding guarantee for a final peace for Israel to which the world heralds as peace and safety. Then, after 3-1/2 years of a strained peace the agreement has been broken, and now marshal law, or some other forced regulation, has stepped in to promote a universal systematic elimination to all reference to a higher God and His historical children, the Jews, and other believers in God. Here is the time of the great tribulation on God's peoples, unequaled in all of history, spoken of by both Jeremiah and Jesus. [4] This previously described scenario reveals that this world authority is the prophesied antichrist that would come prior to "the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to Him".[5] However, not part of antichrist's plan, is the sudden darkening of the sun (which duration is unknown) followed by a brilliant, awesome, unparalleled brightness in the heavens around the earth. Immediately, those perpetuating persecutions find that their own personal sudden and utter terror takes precedence over everything else and the persecutions stop. Either or both of these events grab the attention of the world's peoples like nothing else could. Some may be reminded of a truth they have heard, or the teaching by the promised witnesses, or Elijah, or an angel of the Lord. Suddenly they realize that they are in that deep valley of decision; should they believe their deceivers and take safety in numbers; or, should they cry out to God with the risk of martyrdom or starvation. Jesus and the prophets have warned that the time is short, Jesus is at the very doors to rapture His believers before the full wrath of God unfolds. It would be a mistake to ask advice from a neighbor; the decision is personal, one sided, alone. Perhaps some will think back to grandpa and grandma, or to their children around them. Many guilty persons around them are frantically hunting for some refuge from the wrath they know is coming. Grasping for some truth by those who carelessly knew no truth, perhaps God will give it. This short moment at the end of the church age might compare with Ruth who gleaned the fields of grain to conclude the harvest.[6] Again from Joel: "And it shall come to pass that whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved."

John, in his heavenly vision says "After these things I looked, and behold, a great multitude which no one could number, of all nations, tribes, peoples and tongues, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, with palm branches in their hands, and crying out with a loud voice, saying, 'Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!' ". "Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, 'Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?' And I said to him, 'Sir, you know.' So he said to me, 'These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the

[4] Jeremiah 30:7, Matthew 24:21
[5] II Thessalonians 2:1 (see v.3)
[6] For more on Ruth see: https://www.keepandshare.com/doc18/32211/ruth-pdf-45k?da=y

Lamb.'." This great multitude appears to be a group additional to the raptured saints from their graves; those who did not live through the great tribulation as did this great multitude. In Luke's quotes from Jesus regarding the warnings of the end times and for the generation that "will by no means pass away till all things are fulfilled", He concludes with "Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man". That great multitude seen by John is seen standing before the throne and before the Lamb. In trying to imagine a world of billions of people, might some comprise the multitudes referenced by Joel who have called upon the name of the Lord in those final moments of the day of grace?

One other thought that appears to be relevant to this time period is the stark warning found in II Thessalonians 2:3; "Let no one deceive you by any means; for **that day**[7] will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition." The purpose of this entire chapter was due to the erroneous handling of Paul's previous teaching on the occurrence of the day of Christ. Now he puts it into writing. Paul saw the confusion that was generated by misquoting him, and was determined that it should not be repeated. The explicit truth would be especially important for the church in the very last days. Yet, here we are again; this warning is ignored and many are taught that "we will be out of here before the tribulation[8] period" and before the antichrist comes on the scene. We are falsely taught that the 'tribulation period' is God's wrath (to which we are not appointed). Therefore, when the antichrist is revealed, and the sun is darkened, how many are going to be confused and grasped by fear such that their hearts will fail? Is it possible that some would say "This cannot be the mark of the beast because the rapture has not yet occurred."? Paul's explicit warning, if ignored, is not without consequences; both to the hearer and to those promoting the deception.

The Valley of Jehoshaphat and God's end time Battle of the Nations:

Joel in 3:9-13 speaks of God's final battle against the enemy nations of the earth in The Valley of Jehoshaphat and God's dealing with the nations in the Day of the Lord. The term "the valley of Jehoshaphat" used by Joel as the scene where all nations shall be gathered by Jehovah for judgment was attributed to the Kidron valley sometime in the 4th century a.d. for no biblicly substantiated reason. There is no evidence that any valley actually bore this name. The language used by Joel may have served as the name for an unspecified battlefield of the future [9] and with the fact that all nations are gathered together the actual battlefield will be very large over and around Israel. Revelation 16:14,16 has the gathering place for the battle of that great day of God Almighty as Armageddon or Megiddo which is in the Jezreel Valley in northern Israel. Rev. 14:20

[7] What day? In II Thess. 2:1 Paul's specific object is the day of Christ. Paul seems to anticipate a misappropriation of his specific timing; he clearly states **that day** as being the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ **and** our gathering together to Him which is not coincident with the great and terrible Day of the Lord. This gathering is of the dead in Christ and those who are alive and remain. The rapture therefore is an event within His second coming.

[8] The **tribulation** as defined by pretribulationists is the 7 year period found in Daniel 9 as being the time of God's wrath. Therefore, because "For God did not appoint us to wrath" they therefore have the rapture at some time before this period of Antichrist and with no required indicators signaling the coming rapture.

The **great tribulation** found in Mt. 24:21 is defined by prewrathers as an undefined period of time in the final 3-1/2 years of Daniel's 7 year period and occurs after the antichrist is revealed and just prior to the rapture and the onset of God's wrath. Because believers are not appointed unto God's wrath, these two incompatible views take on significance in II Thess. 2.

[9] Zondervan Bible Dictionary-"Jehoshaphat, Valley of

describes the battle fleld as being the length of 1600 furlongs, or stadia, which is about 200 miles.

The people of Jerusalem, having been instructed from scripture to flee at the revelation of the Antichrist, will do so - those who have refused to take the mark. For many, " Then you shall flee through My mountain valley, for the mountain valley shall reach to Azal." Southward is Edom and the mountainous cities of Petra and Bozrah. The pursuing nations follow them there.

Then we find in Isa. 63:1-6 that the apparent end and endpoint of the battle occurs in Bozrah in Edom: “Who is this coming from Edom, from Bozrah, with his garments stained crimson? Who is this, robed in splendor, striding forward in the greatness of his strength? “It is I, proclaiming victory, mighty to save.” Why are your garments red, like those of one treading the winepress? “I have trodden the winepress alone; from the nations no one was with me. I trampled them in my anger and trod them down in my wrath; their blood spattered my garments, and I stained all my clothing. It was for me the day of vengeance; the year for me to redeem had come. I looked, but there was no one to help, I was appalled that no one gave support; so my own arm achieved salvation for me, and my own wrath sustained me. I trampled the nations in my anger; in my wrath I made them drunk and poured their blood on the ground.” The distance from Megiddo to Edom also is 200 miles long. Bozrah is identified as the modern village of el-Busaireh a few miles SE of the Dead Sea in Edom near the road towards Petra.[10]

Matthew, Mark, and Luke record Jesus' instruction to Israel for fleeing from Jerusalem to the mountains when they see the abomination of desolation in the temple and the surrounding enemy armies, together portending extreme and immediate persecution; events leading directly to the time of God's wrath. Some view Petra as a likely location of safety for the fleeing nation as it is in a basin surrounded by mountains south of the Dead Sea in the area of Bozrah in Edom. The pursuing armies would logically follow them to Edom where the battle is concluded.

As mentioned, no valley ever was named the Valley of Jehoshophat. It is quite possible that the Valley of Jehoshaphat is not identifiable today because it is yet future. Zechariah 14:3-5 reads “For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem; The city shall be taken, The houses rifled, And the women ravished. Half of the city shall go into captivity, But the remnant of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations, as He fights in the day of battle. 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. Then you shall flee through My mountain valley, for the mountain valley shall reach to Azal. Yes, you shall flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Thus the LORD my God will come, and all the saints with You.”
This passage speaks of gathering all the nations to battle; of the Lord fighting against the nations; the formation of a large valley as Jerusalem's escape route toward Azal. And finally that the Lord will come with all his saints with Him. These all fit the chronological timing of the Day of the Lord. Notice also that the valley is **My** valley and is yet in the future.

[10] Zondervan Bible Dictionary- "Bozrah, An important city of Edom..

The language for the vengeance in Isaiah 63 correlates with that of Revelation 14:19 where John records: "So the angel swung his sickle over the earth and gathered the grapes of the earth, and he threw them into the great winepress of God's wrath." This is the last conclusive war on behalf of God's peoples to usher in the millennial reign of Jesus for 1000 years and therein to fulfill the long held promises for Israel's safety, blessing and world peace . This event ties together numberless prophesies from both old and new testaments. So, even logically, if God's peoples flee from Jerusalem for escape, the enemy nations would pursue them to their destination at which point God would conclude the war in total defeat of the enemy nations as promised. It is at this point that it can be said that "Edom will escape out of his hand"[11] as this may be the point of final victory as alluded by Isaiah above. God's word through Joel: "I will also gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat, and will plead with them there for my people and *for* my heritage Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations, and parted my land." Even though the world seems to be convinced that there is safety in numbers even when warring against God; Zechariah argues differently: "And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people; all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it."[12] That burdensome stone is the final war of God against the enemies of Israel. God is about "To make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy."[13]

Chronologically at this point the beast is captured and the false prophet, the devil, is chained for a thousand years and the millennial kingdom lasts for a thousand years where Christ reigns. Following is the great white throne judgment of the dead who are raised for judgment.Then comes a new heaven and a new earth and the holy city, New Jerusalem.

[11] Daniel 11:41

[12] Zechariah 12:3

[13] Daniel 9:24