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JOEL 3: 1 "For, behold, in those days, and in that time, when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem,

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The prophecy in this chapter is thought by some to relate to the latter times of the world, when God shall finally deliver his people from all their adversaries; and it must be confessed that the figures employed are so lofty as to render it impossible to restrain the whole of their import to any events prior to the commencement of the Christian era. The whole prophecy is delivered in a very beautiful strain of poetry; by what particular events are referred to is at present very uncertain, vv. 1-21.

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JOEL 3: 2 I will gather all nations, and will bring them down into the valley of Jehoshaphat; and I will execute judgement on them there for my people, and for my heritage, Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations. They have divided my land,

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#### Verse 2

The valley of Jehoshaphat - There is no such valley in the land of Judea; and hence the word must be symbolical. It signifies the judgment of God, or Jehovah judgeth; and may mean some place (as Bp. Newcome imagines) where Nebuchadnezzar should gain a great battle, which would utterly discomfit the ancient enemies of the Jews, and resemble the victory which Jehoshaphat gained over the Ammonites, Moabites, and Edomites, 2Chr 20:22-26.

And parted my land - The above nations had frequently entered into the territories of Israel; and divided among themselves the lands they had thus overrun.

While the Jews were in captivity, much of the land of Israel was seized on, and occupied by the Philistines, and other nations that bordered on Judea.

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JOEL 3: 3 and have cast lots for my people, and have given a boy for a prostitute, and sold a girl for wine, that they may drink.

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#### Verse 3

Have given a boy for a harlot - To such wretched circumstances were the poor Jews reduced in their captivity, that their children were sold by their oppressors; and both males and females used for the basest purposes. And they were often bartered for the necessaries or luxuries of life. Or this may refer to the issue of the Chaldean war in Judea, where the captives were divided among the victors. And being set in companies, they cast lots for them: and those to whom they fell sold them for various purposes; the boys to be slaves and catamites, the girls to be prostitutes; and in return for them they got wine and such things. I think this is the meaning of the text.

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JOEL 3: 4 "Yes, and what are you to me, Tyre, and Sidon, and all the regions of Philistia? Will you repay me? And if you repay me, I will swiftly and speedily return your repayment on your own head.

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Verse 4

What have ye to do with me - Why have the Syrians and Sidonians joined their other enemies to oppress my people? for they who touch my people touch me.

Will ye render me a recompense? - Do you think by this to avenge yourselves upon the Almighty? to retaliate upon God! Proceed, and speedily will I return your recompense; I will retaliate.

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JOEL 3: 5 Because you have taken my silver and my gold, and have carried my finest treasures into your temples,

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Verse 5

Ye have taken my silver and my gold - The Chaldeans had spoiled the temple, and carried away the sacred vessels, and put them in the temple of their own god in Babylon.

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JOEL 3: 6 and have sold the children of Judah and the children of Jerusalem to the sons of the Greeks, that you may remove them far from their border.

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Verse 6

Sold unto the Grecians - These were the descendants of Javan, Gen 10:2-5. And with them the Tyrians trafficked, Eze 27:19.

That ye might remove them far from their border - Intending to send them as far off as possible, that it might be impossible for them to get back to reclaim the land of which you had dispossessed them.

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JOEL 3: 7 Behold, I will stir them up out of the place where you have sold them, and will return your repayment on your own head;

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Verse 7

I will raise them - I shall find means to bring them back from the place whither ye have sold them, and they shall retaliate upon you the injuries they have sustained. It is said that Alexander and his successors set at liberty many Jews that had been sold into Greece. And it is likely that many returned from different lands, on the publication of the edict of Cyrus. - Newcome.

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JOEL 3: 8 and I will sell your sons and your daughters into the hands of the children of Judah, and they will sell them to the men of Sheba, to a faraway nation, for the LORD has spoken it.”

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Verse 8

I will sell your sons - 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.

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JOEL 3: 9 Proclaim this among the nations: “Prepare for war! Stir up the mighty men. Let all the warriors draw near. Let them come up.

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Verse 9

Prepare war - Let all the enemies of God and of his people join together; let them even call all the tillers of the ground to their assistance, instead of laboring in the field; let every peasant become a soldier. Let them turn their agricultural implements into offensive weapons, so that the weak, being well armed, may confidently say, I am strong: yet, when thus collected and armed, Jehovah will bring down thy mighty ones; for so the clause in Joe 3:11 should be rendered.

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JOEL 3: 10 Beat your ploughshares into swords, and your pruning hooks into spears. Let the weak say, ‘I am strong.’

JOEL 3: 11 Hurry and come, all you surrounding nations, and gather yourselves together.” Cause your mighty ones to come down there, LORD.

JOEL 3: 12 “Let the nations arouse themselves, and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat; for there will I sit to judge all the surrounding nations.

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Verse 12

Let the heathen be wakened - The heathen shall be wakened.

The valley of Jehoshaphat - Any place where God may choose to display his judgments against his enemies.

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JOEL 3: 13 Put in the sickle; for the harvest is ripe. Come, tread, for the wine press is full, the vats overflow, for their wickedness is great.”

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Verse 13

Put ye in the sickle - The destruction of his enemies is represented here under the metaphor of reaping down the harvest; and of gathering the grapes, and treading them in the wine-presses.

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

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Verse 14

Multitudes, multitudes - המונים המונים hamonim, hamonim, crowds upon crowds, in the valley of decision, or excision: the same as the valley of Jehoshaphat, the place where God is to execute judgment on his enemies.

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JOEL 3: 15 The sun and the moon are darkened, and the stars withdraw their shining.

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Verse 15

The sun and the moon shall be darkened - High and mighty states shall be eclipsed, and brought to ruin, and the stars - petty states, princes, and governors - shall withdraw their shining; withhold their influence and tribute from the kingdoms to which they have belonged, and set up themselves as independent governors.

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JOEL 3: 16 The LORD will roar from Zion, and thunder from Jerusalem; and the heavens and the earth will shake; but the LORD will be a refuge to his people, and a stronghold to the children of Israel.

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Verse 16

The Lord also shall roar out of Zion - His temple and worship shall be reestablished there, and he will thence denounce his judgments against the nations. "The heavens and the earth shall shake." There shall be great commotions in powerful empires and their dependencies; but in all these things his own people shall be unmoved, for God shall be their hope and strength.

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JOEL 3: 17 "So you will know that I am the LORD, your God, dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain. Then Jerusalem will be holy, and no strangers will pass through her any more.

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Verse 17

So shall ye know - By the judgments I execute on your enemies, and the support I give to yourselves, that I am the all-conquering Jehovah; and that I have again taken up my residence in Jerusalem. All this may refer, ultimately, to the restoration of the Jews to their own land; when holiness to the Lord shall be their motto; and no strange god, or impure people, shall be permitted to enter the city, or

even pass through it; they shall have neither civil nor religious connections with any who do not worship the true God in spirit and in truth. This, I think, must refer to Gospel times. It is a promise not yet fulfilled.

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JOEL 3: 18 It will happen in that day, that the mountains will drop down sweet wine, the hills will flow with milk, all the brooks of Judah will flow with waters, and a fountain will flow out from the LORD's house, and will water the valley of Shittim.

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#### Verse 18

In that day - After their return from their captivities.

The mountains shall drop down new wine - A poetic expression for great fertility. Happy times: peace and plenty. The vines shall grow luxuriantly on the sides of the mountains; and the hills shall produce such rich pastures that the flocks shall yield abundance of milk.

And all the rivers of Judah - Far from being generally dry in the summer, shall have their channels always full of water.

And a fountain shall come forth of the house of the Lord - See the account of the typical waters in Ezekiel 47, to which this seems to have a reference; at least the subject is the same, and seems to point out the grace of the Gospel, the waters of salvation, that shall flow from Jerusalem, and water the valley of Shittim. Shittim was in the plains of Moab beyond Jordan; Num 33:49; Jos 3:1; but as no stream of water could flow from the temple, pass across Jordan, or reach this plain, the valley of Shittim must be considered symbolical, as the valley of Jehoshaphat. But as Shittim may signify thorns, it may figuratively represent the most uncultivated and ferocious inhabitants of the earth receiving the Gospel of Christ, and being civilized and saved by it. We know that briars and thorns are emblems of bad men; see Eze 2:6. Thus all the figures in this verse will point out the happy times of the Gospel: the mountains shall drop down new wine; the hills flow with milk; the thorny valleys become fertile, etc. Similar to those almost parallel words of the prince of poets: -

Mistaque ridenti colocasia fundet acantho.

Ipsae lacte domum referent destenta capellae

Ubera: nec magnos metuent armenta leones.

Molli paullatim flavescet campus arista,

Incultisque rubens pendebit sentibus uva:

Et durae quercus sudabunt roscida mella.

Virg. Ed. 4:20.

Unbidden earth shall wreathing ivy bring,

And fragrant herbs the promises of spring.

The goats with streaming dugs shall homeward speed;

And lowing herds, secure from lions, feed.

Unlabour'd harvests shall the fields adorn,  
And cluster'd grapes shall grow on every thorn:  
The knotted oaks shall showers of honey weep.  
Dryden.

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JOEL 3: 19 Egypt will be a desolation, and Edom will be a desolate wilderness, for the violence done to the children of Judah, because they have shed innocent blood in their land.

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Verse 19

Egypt shall be a desolation - While peace, plenty, and prosperity of every kind, shall crown my people, all their enemies shall be as a wilderness; and those who have used violence against the saints of God, and shed the blood of innocents (of the holy Martyrs) in their land, when they had political power; these and all such shall fall under the just judgments of God.

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JOEL 3: 20 But Judah will be inhabited forever, and Jerusalem from generation to generation.

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Verse 20

But Judah shall dwell for ever - The true Church of Christ shall be supported, while all false and persecuting Churches shall be annihilated. The promise may also belong to the full and final restoration of the Jews, when they shall dwell at Jerusalem as a distinct people professing the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ.

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JOEL 3: 21 I will cleanse their blood, that I have not cleansed: for the LORD dwells in Zion."

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Verse 21

For I will cleanse their blood - נקיתי nikkeythi, I will avenge the slaughter and martyrdom of my people, which I have not yet avenged.

Persecuting nations and persecuting Churches shall all come, sooner or later, under the stroke of vindictive justice.

For the Lord dwelleth in Zion - He shall be the life, soul, spirit, and defense of his Church for ever. This prophet, who has many things similar to Ezekiel, ends his prophecy nearly in the same way:

Ezekiel says of the glory of the Church, יהוה שמה Yehovah shammah, The Lord Is There.

Joel says, יהוה שכן בציון Yehovah shochan betsiyon, The Lord Dwelleth in Zion.

Both point out the continued indwelling of Christ among his people.

## Verse 1

For, behold, in those days - According to the preceding prophecy, these days should refer to Gospel times, or to such as should immediately precede them. But this is a part of the prophecy which is difficult to be understood. All interpreters are at variance upon it; some applying its principal parts to Cambyses; his unfortunate expedition to Egypt; the destruction of fifty thousand of his troops (by the moving pillars of sand) whom he had sent across the desert to plunder the rich temple of Jupiter Ammon; his return to Judea, and dying of a wound which he received from his own sword, in mounting his horse, which happened at Ecbatane, at the foot of Mount Carmel. On which his army, composed of different nations, seeing themselves without a head, fell out, and fought against each other, till the whole were destroyed. And this is supposed to be what Ezekiel means by Gog and Magog, and the destruction of the former. See Ezekiel 38 and 39.

Others apply this to the victories gained by the Maccabees, and to the destruction brought upon the enemies of their country; while several consider the whole as a figurative prediction of the success of the Gospel among the nations of the earth. It may refer to those times in which the Jews shall be brought in with the fullness of the Gentiles, and be re-established in their own land. Or there may be portions in this prophecy that refer to all the events; and to others that have not fallen yet within the range of human conjecture, and will be only known when the time of fulfillment shall take place. In this painful uncertainty, rendered still more so by the discordant opinions of many wise and learned men, it appears to be my province, as I have nothing in the form of a new conjecture to offer, to confine myself to an explanation of the phraseology of the chapter; and then leave the reader to apply it as may seem best to his own judgment.

I shall bring again the captivity of Judah and Jerusalem - This may refer to the return from the Babylonish captivity; extending also to the restoration of Israel, or the ten tribes.