

Joel 3:14

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision.

Analysis

Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision—the Hebrew hamonim hamonim be'emeq hecharuts (הָמוֹנִים הָמוֹנִים בְּעֵמֶק הַסְּרֹעֶץ) uses emphatic repetition. Hamon (הָמוֹן) means multitude, crowd, or throng—vast numbers of people. The doubling emphasizes staggering magnitude—innumerable hosts assembled for judgment. "The valley of decision" (emeq hecharuts) uses charuts (הַסְּרֶץ), meaning decision, strict determination, or that which is decisive/cut sharp. This is not the valley where nations make decisions, but where God's decision is executed upon them. The word shares a root with charats (to decide, decree, determine)—God has made His judicial determination, and the verdict will now be carried out.

For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision (Hebrew ki qarov yom-YHWH be'emeq hecharuts, קִי קָרֹב יוֹם־יְהוָה בְּעֵמֶק הַסְּרֹעֶץ)—the phrase "day of the LORD" appears again (see 1:15, 2:1, 11, 31), now described as qarov (קָרֹב), "near"). What Joel announced as approaching throughout his prophecy has now arrived. The repetition of "in the valley of decision" emphasizes location and purpose—God has appointed this specific place for decisive judgment. The gathered multitudes face their inescapable appointment with divine justice.

This verse creates haunting imagery: countless multitudes assembled, the Day of the LORD at hand, God's decree about to be executed. The scene evokes Revelation 20:11-15's Great White Throne judgment where the dead, small and great, stand before God, and books are opened. The "multitudes, multitudes" may include both the wicked gathered for judgment and the righteous vindicated.

However, the context emphasizes judgment on the nations who opposed God and persecuted His people. The valley becomes humanity's Waterloo—the place where rebellious pretensions are finally and forever crushed. Yet remarkably, even amid this terrifying judgment scene, God provides escape: "Whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered" (2:32). The gospel invitation remains open until Christ returns; afterward, only judgment awaits.

Historical Context

The "valley of decision/threshing" (emeq hecharuts) may be another name for the Valley of Jehoshaphat, or it may describe the same eschatological judgment using different terminology. Charuts can mean threshing instrument—a sharp tool for separating grain from chaff, which reinforces the harvest imagery from verse 13. God's judgment separates righteous from wicked as thoroughly as threshing separates wheat from chaff (Matthew 3:12). The "multitudes, multitudes" assembled for judgment recalls multiple Old Testament scenes: the nations gathered against Jerusalem (Zechariah 12:2-3, 14:2), Gog and Magog's armies (Ezekiel 38-39), and ultimately Armageddon (Revelation 16:14-16). Each historical gathering prefigures the final assembly when all humanity faces God.

Related Passages

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Study Questions

1. How does the repetition "multitudes, multitudes" emphasize both the magnitude of judgment and the countless individuals facing God's verdict?
2. What does calling it the "valley of decision" teach about the finality and irrevocability of God's judgment?
3. How should the certainty of the Day of the LORD being "near" create urgency in both personal repentance and evangelistic witness?

Interlinear Text

רַבָּה	רַבָּה	בְּבִירַעַת	בְּבִירַעַת	כִּי	קָרְבָּן	וְיֹמָה
Multitudes	Multitudes	in the valley	of decision	H3588	is near	for the day
H1995	H1995	H6010	H2742		H7138	H3117
יְהֹוָה	בְּבִירַעַת	בְּבִירַעַת				
of the LORD	in the valley	of decision				
H3068	H6010	H2742				

Additional Cross-References

Joel 3:2 (Parallel theme): 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.

Philippians 3:2 (Parallel theme): Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the concision.

2 Peter 3:7 (Parallel theme): But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men.

Joel 2:1 (References Lord): Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the LORD cometh, for it is nigh at hand;