

Joel 3:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

For I will cleanse their blood that I have not cleansed: for the LORD dwelleth in Zion.

Analysis

For I will cleanse their blood that I have not cleansed (ve-niqqeti damam lo niqqeti)—This difficult phrase likely means 'I will avenge blood I have not yet avenged' (ESV, CSB) or 'I will pardon their bloodguilt' (others). The term niqah means 'to be clean/innocent/free from guilt.' God promises either to judge Israel's oppressors for unpunished bloodshed or to purify Israel from guilt.

For the LORD dwelleth in Zion (va-YHWH shochen be-Tsion)—The book's climax: God's presence is the ultimate promise. This echoes 3:17's opening and Ezekiel's vision, which concludes: 'The name of the city from that day shall be, The LORD is there' (Ezekiel 48:35). God dwelling with His people is the telos of redemptive history (Revelation 21:3: 'Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men').

Historical Context

The dwelling (shochen) recalls the tabernacle (mishkan, same root)—God's mobile dwelling among Israel (Exodus 25:8). After Solomon's temple was destroyed, Ezekiel saw God's glory depart (Ezekiel 10-11) but return to the eschatological temple (Ezekiel 43:1-5). Jesus 'tabernacled' among us (John 1:14), and now the church is God's temple (1 Corinthians 3:16, Ephesians 2:21-22). Ultimate fulfillment awaits the eternal Zion.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. What does it mean that God 'dwells' with His people—how do you experience His presence?
2. How does the promise of cleansing 'blood that I have not cleansed' point to Christ's atoning sacrifice that cleanses all bloodguilt?
3. In what sense is Revelation 21:3 ('God himself shall be with them') the ultimate fulfillment of Joel's prophecy?

Interlinear Text

נִקְיָה יְהוָה	וְדָמָם	לֹא	נִקְיָה יְהוָה	יְהוָה ה	שָׁכֵן
For I will cleanse	their blood	H3808	For I will cleanse	for the LORD	dwelleth
H5352	H1818		H5352	H3068	H7931
בְּצִיּוֹן:					
in Zion					
H6726					

Additional Cross-References

Revelation 21:3 (Parallel theme): And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God.

Isaiah 4:4 (Blood): When the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning.

Ezekiel 36:25 (Parallel theme): Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean: from all your filthiness, and from all your idols, will I cleanse you.

Ezekiel 36:29 (Parallel theme): I will also save you from all your uncleannesses: and I will call for the corn, and will increase it, and lay no famine upon you.

Ezekiel 48:35 (References Lord): It was round about eighteen thousand measures: and the name of the city from that day shall be, The LORD is there.

Joel 3:17 (References Lord): So shall ye know that I am the LORD your God dwelling in Zion, my holy mountain: then shall Jerusalem be holy, and there shall no strangers pass through her any more.