

JOEL 3:11-13

“Hasten and come, all you surrounding nations, and gather yourselves there. Bring down, O LORD, Your mighty ones. Let the nations be aroused and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat, for there I will sit to judge all the surrounding nations. 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.”

An undeniable theme of the Book of Joel is the Day of the Lord, and while there are multiple components and dimensions as to what such a Day of the Lord involves—it definitely involves the Lord’s vindication of His people, and His judgment to be issued upon His enemies. Bible readers should immediately be able to make a connection between the word of Joel 3:13 and what is witnessed later in Revelation 14:18: “Then another angel, the one who has power over fire, came out from the altar; and he called with a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, ‘Put in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters from the vine of the earth, because her grapes are ripe.’” While some of the details of an oracle like Joel 3:11-13 are a bit unclear, and require consultation and some synthesizing with other statements appearing in the Hebrew Prophets and the Apostolic Writings, the thrust of what is communicated is not unclear: the Lord God of Israel is going to bring judgment to the nations of Planet Earth.

A default view of approaching what the Prophet Joel decrees is represented by Duane A. Garrett, who would take what he says in the direction of it pointing to more specific realities witnessed in the Apostolic Scriptures:

“[T]he notion of ‘rousing’ or ‘awakening’ the nations calls to mind the New Testament picture of the peoples of earth being awakened from the dead to face judgment (as in Rev 20:11-13). Joel did not explicitly speak of a resurrection or judgment of the dead, but his language in this chapter is universal and draws the apocalyptic theme of the day of the Lord to a crescendo.”¹⁶⁹

We will have to wait and see what “Let the nations bestir themselves” (Joel 3:12a, RSV) really means in future history. What cannot be avoided is how in Joel 3:12[4:12] that it is the Lord proper, in the first person, who judges the Earth: “I will sit in judgment over all the nations” (NJPS). While God as Judge is a theme witnessed throughout the Tanach or Old Testament, significant questions are raised in the continuing testimony of the Apostolic Scriptures or New Testament, as the activity of judging is something actually to be performed by Yeshua the Messiah. James Limburg summarizes,

“This theme of the Lord as Judge runs through the Bible, from Genesis 18:25 where the Lord is named ‘Judge of all the earth’ through the portrayals of judgment in the psalms (96:13; 98:9) and promises of judgment in the prophets (Isa. 2:4; Micah 4:3; Ezek. 34:17-22) and in apocalyptic texts (Dan. 7:9-14). The scene in Matthew 25:31-46 is especially well known; as in Joel (3:3), the basis for the judgment is the manner in which those judged have treated the weakest members of society. The New Testament can speak of this activity of judging as the responsibility of God (Acts 17:31) or of the risen Christ (II Cor. 5:10).”¹⁷⁰

The explicit claim of Yeshua the Messiah in Matthew 25:29-31, doubtlessly drawing upon Joel 3:11-13, is: “But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats.” This is a judgment which has eternal rewards or consequences (Matthew 25:33-34, 46).

¹⁶⁹ Duane A. Garrett, *New American Commentary: Hosea, Joel*, Vol 19a (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1997), 387.

¹⁷⁰ James Limburg, *Interpretation, A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching: Hosea-Micah* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1988), 74.

One could be willing to concede that for individual judgment scenes or acts of vindication, that God proper would send a supernatural yet created agent, a messenger or angel, from Heaven to Earth. The judgment depicted in Joel 3:11-13, picked up by Yeshua in Matthew 25:29-31, begs some significant questions about the nature of the Messiah. Is it logical to think that a supernatural yet created agent of God would be delegated to have the final authority over whether someone spends an eternity with their Creator, or an eternity apart from their Creator? *Among the many different activities of God proper, which could be legitimately delegated to a created supernatural agent, could this actually include the final judgment?* It would be proper to envision angels present at the final judgment, as those who escort the unrighteous condemned away into eternal punishment—no different than how law enforcement officials today escort condemned criminals away. But Yeshua as the officiating judge here, with no hint of an appeal to any higher authority available to the unrighteous condemned, needs to be very seriously weighed in terms of Christology.

In their resource *Putting Jesus in His Place*, Bowman and Komoszewski,¹⁷¹ offer the following Bible passages for consideration, in how both the Lord God and the Lord Yeshua/Jesus are seen to be “Judging all people”:

Judging all people	
the LORD GOD	Lord Jesus (Yeshua)
<p><i>Genesis 18:25; Deuteronomy 1:17; Psalm 7:9-11; 50:4, 6; 62:12; 75:7; 96:12-13; Proverbs 24:12; Isaiah 40:9-11; Jeremiah 25:31; Joel 3:12; Romans 2:3; 14:10</i></p> <p>“Far be it from You to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous and the wicked are <i>treated</i> alike. Far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?” (Genesis 18:25).</p> <p>“You shall not show partiality in judgment; you shall hear the small and the great alike. You shall not fear man, for the judgment is God’s. The case that is too hard for you, you shall bring to me, and I will hear it” (Deuteronomy 1:17).</p> <p>“O let the evil of the wicked come to an end, but establish the righteous; for the righteous God tries the hearts and minds. My shield is with God, who saves the upright in heart. God is a righteous judge, and a God who has indignation every day” (Psalm 7:9-11).</p> <p>“He summons the heavens above, and the earth, to judge His people...And the heavens declare His righteousness, for God Himself is judge. Selah” (Psalm 50:4, 6).</p>	<p><i>Matthew 16:27; 25:31-46; John 5:22-23; Acts 10:42; 17:31; Romans 2:16; 1 Corinthians 4:4-5; 2 Corinthians 5:10; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-8; 2 Timothy 4:1; Revelation 2:23</i></p> <p>“For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and WILL THEN REPAY EVERY MAN ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS [Psalm 28:4; 62:12; Proverbs 24:12]” (Matthew 16:27).</p> <p>“But when the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, then He will sit on His glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before Him; and He will separate them from one another, as the shepherd separates the sheep from the goats; and He will put the sheep on His right, and the goats on the left. Then the King will say to those on His right, ‘Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry, and you gave Me <i>something</i> to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me <i>something</i> to drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in; naked, and you clothed Me; I was sick, and you visited Me; I was in prison, and you came to Me.’ Then the righteous will answer Him, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You <i>something</i> to drink? And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? When</p>

¹⁷¹ Bowman and Komoszewski, 287.

"And lovingkindness is Yours, O Lord, for You recompense a man according to his work" (Psalm 62:12).

"But God is the Judge; He puts down one and exalts another" (Psalm 75:7).

"Let the field exult, and all that is in it. Then all the trees of the forest will sing for joy before the LORD, for He is coming, for He is coming to judge the earth. He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples in His faithfulness" (Psalm 96:12-13).

"If you say, 'See, we did not know this,' Does He not consider *it* who weighs the hearts? And does He not know *it* who keeps your soul? And will He not render to man according to his work?" (Proverbs 24:12).

"Get yourself up on a high mountain, O Zion, bearer of good news, Lift up your voice mightily, O Jerusalem, bearer of good news; lift *it* up, do not fear. Say to the cities of Judah, 'Here is your God!' Behold, the Lord GOD will come with might, with His arm ruling for Him. Behold, His reward is with Him and His recompense before Him. Like a shepherd He will tend His flock, in His arm He will gather the lambs and carry *them* in His bosom; He will gently lead the nursing ewes" (Isaiah 40:9-11).

"A clamor has come to the end of the earth, because the LORD has a controversy with the nations. He is entering into judgment with all flesh; as for the wicked, He has given them to the sword,' declares the LORD" (Jeremiah 25:31).

"Let the nations be aroused and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat, for there I will sit to judge all the surrounding nations" (Joel 3:12).

"But do you suppose this, O man, when you pass judgment on those who practice such things and do the same *yourself*, that you will escape the judgment of God?" (Romans 2:3).

"But you, why do you judge your brother? Or you again, why do you regard your brother with contempt? For we will all stand before

did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' The King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, *even* the least of *them*, you did it to Me.' Then He will also say to those on His left, 'Depart from Me, accursed ones, into the eternal fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels; for I was hungry, and you gave Me *nothing* to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me *nothing* to drink; I was a stranger, and you did not invite Me in; naked, and you did not clothe Me; sick, and in prison, and you did not visit Me.' Then they themselves also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not take care of You?' Then He will answer them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.' These will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life" (Matthew 25:31-46).

"For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son, so that all will honor the Son even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him" (John 5:22-23).

"And He ordered us to preach to the people, and solemnly to testify that this is the One who has been appointed by God as Judge of the living and the dead" (Acts 10:42).

"[B]ecause He has fixed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead" (Acts 17:31).

"[O]n the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Messiah Yeshua" (Romans 2:16).

"For I am conscious of nothing against myself, yet I am not by this acquitted; but the one who examines me is the Lord. Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, *but wait* until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of *men's* hearts; and then each man's praise will come to him from God" (1 Corinthians 4:4-5).

<p>the judgment seat of God” (Romans 14:10).</p>	<p>“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Messiah, so that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad” (2 Corinthians 5:10).</p> <p>“[A]nd to give relief to you who are afflicted and to us as well when the Lord Yeshua will be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels in flaming fire” (2 Thessalonians 1:7).</p> <p>“I solemnly charge <i>you</i> in the presence of God and of Messiah Yeshua, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom” (2 Timothy 4:1).</p> <p>“And I will kill her children with pestilence, and all the churches will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts; and I will give to each one of you according to your deeds” (Revelation 2:23).</p>
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It can indeed be properly recognized that **unless Yeshua the Messiah were integrated into the Divine Identity as the LORD or YHWH Himself, that He would not have the inherent ability or right to judge the entire world and the eternal destiny of people.** A created supernatural being, such as an angel or archangel, might be expected to be authorized by God to go to Planet Earth and perform specific actions of judgment or vengeance; a created supernatural being would not be expected to be responsible for the decision of who essentially winds up in either the Kingdom of Heaven or in the Lake of Fire.

MICAH 5:2

“But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity.”

The statement of Micah 5:2 is important for recognizing the Messiahship of Yeshua of Nazareth, given its direct quotation in Matthew 2:5-6: “They said to him, ‘In Bethlehem of Judea; for this is what has been written by the prophet: AND YOU, BETHLEHEM, LAND OF JUDAH, ARE BY NO MEANS LEAST AMONG THE LEADERS OF JUDAH; FOR OUT OF YOU SHALL COME FORTH A RULER WHO WILL SHEPHERD MY PEOPLE ISRAEL.’” While there are useful and important examinations to be conducted on Micah 5:2 in terms of the Messiahship of Yeshua, both those who hold to either a high or a low Christology affirm that this has been properly applied to Him.

A significant statement about the origins of this ruler of Israel who will come from Bethlehem, is, *u’motza’otayo m’qedem mimei olam* (וּמוֹצְאָתָיו מִקְדָּם מֵיְמֵי עוֹלָם), which the Kohlenberger interlinear renders with, “and-goings-out-of-him from-of-old from-days-of ancient-time.”¹⁷² That there is some variance among Christian examiners is witnessed in how this statement appears in like the RSV, which has, “whose origin is from of old, from ancient days,” a

¹⁷² Kohlenberger, 4:537.