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**C0815 – April 16, 2008 – Joel 3:18-21 – The Kingdom Of The  
Messiah**

What we want to do tonight is look at the Kingdom of the Messiah. The Kingdom, the earthly kingdom that Rev 20 teaches will last for a literal 1,000 years. This is one of those sections of Scripture that's just allegorized by most people. Many of you, if you've ever discussed prophecy with another believer, at one time or another you ran into someone who did not believe in Premillennialism, did not believe in an earthly kingdom. Often we're told that there are differences in how we interpret these passages because of different hermeneutics, literal hermeneutic or a mixed hermeneutic. That's not really the reason. There's something behind that, a network of truths, a preconceived worldview driving people to choose one or the other hermeneutic. It has nothing to do with exegesis because that's the application of a hermeneutic. What typically happens in a passage like this is their wearing uniformitarian blinders. What happens is man has his limited experience, we've seen this chart before, now I just want to show you how this bears on a person's interpretation of Scripture. We've said man is very limited in his experience; everyone is limited to their spatial and time limitations, when you lived, where you lived, where you've been, what you've seen, that box is your maximum direct observation. You can extend it with instruments so you can look further with the telescope, you can get closer to the knife edge of time with high speed camera, you can look at smaller things through a microscope. You can see amazing things that no one else has ever seen before in our day. Just 100 years ago they were looking at the cell as just a blob, they didn't have a clue as to what was inside the cell, all the complexity, they thought it was just a blob of protein. It was called a "black box" because nothing was known about its contents. Now, with advanced microscopes and other instrumentation we're getting inside that box and seeing that, far from a blob of protein, what's going on is astonishingly

complex. But still, even with these tools we're limited. But man, because he is made in God's image, has a thirst for knowledge, he wants to push the boundary back, ultimately to origins because that's where we find meaning. Turn with me for a minute to Eccl 3 because I want you to see more of the significance of this chart. This chart is really a summary of a lot of what the Bible has to say about man. We say that man wants to push his knowledge back to origins, obviously because if I can find out where I came from then that tells me who I am, why I'm here. So, if I'm stuck in this box, if I'm limited in knowledge to what I directly observe that never satisfies. So what I've got to do to get outside the box is pretend that everything I directly observe inside the box holds outside the box. So I universalize my experience and that's what we called "uniformitarianism", that's the modern way of expressing what Peter knew centuries ago, "that all things continue just as they have since creation." Pagan man's key to unlocking the past is this idea of uniformitarianism, that present processes are immutable, they continue forever and ever, unchangeable and therefore are the key to the past. Of course, *if* that is true then we can go back in the past but the Bible warns us not to get trapped by that because it's a false assumption. People are pretending that things outside the box are just as much fact as things inside the box but it's just a guess. And it's that guess that Scripture is challenging, and as a Christian you can't afford to grant uniformitarianism. If you do it's going to come over here and affect your interpretation of Scripture. Verse 11, "He has made everything appropriate in its time. He has also set eternity in their heart," in whose heart? Man's heart. God set eternity in every man's heart. What does that mean? What it means is that God places within each of us a sense of eternity, a sense of something much grander, and we want to know, we want to figure it out and the autonomous man, the man who says, "I don't want to hear Your word God, I reject Your revelation" is left on his own trying to figure it out. But to figure it out you have to universalize your own experience to get outside of the box, to satisfy this longing God set in your heart. There is no other way. And that's why we have pagan and Christian spending your tax dollars to figure it out. But what does the Preacher say here about those attempts to get outside the box independently of God? "yet so that man will not find out the work which God has done from the beginning even to the end." God has set it up such that there's a sense of eternity in all of us but, and this is the frustration of man, we can't figure it out on our own. We alone are not sufficient to figure it out. No matter how BIG a person's brain might be it's not infinite. So there's a tension in this

verse within man, I want to figure it out but I can't and the bottom line is it cuts man down to size because man has to say like Job said, that these are things far too wonderful for me to ever figure out. God's word is saying over and over in numerous different ways that we are finite, we are limited to that box and the minute we try to go outside of that box we're just speculating, making a guess. And that guess does not necessarily describe what then was. Man cannot figure out what God has done from beginning to end without going to God and getting His story. "But I don't want to go to God, I want to figure it out on my own." Fine, but you can't. And notice, it's a quest, not to figure out what man has done from beginning to the end, not to figure out what nature and natural process, the molecules have done from beginning to end, it's a quest to find out what God has done. But man, in his autonomy, his rejection of what God has to say, must, in order to get outside of that box, assume uniformitarianism, there's no other way, because if things were different then, on a pagan basis I can't know anything about that. So, to salvage knowledge, pagan knowledge, I erect universals, constants within the creation, just as Peter said and conjecture back. Now, turn to Joel 3. Why do we review this as we reach the end of Joel? Simply to say that most Christians have been so corrupted by pagan uniformitarianism that when they read a passage like this they allegorize it away. They do it with the pre-Flood world, saying it's just a fantasy land being described there, they do it with the Flood itself, making it local rather than Global. Why are they doing that? Because they're assuming uniformitarianism, they're assuming there have been no major interruptions of natural processes, no catastrophes, no grand interventions. Change occurs by the principle of gradualism, set rates of sedimentary deposition, set rates of decay. So when we see a catastrophic intervention in Scripture that doesn't fit our preconceived gradualism so we re-interpret Scripture to fit our preconceived worldview. Picture a frog in the chemistry classroom sitting in a pot of water and you turn the Bunsen burner on and the water gradually heats up and the frog just sits there. Compare that idea with having your frog in a pot and dumping boiling water on it, that's the difference between pagan uniformitarianism, a gradual process and biblical catastrophism, a sudden intervention. What do we see at the Second Coming of Christ? How does that occur? Is Jesus Christ gradually descending over a period of millions of years as some kind of cosmic process? Or does He suddenly intervene, breaking into history? Do you see how the way you interpret Scripture is affected by your view of the universe? If you buy into this pagan assumption of uniformitarianism, because the all-knowing

university professor with 3 Ph.D.'s says, "Oh, we know this is true, we've got it all worked out, it's science, its fact" then when you come to these passages about the kingdom, like we see tonight and you read about the lamb lying with the lion and babies playing next to vipers dens and no one getting hurt what do you conclude? Well, either modern science is terribly wrong or the Bible's terribly wrong. You're going to have to either reject modern science or re-interpret your Bible. And because many Christians have been so promiscuous with the culture, they have all these cultural idols, then when they come to Scripture they accommodate, re-interpret the Bible to fit somehow with modern science because, "Well, lambs and lions frolicking together is just flat impossible. Everybody knows that." So when they face these texts there's a shift in the way they read. "Oh, can't be literal, must be a figure of speech, the Bible's full of allegory." What they've done there is something slick you have to watch for because "Yes, they're correct in one sense, that there are figures of speech in the Bible. Every language has figures of speech. But does that do away with the real thing being described by the figure? Jesus said, "I am the door." Does that mean Jesus is a piece of wood? Does that do away with the real truth behind the figure? That Jesus Christ is the way of salvation? Of course not. But what they like to do is point out there are figures to which we all agree and then dismiss the real truth behind the figure and say, "Aha, we've got you you silly literalists." But what they've done is wipe out the text; to them it's just an enigma, whatever it might mean. Why can't they see what it means? Because they're interpreting through the lens of uniformitarianism, that's why. You mean a Christian can adopt a pagan presupposition? Of course, Peter did it in Matt 16. What did Jesus say, "Get thee behind me Satan." You can't be more dead wrong than Peter in that passage, denying the idea that Jesus would die and be resurrected. Why did he deny that? Because his presuppositions didn't allow it. So, their interpretation of passages like this has little to do with their hermeneutic, it has to do with their view of the universe which underlies their hermeneutic. They are driven to that interpretation by a preconceived worldview. That's what's going on. As Charles Clough states,

"Bible teachers often assert that Dispensationalism proceeds from a literal hermeneutic, whereas Covenant Theology uses a mixed hermeneutic, particularly in prophetic passages. However, neither side chose its hermeneutic in a vacuum...An integrated network of beliefs

about the world and the Scriptures lies behind the hermeneutic in general and its specific application.”<sup>i</sup>

I can guarantee you're going to run into Christians who do not believe in a future kingdom on earth so keep this in mind, that deep down the issue is they've bought into a pagan presupposition, that's what's controlling their interpretation. What we're up against tonight as we look at the King and His kingdom is that there's been a catastrophic intervention, the Second Coming of Jesus Christ.

**Joel 3:18 And in that day**, that is the day of Israel's restoration from verse 1, "For behold, in those days and at that time, I will restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem." Judah and Jerusalem being the subjects of restoration both there and in verse 20. "But Judah will be inhabited forever And Jerusalem for all generations." Turn to Amos 9:11. We want to think through the geophysical and environmental implications of the Second Coming of Christ. Far too often when we come to the Bible we sort of come with our religious glasses on, looking for some gem of a verse to help me solve a religious problem; something with my son, something at work or how to pray better, all important things but when we come to the Scripture with a religious mindset we're far too narrow. God is concerned with all creation. Here's the broader sweep of things, verse 11, things that make you appreciate our God, "In that day I will raise up the fallen booth of David, And wall up its breaches; I will also raise up its ruins And rebuild it as in the days of old;" So, here's the first great city to be built in the Messianic Kingdom and it's the city of Jerusalem. Skip down to verse 13 for the agricultural produce in the kingdom. "Behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "When the plowman will overtake the reaper And the treader of grapes him who sows seed;" In other words, one of the things they're going to argue about in the kingdom is "Hey buddy, get out of my way here, I'm trying to get the soil ready for the next crop." Do you see what's going on here? There's not going to be a food shortage, I can tell you that, no famines, no starvation. Year-round sowing and reaping, sowing and reaping, sowing and reaping. Think about this. Think about the economic impact alone; billions and billions of dollars. So we have agricultural implications, economic implications, anthropological implications. Continuing, verse 13, for more agricultural changes, "When the mountains will drip sweet wine And all the hills will be dissolved." That's some flowery language but it's not just allegorical. There will literally be a

wealth of vineyards giving forth “sweet wine.” That’s the freshly stomped wine, it’s got a high sugar content, tastes really good, typically less alcohol by volume but the same stuff posited on Pentecost as intoxicating the tongues speakers (Acts 2:13). “All the hills will be dissolved,” in the sense that there will be so much wine it will erode the hills as it flows down. It’s a figure of speech but you get the idea, tremendous agricultural blessing. Verse 14, “Also I will restore the captivity of My people Israel, And they will rebuild the ruined cities and live *in them*; They will also plant vineyards and drink their wine, And make gardens and eat their fruit.” Her’s some implications in the realm of national security, protection from militant nations. One of the constant thorns in Israel’s side was having all their work in the fields decimated by wild beasts or invaders with the result that they lost the enjoyment of working with their hands. Think of all your hard work being stolen or destroyed, it’s more than just a stolen object, it’s theft of life, you pour your life into some work and when it’s taken it’s devastating mentally and physically. But that will all be reversed in the kingdom. Verse 15, “I will also plant them on their land, And they will not again be rooted out from their land.” There’s national security. They were uprooted from their land in AD70 until 1948 so has this been fulfilled? Has Israel ever been planted such that she will not again be uprooted? Of course not. Did they ever see this kind of agricultural prosperity? So this is all in the future, *if* God is faithful. So, the Bible keeps talking about the land, the land, the land of Israel, promised to Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and his descendants as an eternal possession (Gen 17:8; Acts 1:6-8). The day is coming when they will possess it forever and that’s what Joel is talking about, when Israel will be restored, in that time this tremendous agricultural produce, tremendous geophysical and environmental changes. To really grasp the nature of this future world maybe it will help you to do a little thought experiment. We’ve talked a lot about the ante-diluvian world, the world before Noah, the vegetable diet, the longevity of human life, the flatter topography of the earth, the far superior environment compared to what we observe today. It was so different that if you took a time machine back to that world and stepped out you’d think you were on another planet. Now, transfer that idea to the future kingdom; it’s a different planet than you and I observe today, geophysically, atmospherically, environmentally, the curse of the Flood is partially lifted. We’ll see more of these differences as we go along. So let’s go back to Joel 3. **The mountains will drip with sweet wine**, that’s a parallel with what we just read in Amos. **And the hills will flow with milk**, hearkens back to passages that

talk about the land flowing with milk and honey (Exod 3:8; Dt 6:3; 11:9; Josh 5:6; Ezek 20:1-17) which shows you the connection between the spiritual and the physical with respect to Israel. God promised them agricultural abundance for spiritual obedience. There's not something intrinsic to that soil that makes it better than any other soil. It's their spiritual obedience in the kingdom that results in God providing agricultural blessing. He makes the land fruitful. Now that doesn't go for the Church, that's for Israel. God doesn't promise material prosperity for you if you're obedient, He promises rewards in the kingdom for the Church for all who trust His gracious promises during times of adversity and patiently endure to the end of the trial (Js 1:12; 5:7-11; 2 Pet 1:2-11). Those who are faithful to the Lord through life's adversities will be abundantly rewarded and will enter to reign in the kingdom. But Israel was promised material and agricultural prosperity. Here in the Millennium **the hills will flow with milk**. The milk is not cow's milk but goat's milk. Goats live up in the hills and due to Israel's obedience the Lord will make the land fruitful for the raising of goats. "There would be milk—dairy goat milk. The modern, Western reader may not appreciate this fact, having perhaps a negative attitude toward goat milk. But in many places even in our modern world, the care and breeding of goats is highly valued, for it produces delicious milk that has many uses, both fresh for drinking and processed for cheese and yogurt." **And all the brooks of Judah will flow with water**; again, you need water to make the land productive and the Lord will provide brooks throughout Judah. **And a spring will go out from the house of the LORD To water the valley of Shittim**. Alright, now this introduces the Millennial Temple. If you study the OT carefully you'll find passages that keep referring to either the Tribulation Temple or the Millennial Temple. This is the Millennial Temple. Its description is given in Ezek 40-46. Seven chapters of the OT are devoted to the dimensions of this future Temple. It will stand longer than any of the previous Temples, 1,000 years. It will be built by the Messiah Himself. It will be His **house** and Shechinah Glory will also dwell there. The big problem people have with a Millennial Temple is that you have sacrifices for atonement, there's no escaping that teaching of Scripture (cf Ezek 43:20, 26; 45:15, 17, 20) and the question is "Why? Why if Christ has come and provided full atonement for sin do you have millennial sacrifices?" The traditional answer to this problem was that it was just a memorial of the death of Christ, just a reminder, kind of like how the Lord's Supper is a memorial of the death of Christ. Frankly, that may sound nice but it's totally impossible to sustain



from Scripture. The sacrifices are never said to be for a memorial but for “atonement” (see references above). Over and over and over again they are for atonement. The key gets back to the meaning of the Hebrew “atonement” in Leviticus and Ezekiel. The Hebrew word *kipper* and its derivatives come from the Akkadian cognate *kuppuru* which means “to cleanse” or “purify”. If a person or object used in Temple worship was defiled by some action they were required to offer an animal sacrifice which would cleanse their flesh or the object used in the worship of Shechinah. It did not provide justification or inner sanctification. As a result of animal sacrifice the person or object could worship in the presence of Shechinah and Shechinah could continue to dwell among them. What the sacrifices did not do is cover people’s sins from God’s sight till they could be taken away by Christ. Not one animal sacrifice ever did that. God simply overlooked sins committed beforehand (Rom 3:25). The OT sacrifices never covered sin; they never pertained to justification or inner sanctification. They only pertained to outward or external sanctification (i.e. to cleanse defiled flesh or objects used in Temple worship). Remarkably, a careful analysis of “atonement” in the Bible will show you that it is never directed toward God or sin in the Bible but always toward people or objects who have become unclean. The blood sacrifices ritually cleansed people and objects from external defilement so they could be used in the worship of Shechinah Glory. The key to understanding atonement is the presence of Shechinah among men. Whenever He is dwelling among men who are not in glorified bodies there is an added measure of ritual purity that must be maintained. That ritual purity is external only and is atoned for by animal sacrifice. Although Shechinah shows up numerous times in Scripture there are only three periods of history when He dwelled with man;

1. In the Garden Temple of Eden for an unknown period of time (Gen 3:8)
2. In the Tabernacle and Solomonic Temple from 1445-586BC (Exod 40-Ezek 10)
3. In the Millennial Temple (Ezek 43:1-12)

Animal sacrifices were not required in the Garden Temple of Eden because there was no defilement. However, when He came to dwell among men in the Tabernacle and Solomonic Temple animal sacrifices were required because men were defiled by violating ceremonial laws. Thus they needed sacrifices to ceremonially cleanse them from their defilement. There is an added measure of purity that must be maintained in order for Shechinah to dwell among



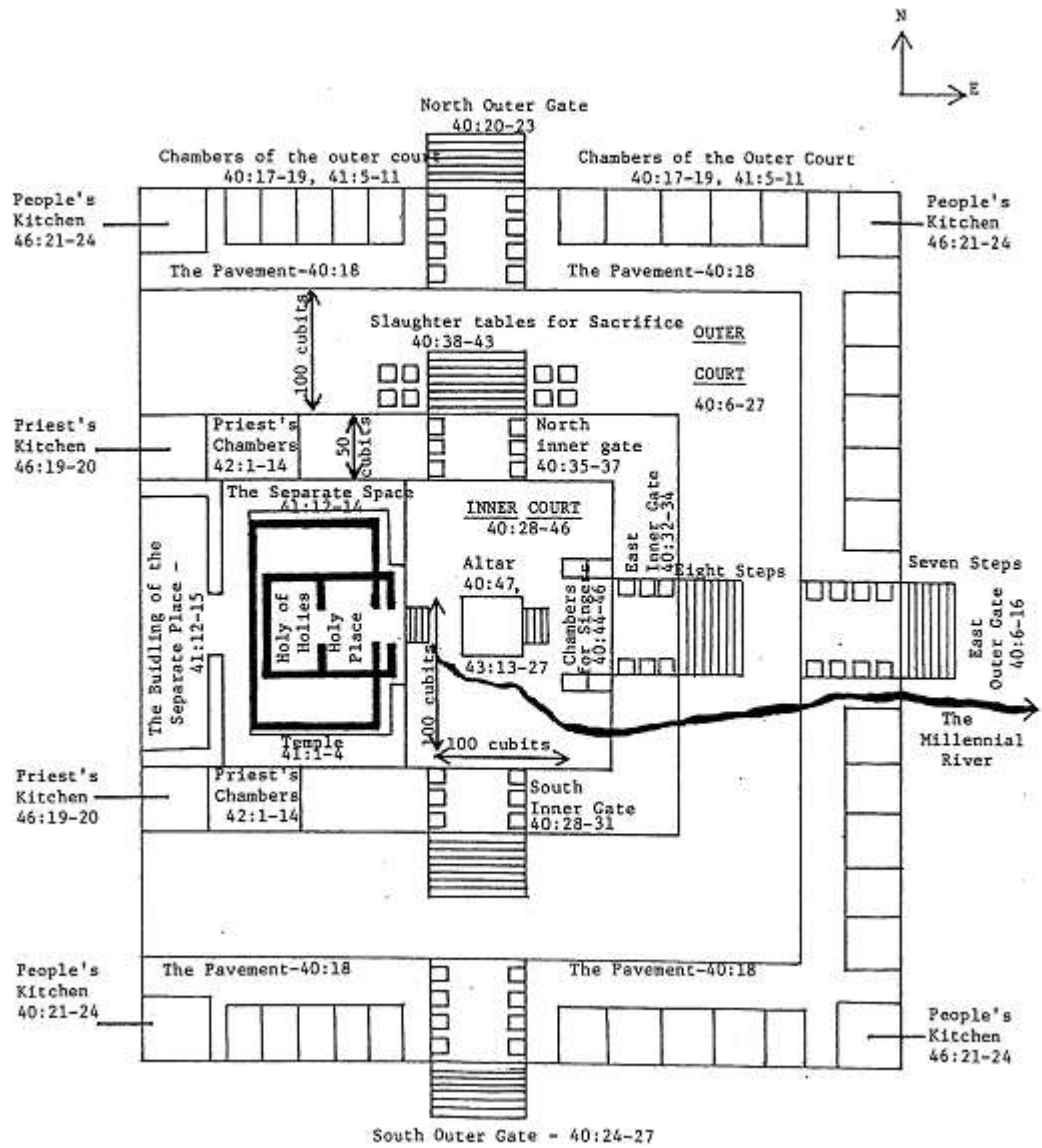
men. This explains why there is a need for animal sacrifices in the Millennium since those serving in the Millennial Temple are in Shechinah's presence. Although regenerate they will still be in natural bodies, bodies subject to sin and defilement. As Dr Randall Price said, "...this kind of sacrificial "atonement" is not for salvation nor for inward sanctification, but to preserve outward *corporate* "sanctification" (or ceremonial purification) so that a holy God can remain in the midst of an unholy people."<sup>ii</sup>

Coming out from this Temple Joel says there will be a Millennial River. Some people confuse this with the river mentioned in the New Jerusalem. This is not the New Jerusalem but the Millennial Jerusalem. Joel says, **a spring will go out from the house of the LORD To water the valley of Shittim.** This **spring** which comes out of the Millennial Temple becomes a river that is described in Ezek 47:1-12.

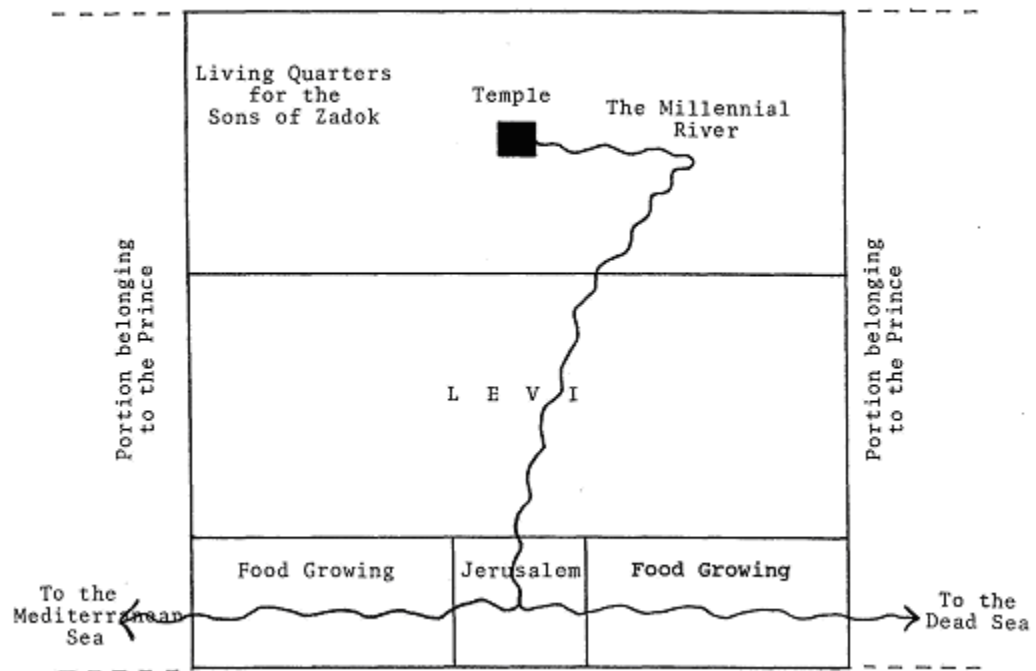
Then he brought me back to the door of the house; and behold, water was flowing from under the threshold of the house toward the east, for the house faced east. And the water was flowing down from under, from the right side of the house, from south of the altar. <sup>2</sup>He brought me out by way of the north gate and led me around on the outside to the outer gate by way of *the gate* that faces east. And behold, water was trickling from the south side. <sup>3</sup>When the man went out toward the east with a line in his hand, he measured a thousand cubits, and he led me through the water, water *reaching* the ankles. <sup>4</sup>Again he measured a thousand and led me through the water, water *reaching* the knees. Again he measured a thousand and led me through *the water*, water *reaching* the loins. <sup>5</sup>Again he measured a thousand; *and it was* a river that I could not ford, for the water had risen, *enough* water to swim in, a river that could not be forded. <sup>6</sup>He said to me, "Son of man, have you seen *this*?" Then he brought me back to the bank of the river. <sup>7</sup>Now when I had returned, behold, on the bank of the river there *were* very many trees on the one side and on the other. <sup>8</sup>Then he said to me, "These waters go out toward the eastern region and go down into the Arabah; then they go toward the sea, being made to flow into the sea, and the waters of *the sea* become fresh. <sup>9</sup>"It will come about that every living creature which swarms in every place where the river goes, will live. And there will be very many fish, for these waters go there and *the others* become fresh; so everything will live where the river goes. <sup>10</sup>"And it will come

about that fishermen will stand beside it; from Engedi to Eneglaim there will be a place for the spreading of nets. Their fish will be according to their kinds, like the fish of the Great Sea, very many. <sup>11</sup>“But its swamps and marshes will not become fresh; they will be left for salt. <sup>12</sup>“By the river on its bank, on one side and on the other, will grow all *kinds of trees* for food. Their leaves will not wither and their fruit will not fail. They will bear every month because their water flows from the sanctuary, and their fruit will be for food and their leaves for healing.”

**The Temple Compound**



**The Millennium Temple with River**



### Enlarged View of Millennial Temple, River and it's Course

Now, Joel says it will go forth to water the valley of Shittim, that is the “Acacias”. The Acacia tree was used in the construction of many of the furniture pieces in the Tabernacle such as the Ark of the Covenant and the Table of the Showbread.<sup>iii</sup> Looking at the diagram above Ezekiel was taken to the dividing point of the Millennial River and when he looked east the river went to “Dead Sea” which today is the saltiest body of water on earth. Nothing, I mean nothing lives in the Dead Sea, that’s why they call it Dead. In the Bible it’s often called the Salt Sea (Gen 14:3; Num34:3, 12; Deut 3:17; Josh 3:16; 12:3; 15:2, 5; 18:19). Today it’s about 30% mineral salts which means if you drink a mouthful of this water it will kill you. Every fish that flows down the Jordan River into it dies immediately when its fresh waters merge with the salt waters. But in the Millennium it will be a fresh water lake filled by the Millennial River which comes from a spring under the Millennial Temple.<sup>iv</sup> Everything that this river touches will come to life. And where is the valley of the Acacias (Shittim)? On the map below you can see that Shittim is located on the NE shore of the Dead Sea. This is the last place where Joshua and the Israelites camped before crossing the Jordan River and conquering Jericho. Today this is a rocky, barren region but in the Millennium it will be a well-watered, fruitful valley.

### Valley of the Acacias (Shittim) on NE corner of Dead Sea

Outside of the beautiful land of Israel Joel lists two areas that will be desolate.<sup>v</sup> He says **Egypt will become a waste** in the Millennium. The Egyptians come from Mizraim, the son of Ham (Gen 10:6). They were lighter skinned Hamites. Some people think all Hamites are black. That's not true. Technically everyone is a lighter or darker shade of brown. Cush, another son of Ham was black and gave rise to the Ethiopians but the Egyptians were lighter skinned Hamites. This just shows the genetic diversity in the DNA.<sup>vi</sup> Two prophetic passages relate to Egypt in the future. First, Isa 19 teaches that during the Tribulation Egypt will be converted to the God of Israel. Thus, peace will come between Israel and Egypt by means of conversion. Only when the Egyptians worship the same God as Israel, through Jesus the Messiah, will peace finally come. Second, according to Ezek 29 when Egypt enters the Millennial Kingdom her land will lay desolate for the first forty years because of her longstanding mistreatment of Israel in accordance with the outworking of Gen 12:3, those who curse Israel will be cursed. During this time the land of Egypt will lay desolate and the Egyptians will be dispersed all over the world. But afterwards, the Egyptians will be regathered, becoming a kingdom again. The second nation mentioned by Joel is **Edom**. **And Edom will become a desolate wilderness** during the Millennial period. Who is Edom? We learned in the Book of Obadiah that Edom is another name for Esau, the twin brother of Jacob. Esau was the firstborn and had the inheritance but he sold it to Jacob for a bowl of red soup so he was called Edom which means "red" (Gen 25:22-34). Her anti-Semitism is greater than Egypt's and therefore her desolation will last the entire 1,000 years. While the whole earth is beautified and blossoming continually like a rose, Edom will be a place of burning and desolation. Smoke will rise visibly from Edom for the entire 1,000 years. No person will live there. The Bible teaches that while Satan is confined to the abyss for the 1,000 years his demons will be confined to Edom and Babylon for the 1,000 years (Isa 34:8-15; Jer 49:17-18). Babylon is the only other place that will be totally desolate for the duration of the entire 1,000 years (Isa 13:20-22; Jer 50:39-43; Rev 19:3; 18:1-2). Demons will also dwell there. The reason for the desolations of Egypt and Edom is given in Joel 3:19, **Because of the violence done to the sons of Judah, In whose land they have shed innocent blood**. Both Egypt and Edom are punished for their anti-Semitism as an outworking of Gen 12:3. Those who curse Israel will be cursed. <sup>20</sup>**But**, and there's the contrast, **But Judah will be inhabited forever And Jerusalem for all generations**.

In other words there is a reversal of fortunes. Israel has been oppressed and exiled from her land by anti-Semitic nations but in the Millennium she will be restored to her land they will be exiled from their land. This is the fulfillment of the Land Covenant. God promises Israel would receive the land as an eternal possession. The boundaries are marked out in Gen 15 and at this time, from the Millennium forward Israel will inhabit her land. **<sup>21</sup>And I will avenge their blood which I have not avenged, For the LORD dwells in Zion.** The final end note of Joel is that justice will be executed. Will not the Judge of the earth do right? The day of the Lord will culminate in YHWH dwelling in Zion on the millennial earth. Israel will surely be restored above and beyond anything she has ever experienced in her 4,000 year history. The Lord will dwell in the Millennial Zion for 1,000 years and then this temporal kingdom will merge into the final state of the kingdom described in Rev 21-22. This mergence is also described in 1 Cor 15:23-28.

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<sup>i</sup> Charles Clough, *A Meta-Hermeneutical Comparison of Covenant and Dispensational Theologies*, [http://www.chafer.edu/journal/back\\_issues/v7n2\\_3.pdf](http://www.chafer.edu/journal/back_issues/v7n2_3.pdf), p 1

<sup>ii</sup> Randall Price, *The Temple and Bible Prophecy*, 556.

<sup>iii</sup> Acacia wood is mentioned only in connection with the tabernacle (Exodus chapters 37 and 38). The following items were made of acacia wood: the ark and its poles, the table of showbread and its poles, the brazen altar and its poles, and the incense altar and its poles, all the poles for the hanging of the curtains as well as the supports [boards]. In short, all the structural features of the tabernacle were constructed of acacia wood. The genus *Acacia* includes more than one hundred species of trees and shrubs which are found mainly in the arid and semiarid regions of Africa where they are ecologically the most important plants. Here the acacia trees are often the only plants on an otherwise bleak and monotonous terrain. Several species of acacia grow in the Sinai but not all would be suitable for use in construction. One of the most common is *Acacia raddiana* and it seems likely that this could be the acacia referred to in the Scriptures. These trees are conspicuous in the desert with their often slanted, flat tops. The leaves are very small, an adaptation which helps the plant conserve water. In times of water stress, the tree can drop its leaves entirely. The flowers are white and borne in dense head-like clusters. The shape of the fruit varies in different species but in *Acacia raddiana* is a coiled pod-like structure which contains several very hard seeds. Because of the slow growth of the tree, the wood is hard and dense. The heartwood is dark red-brown and attractive when polished. This wood is resistant to decay because the tree deposits in the heartwood many waste substances which are preservatives and render the wood unpalatable to insects making the wood dense and difficult to be penetrated by water and other decay agents. Recent research on the weight of the wood used in the tabernacle system shows that solid boards would be extremely heavy. Therefore, it has been postulated that narrow pole-like structures were used (Zevit, Z. 1992. Timber for the tabernacle: Text, tradition, and realia. *Eretz Israel* 23: 136-143.) I have not seen large specimens of these trees in the Middle East. Perhaps such trees were present at the time of the wanderers in Sinai. It is interesting to note that one of the freewill offerings which the children of Israel could bring for the tabernacle was acacia wood (Exodus 35:24). Those presenting an offering of silver or bronze brought it as an offering to the Lord, and everyone who had acacia wood for any part of the work brought it. (<http://images.google.com/imgres?imgurl=http://www.bibleplaces.com/images/Acacia%2520tree%2520in%2520Red%2520Canyon,%2520tb%2520n030101.jpg&imgrefurl=http://www.bibleplaces.com/wilderness.htm&h=300&w=400&sz=40&hl=en&start=8&um=1&tbid=4aG1P7is4QxNM:&tbnh=93&tbnw=124&prev=/images%3Fq%3Dacacia%2Btree%26um%3D1%26hl%3Den%26client%3Dfirefox-a%26rls%3Dorg.mozilla:en-US:official%26sa%3DN>)



iv Rev 21:6; 22:1.

v The information regarding Edom, Egypt and the dimensions of the Millennial Temple and River are gleaned from Arnold Fruchtenbaum, *Premillennialism in the Old Testament*, paper delivered at the Pre-Trib Research Center Conference, 2003.

vi Black and white fraternal twins by the same father have been known to be born on numerous occasions. [http://urbanlegends.about.com/library/bl\\_black\\_and\\_white\\_twins.htm](http://urbanlegends.about.com/library/bl_black_and_white_twins.htm), <http://www.geneticsandhealth.com/2006/10/21/twins-with-different-skin-color-genes/#more-1178>, <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/15447465/>.

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