

FROM SWORDS TO PLOUGHSHARES -- THE RETURN OF JESUS



One of the most famous prophecies of the Bible is in Isaiah 2:1-4, talking of a wonderful time to come when God's Kingdom will be established on earth.

Isaiah 2:1 This is what Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem: ²“In the last days the mountain of the LORD's temple will be established as the highest of the mountains; it will be exalted above the hills, and all nations will stream to it. ³Many peoples will come and say, “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the temple of the God of Jacob. He will teach us His ways, so that we may walk in His paths.” The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. ⁴He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples.

They will beat their swords into ploughshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.”

Notice what it says in verse 4: “They will beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning hooks.” This is inscribed in stone near the entrance to the United Nations Headquarters in New York. But the U.N. hasn't been successful in achieving this – it is obvious world peace won't be able to be achieved by human beings. What it will take is the first part of verse 4 – God will need to intervene to settle the disputes. That is going to happen, according to this prophecy, and then we will have world peace.

It's amazing how all the prophecies of the Bible dovetail together and back each other up. Let's notice what it says in Joel 3:10 “Beat your ploughshares into swords and your pruning hooks into spears. Let the weakling say, “I am strong!”

What??!! That is the opposite of Isaiah 2:4! Does this mean there is a contradiction in the Bible? Or is the verse in Joel misquoted?

No – these prophecies are *both* right, but they're looking at different times in the future. Unfortunately, before the time of great world peace which is coming with Christ's return to the earth, there is going to be a time of great war.

Let's notice the context of Joel 3, and we can see this is talking of the time just before Christ returns. Starting in Verse 9, we notice the N.Z. rugby league side is mentioned here – “*Proclaim this among the nations: Prepare for war! Rouse the warriors! Let all the fighting men draw near and attack.*”

Joel 3:2 “I will gather all nations and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat. There I will put them on trial for what they did to my inheritance, my people Israel, because they scattered my people among the nations and divided up my land.”

This shows it is **all** the nations. This has never happened before in history. It is going to happen just before Christ returns, because Verse 11B “Bring down your warriors, O Lord!”

refers not to the N.Z. Rugby League team, but to the “mighty ones” of God, another name for God’s angels.

The “Valley of Jehoshaphat” means the “Valley of Judgment” – it’s also called the “Valley of Decision” in Joel 3:14. Talking of God’s decision that it is now time to judge mankind for his rebellion.

Joel 3:15-16 ¹⁵ “The sun and moon will be darkened, and the stars no longer shine. ¹⁶ The LORD will roar from Zion and thunder from Jerusalem; the earth and the heavens will tremble. But the LORD will be a refuge for His people, a stronghold for the people of Israel.”

There will be amazing heavenly signs at that time. We’ll read about them in a corresponding prophecy soon. [*Also note Joel 2:31 “The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD.”*]

Joel 3:16B This brings us back to the positive outcome. “But the LORD will be a refuge for His people, a stronghold for the people of Israel.”

Joel 3:17ff look beyond the great battle to the resultant scene after Christ’s return.

Verse 18 “In that day the mountains will drip new wine, and the hills will flow with milk; all the ravines of Judah will run with water. A fountain will flow out of the LORD’s house and will water the valley of acacias.” Talk about fertile soil!

Other parallel prophecies add further details of this time, these amazing events.

Zechariah 14 is talking of the same time.

Zech 14:2 shows all the nations will be gathered at Jerusalem.

Verse 3 God will fight them, as we saw in Joel.

Verse 4 Adds the important detail that Jesus will return at this time. At the time Zechariah wrote this, he didn’t know Jesus would ascend to heaven from the Mount of Olives, but now we find Jesus will return exactly where He left from.

Verse 5B “All the holy ones” – something we also read about in Joel.

Verses 6-7 Heavenly signs, as we saw in Joel. The sun won’t shine, but it won’t be cold. It will be a unique day – a “once-only” occurrence. It won’t be light, because of the darkening of the sun, but it won’t be dark because of the glory of Jesus Christ and the angels’ arrival. It’s hard to describe or understand – it will be unprecedented, unlike any other day there has ever been. We’ll have to be there to see what it is like!

Verses 8-9 God’s Kingdom will be established on earth!

These prophecies of the Old Testament are right in line with what Jesus Christ Himself said would happen, when He was on earth the first time. He also predicted these events.

Matthew 24:3 “As Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately. “Tell us,” they said, “when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age?”

How did the disciples know He was coming again? Well, He said in Matthew 16:27 “For the Son of Man is going to come in His Father’s glory with His angels.”

Firstly, Jesus talked of things that have been happening continually since His first coming.

Matthew 24:4-8 ⁴ “Jesus answered: “Watch out that no one deceives you. ⁵ For many will come in my name, claiming, ‘I am the Messiah,’ and will deceive many. ⁶ You will hear of wars and rumours of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. ⁷ Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. ⁸ All these are the beginning of birth pains.”

Similarly in Matthew 24:9-13: ⁹ “Then you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of me. ¹⁰ At that time many will turn away from the faith and will betray and hate each other, ¹¹ and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. ¹² Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, ¹³ but the one who stands firm to the end will be saved.”

Matt.24:14 “And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.” This is happening. Only God can decide when it has been done sufficiently.

Matt. 24:15-16 “So when you see standing in the holy place ‘the abomination that causes desolation,’—spoken of through the prophet Daniel—let the reader understand— ¹⁶ then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.”

This gets to something specific which will happen right at the time, showing it is now time for people to prepare by fleeing – and this is what we read about in Joel and Zechariah – armies being gathered around Jerusalem. Maybe this is referring to the setting up of an idol in the temple, but Luke 21:20 says the important thing is the surrounding of Jerusalem by armies. This is the time of the “beating of ploughshares into swords and pruning hooks into spears.”

Matt. 24:21-22 ²¹ “For then there will be great distress, unequaled from the beginning of the world until now—and never to be equaled again. ²² “If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened.”

There is going to be a terrible time of trouble before Jesus Christ returns, but it isn’t going to result in the annihilation of mankind!

Matt. 24:29 “Immediately after the distress of those days ‘the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from the sky, and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.’

This talks about the heavenly signs we also read about in Joel and Zechariah. All these prophecies tie together.

Matt. 24:30-31 ³⁰ “Then will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. And then all the peoples of the earth will mourn when they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. ³¹ And He will send His angels with a loud *trumpet call*, and they will gather His elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.”

At that time, Jesus Christ will return. It is sad the nations will mourn, but most people are opposed to God – they don't want Him to be involved in their lives. However, there will be some people not mourning but rather rejoicing! Christians will greet this event with great joy. They will be gathered together by the angels. When Joel said “Bring down your warriors, O Lord!” he was talking about this.

Matt. 24:31 mentions a trumpet call. In the Old Testament, Israel kept a Feast called the “Feast of Trumpets”. Trumpets were used in Israel, and are still used today as an alarm of war, and a signal for people to gather together, and a signal for an announcement or proclamation, particularly at the coronation of a king or queen.

No one knows when this will happen, but we need to keep on our toes, watching and waiting and constantly being ready for it, according to verses 36 and 42:

Matt. 24:36 “But about that day or hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father.”

Matt. 24:42 “Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come.”

Another amazing prophecy of these events is found in the Book of Revelation.

Revelation 16:14 “They are demonic spirits that perform signs, and they go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them for the battle on the great day of God Almighty.”

The kings (leaders) of the whole world are gathered together for war. This is exactly what we read about in Joel, Zechariah and Matthew – the time when pruning hooks are turned into spears.

Rev.16:16 “Then they gathered the kings together to the place that in Hebrew is called Armageddon.”

Revelation 19:11-14 ¹¹ “I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice He judges and wages war. ¹² His eyes are like blazing fire, and on His head are many crowns. He has a name written on Him that no one knows but He Himself. ¹³ He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and His name is the Word of God. ¹⁴ The armies of heaven were following Him, riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean. ¹⁵ Coming out of His mouth is a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations. “He will rule them with an iron sceptre.” He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God Almighty. ¹⁶ On His robe and on His thigh He has this name written: **KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.**”

Rev.19:13 This is of course referring to Jesus. The “blood” relates to His crucifixion for us, but also at this time He will need to fight the armies of the nations who oppose Him.

Rev.19:14 These are the “warriors” or “mighty ones” we read about in Joel 3.

We read in Joel, Zechariah and Matthew of the armies gathered together for war.

Now we read about what the war is – they gather to fight Christ. Most likely this means they are gathering to fight each other, when Jesus Christ appears, and they unite against Him.

Rev. 19:19 “Then I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies gathered together to wage war against the rider on the horse and His army.”

A great trumpet call heralds the fact that God’s Kingdom on earth will begin. This is the time we read of in Isaiah, where the swords will be beaten into ploughshares, the nations will stream into Jerusalem for God’s teachings, and there will be no more war.

Revelation 11:15 shows the outcome of the war.

“The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Messiah, and He will reign forever and ever.”

Let’s conclude in Isaiah 9:2-7.

Verse 2 This is quoted in the gospels as a prophecy of Christ’s first coming.

² “The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.”

Verse 3 Jesus brings happiness to His people.

³ “You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy; they rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest, as warriors rejoice when dividing the plunder.”

Verse 4

⁴ “For as in the day of Midian’s defeat, you have shattered the yoke that burdens them, the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor.”

The “*day of Midian’s defeat*” was when Gideon with a few valiant warriors vanquished the armies of the Midianites (Judges 7:8-22). So Jesus and His Warriors will defeat the forces united against them at His return.

Verse 5 ⁵ “Every warrior’s boot used in battle and every garment rolled in blood will be destined for burning, will be fuel for the fire.”

A fire will burn up all the accoutrements of war after the battle of Armageddon—the spears will be beaten into pruning hooks, and they won’t learn war anymore.

Verses 6-7 This is what God is going to do. What a great time to look forward to!

⁶ “*For to us a child is born, to us a Son is given, and the government will be on His shoulders. And He will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.*

⁷ *Of the greatness of His government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David’s throne and over His kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this.*”

Let’s be sure we’re ready to meet Christ at His return, and to be with Him forever!