THE VALLEY OF DECISION

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Today, you face a valley of decision. It's a very simple decision – a choice between two options – a choice to stand on one side of the valley with one army, or on the other side with the other army.

You sit uneasily on a fence which is increasingly being shaken, by God and by man, and you have to choose which side you're going to land on – you must decide now whether to plant your feet firmly on one side of the fence or on the other side.

You can no longer make excuses, play for time, distract yourself with other issues or passively stay neutral. Through current events, God is bringing everyone into His valley, and He expects you to make *your* decision, because He is about to demonstrate *His* decision, when He rewards those who chose one side and judges those who chose the other.

The valley for you is a metaphorical one, although the decision you must make is real. But there is a literal valley where God is going to demonstrate His decision against His enemies, finally and ferociously, not very long from now. It's mentioned in Joel 3:14, which says:

> *Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision!*
> *For the day of the LORD is near in the valley of decision*.

In the same chapter, speaking of the same event, God declares that He will gather together this rebellious multitude, roar against them, and wreak punishment upon them in the valley where He makes His decision. Who are the people who will make up this multitude, and who will they be gathered together against? Let's read the first two verses of the chapter to get the full picture:

> *For behold, in those days and at that time, when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem, I will gather all the nations and bring them down to the valley of Jehoshaphat ["Yahweh judges"]. Then I will enter into judgment with them there on behalf of My people and My inheritance, Israel, whom they have scattered among the nations; and they have divided up My land*.

This prophecy hasn't yet been fulfilled, because although the Jews were brought back from Babylonian exile, they continued to be oppressed in their own land, and then they were exiled again by the Romans without the nations being gathered together and judged.

Yet today, the Jewish people are being regathered from the four corners of the globe into the land of Israel, and their fortunes are being restored against all the odds. The nations too are fulfilling the prophecy by developing antisemitic hatred against the Jews as a race, turning against their state, and trying to divide up their land.

But it's not *their* land, is it? That passage in Joel tells us that it's *God's* land, and that the Jews are *His* people. They always were His people despite all their rebellions and idolatry, and they continue to be His people despite what Paul described as their temporary blindness to Christ. For the time being, they remain a sinful group of people, and the government of Israel remains a flawed government, but they are a chosen people nonetheless.

So it's God's people that the nations are turning against – and if you oppose God's people and God's land, you're not simply opposing a race or a nation – you're opposing God Himself. That's not a side of the fence that you want to stand on!

Right now, that fence you're balancing on is definitely being shaken. If you've so far managed to ignore the events of the past century, from Britain's Balfour Declaration to the Holocaust to Israel's rebirth in 1948 to its miraculous military victories to its prosperous but perilous position in our day, you certainly can't ignore the decision now. The war in Gaza continues to push people to make a choice; the UK government's decision to recognise a Palestinian state within the land of Israel is a further polarising development, and now we've had the first "successful" terrorist attack against Jewish people on our streets, simply for being God's chosen people. Can you, dare you, sit on the fence any longer?

It's time to make a decision. In the days we're now entering, you won't be able to make delicate distinctions between the Jewish people and the land of Israel and the state of Israel. You won't be able to remain lukewarm, holding a position somewhere between loving Israel and hating Israel. You will have to choose: are you going to side with God's people the Jews and His land of Israel, and thus side with God, or are you going to side against God's people and land, and thus against God?

Anyone of any religion or persuasion can chime in after a tragedy like the Manchester synagogue attack, uniting in condemning violence. But God isn't interested in how His church can copy the world's voices. He wants a church that will speak distinctively and counter-culturally, speaking up for His truth, His interests, His kingdom and His people – not just when it's easy as people condemn a terrorist attack, but when it's difficult and unpopular as public opinion hardens.

That's part of being salt and light in a world that prefers darkness. It's part of taking up our cross daily and following Christ, who was also criticised and rejected. It's part of being a good soldier of Christ rather than cowering in fear of man. And it's part of learning what pleases the Lord, as a bride learns what pleases her Bridegroom and makes it her daily pursuit.

The Lord our Bridegroom is soon going to roar from Zion against the nations that gather to attack Him and His people. But at this moment, He's waiting to see whether we will choose to love what He loves and to side with the cause He sides with. He's looking now to see which side we'll pick, and which army we'll be part of. Which side will you choose?

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(Scripture quotations from NASB 1995.)