

The Valley of Decision

Outside the eastern wall of Jerusalem was a valley known by three names: the Valley of the Kidron (a river), the Valley of Jehoshaphat, and the Valley of Decision; this last name is found in Joel 3:14. When Joel called it "Decision Valley," little did he know how appropriate it would describe that region.

Years later the Lord Himself would pass through this valley on His way to the Garden of Gethsemane.

Jesus was agonizing—struggling with the greatest temptation of His life. Would He go all the way to the cross? He had been born for this purpose, and he had lived his entire life for this end. But could He do it?

That night Heaven stood with bated breath in anticipation as Jesus passed through the Valley of Decision with the weight of the world on His shoulders.

That night Jesus made the most important decision of His life: He looked beyond rejection, beyond fear, beyond pain, yea beyond death, and He saw the smiling face of His Father; and that's when He said to Him, "not My will, but Yours be done."

No doubt a sigh of relief was heard throughout Heaven that night—the night Jesus passed through the Valley of Decision—the night when the fate of the world was hanging in the balance.

Yes, when Joel named this valley, he named it well. But you know what?

We've been there ourselves; in fact, you may be there right now. The course that our lives take is determined in our Valleys of Decision.

Situations of life bring us to crossroads of life where important decisions must be made, decisions that will forever change our lives and the lives of everyone around us. Noteworthy is the fact that...

Decisions which affect our spiritual lives just cannot be isolated from their consequences.

Each decision leads us down paths that will affect all our future decisions.

By making the wrong decision, we become trapped, entrenched in the consequences of our choice; and after the passing of time, we find ourselves captives to our choice, unable to return to the right course. And...

Indecision is no better: When we have to make a choice and don't make it, that's in itself a choice; indecision concerning spiritual values and priorities is a decision that destroys character, happiness, and even salvation.

Making right decisions constantly, decisions based on truth, decisions motivated by love for the Lord—these are what mold us into people who can make a difference for Christ, for truth, and even for our eternity.

Consider this real-life scenario.

A young man just out of high school feels cramped at home; he wants to see the world and experience life, so he makes a decision to join the military. He's sent to a base overseas where he meets and marries a girl.

Before his first tour of duty is over, he has two children and one on the way, so he decides to re-enlist so that the military will pay for the birth of his third child.

By the end of his second tour of duty, he has five kids, and he's getting tired of the military. He wants to get out, but he has no skills for a secular job that will pay well enough to support his family; so he enlists again and again and again.

He has become "a lifer," not because he wanted to make the military his career, but because his early decisions forced him into this position. He wanted freedom, but his early decisions led him into bondage. He feels trapped, that his life is wasted, and that there's no escape.

This young man made decisions that determined the direction of his entire life. There are crucial decisions that everyone of us must make, and they'll lead us either into a life of bondage or a life of liberty. So **let's consider three such decisions we all must make.**

As with the young man in our previous scenario, our decision concerning our job &/or place of residence is the first crucial decision that determines the rest of our life's decisions.

Let's consider Lot's decision: He decided to pursue prosperity in the valley of Sodom, and his decision had devastating consequences to himself, his family, and God's people for generations.

Consider his choice.

Let's read **Genesis 13:5-7** to remind ourselves of the context.

Let's read **verses 8-9** to remind ourselves of the choices he was given.

So we find Lot in the Valley of Decision. Now...

Let's read **verses 10-12** to remind ourselves upon what basis he made his decision. Lastly...

Let's read **verse 13** to remind ourselves of the problem with Lot's choice.

Sodom was the homosexual capital of the world, apparently.

Sodom was so sinful (and Lot must have known this even before he made his choice) that Abraham couldn't even find ten righteous people in order to save the city. Notice...

One decision led to similar decisions.

First Lot pitched his tent towards Sodom (Gen. 13:12).

Then we find him within or by the gate of Sodom (Gen. 19:1). Now...

Consider the consequences.

Lot became a burden to Abraham (as if he didn't have enough on his plate already).

Lot's involvement in a heathen society made him a partaker of their conflicts.

He was captured in a battle carried away, so Abraham had to raise an army to rescue him (Gen. 14:11-16).

Lot experienced complete financial loss: he lost his job, his assets, his house, and pretty much everything except what was on his back; in fact, he ended up in a cave (Gen. 19:30).

Lot lost most of his family: he lost his children who were left behind and his wife on her way out.

Lot lost his sense of morality: although Peter called him a "righteous" man who was "oppressed" by the evil of Sodom (2 Pet. 2:7), we can still see compromise in his life.

We can see his own personal compromise in Genesis 19:4-8 when he offered his daughters to a mob in order to save some messengers.

We can also see compromise in his daughters in Genesis 19:31-35 where they stooped to deception and immorality because they saw a husbandless and childless future. But Lot's daughters were merely practicing the immorality that they had learned in Sodom; in other words, "daddy" made a decision that determined the immoral fabric of his girls. So...

Listen Up, Fathers or Soon-to-Be Fathers! You have to decide where your children will grow up.

Your decision may very well determine their moral convictions. In other words...

We can't expect our children to live in sin-city without compromising their morality.

We might think that we can live without compromise in Sodom, but such is self-deception; if the example of Lot teaches us anything, surely it teaches us that even a "righteous" man can lose his moral convictions when surrounded by immoral and evil men. So...

Our choice of occupation is critical because it usually determines where we'll live.

Lot's successes at his job forced him to move; his occupation motivated the decision. The problem was actually not Lot's job, but where that job took him. When we're considering a job that'll put our family into a situation of constant sinful influence, remember Lot.

Is there a congregation of the Lord's church in that city? And is it strong and active?

Remember: When Lot chose to take a job in the big city, he also chose the terrible consequences of his choice. Lot gave up everything for that job in Sodom. How much are we willing to lose for a job? "The love of money is the root of all evil," Paul said.

Are you at a stage in your life where you're thinking about your life's occupation and where you'll live? Then you're in the Valley of Decision, so don't make a bad choice!

Our decision concerning a spouse is the second and probably the most crucial decision that'll determine our future happiness.

There was a certain preacher who made a mistake in this arena of his life, and it ruined him and his influence before his brethren and the world.

As a young man he was respected for his wisdom and his devotion to God. He quickly became a man of influence, respected by both God's people and the world.

He was studious and well read: he even wrote a few books that became popular; but he made one mistake, and this mistake ruined him—he married an unbeliever. In fact, he married 700 of them!

This preacher's name, obviously, was Solomon. Let's read his story in **First Kings 11**.

Solomon married politically, but he bonded emotionally (**vv. 1-3a**).

What motivated Solomon to marry heathens? Political advantage, but over time he bonded with them emotionally.

The political ties were dangerous enough, but it was the emotional ties that caused him to worship idols. You know...

Some folks think it's wrong to marry outside of the faith, but they can date whoever they want. No! The danger is the emotional bond that develops while dating! The marriage ceremony simply makes the relationship permanent (or at least it's supposed to).

The emotional bond to heathen wives transferred Solomon's devotion from God to idols.

He was warned in Scripture to not marry the heathen (1 Kgs. 11:2 is from Deu. 7:3), and twice he was warned by direct revelation from God to not worship idols (**vv. 9-10**); but even God's own voice had no power over him. So the lesson is clear: Once we've become bonded emotionally to the sinner, even the direct voice of God won't phase us.

Solomon was trapped. The emotional attachment that he had for those idolaters was like a rope tied to a ring in his nose. He went wherever they led him.

The consequences of Solomon's decision were devastating, not just to himself, but also to the entirety of Israel (**v. 11**).

The kingdom was wrenched from the royal family, and Israel was divided: the ten northern tribes couldn't even worship in Jerusalem, causing them to inaugurate false worship.

The point is this: to date outside the Lord is to invite a future of misery and heartache. Remember: Paul said that we should learn from the Old Testament (Rom. 15:4).

Let's emphasize some lessons to be learned from Solomon's decision.

Any relationship that results in an emotional bond which leads us away from God's will is sin.

Paul said this: "Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness" (2 Cor. 6:14)?

He also, therefore, said to marry "only in the Lord" (1 Cor. 7:39).

Even divine wisdom is no match against an ungodly relationship. If Solomon became weak, disobeyed God's direct appeals and worshipped idols, perhaps even to the point of sacrificing some of his children in fire to Chemosh and Molech, who are we to think we're stronger than he—the one to whom God gave wisdom directly (1 Kgs 3)? So...

Let's avoid emotionally close ties with unbelievers; in other words, let's avoid emotional bonds like those created in dating and marriage.

Here's the paramount decision: What will you do (or what are you doing) with Jesus?

Everyone has a serious problem—each of us, at one time, was destined for the finality of Gehenna-Hell. And had Jesus not come to Earth for us, we'd have no choice—Hell would be our fate. But...

Jesus offers to us salvation from our sins, those sins that would've ended us up in that awful fate; so we must choose to follow Him. He doesn't force His lordship on anyone. But...

If we do choose to follow Jesus, be it known that He won't share His lordship with anyone else.

Many pretenders may arise to battle for supremacy in our lives—peers, family, employers, even our own selfish ambition. So...

We must decide to be absolutely committed to Him or totally against Him: Matthew 12:30 has Jesus saying, "He who is not with Me is against Me."

Pilate offered the Jews a choice: Jesus or Barabbas (**Mat. 27:15-17**).

Barabbas represented rebellion, self-will, and murder.

The multitudes now had a chance to redeem themselves by choosing Jesus over Barabbas; but they were convinced to choose Barabbas (**vv. 20-21**). So...

Who will you choose, not just initially, but on a daily basis: Jesus or Barabbas—the enemy of Christ?

If we're not 100% for Jesus, then we haven't really chosen Him; we've chosen to be His enemy.

This is the paramount decision of life. Is it possible that you're now in the Valley of Decision in reference to submission to the Lord of Life and Peace?

Conclusion

This valley outside of Jerusalem was called the Valley of Decision because it represented the judgment of God on His enemies.

According to our text in Joel, it was there that God would make His verdict against those who chose to oppose Him.

This valley was a real place that symbolized a real judgment. And although we may not've ever been there literally, we've all been there figuratively. Some of us may even be there right now.

If you're making a decision right now that'll shape the course of your life, I want you to mark this time in your memory, because you're in the Valley of Decision. And...

If you make the wrong decision here and now, the Lord won't let you forget it down the road, because this is where you'll be judged—in your Valley of Decision—the place and time in your life when you made your decision to reject Him. And...

This isn't just true if we haven't become Christians yet, but it's also true to us who are Christians, because each morning we awaken with a decision to either serve Jesus or the enemy. Listen...

The Valley of Decision can be a place of victory! It was for Jesus.

We just can't conceive the good that we can do by making the right choice in these decisions that shape our lives.

If we're now in Decision Valley, this could be our finest hour! So let's choose God and His way, and watch Him bless us and those we love!