

The Day of the Lord

Scripture: Zechariah 14:1–21

Code: 2171

INTRODUCTION

These are the last days of Israel's history as they are being regathered. They established their nation under a grant given to them by the United Nations providing international protection. Although the nation as a whole is still in a state of unbelief, they are being prepared for the day of their salvation, when they look on the One whom they once pierced. Prior to that time, they will make a pact with a false messiah, identified by Zechariah as a foolish shepherd, and known to us as the Antichrist. Everything will take place peacefully during the first half of that seven-year covenant, but in the middle of it the Antichrist will break his covenant with Israel and require that they worship him alone. When the people of Israel refuse, he will gather the armies of the world to exterminate them. That attack, which will climax in a great siege of the city of Jerusalem, is known as the Battle of Armageddon.

It is precisely at the siege of Jerusalem that Zechariah 14 begins. Chapter 13 prophesied that the siege will begin successfully and bring about tremendous bloodshed and devastation. It will be an apparent victory for the Antichrist and his hosts. But precisely when his victory looks secure is the moment Christ returns. Chapter 14 opens with a defeated Jerusalem, stripped of its possessions and honor, seemingly conquered by the world's armies. The conquerors are reveling in their spoils. However Jesus' return completely reverses the tide of battle.

LESSON

I. THE COMING OF THE DAY OF THE LORD (vv. 1-8)

A. Declared (v. 1)

"Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee."

1. The time

The opening phrase "the day of the Lord cometh" is an announcement all by itself. You could almost put an exclamation mark at the end of it and start the next phrase as a new paragraph. The prophecy has now reached a climax identified as "the day of the Lord." It refers not to one day, but to the period of time beginning with the rapture of the church extending through the Millennial Kingdom. That includes the Tribulation and the conquest and judgment of the nations when the Lord takes back the earth. It also includes the establishment of the Kingdom and Christ's reign on earth for a thousand years, at the end of which Satan will be vanquished forever. Man's day of dominating the earth will end as the Lord establishes His reign.

2. The treasure

The particular point in the day of the Lord that chapter 14 begins with is the climax of the siege of Jerusalem by the armies of the world. Prophecies in the books of Daniel and Revelation tell us there are four major armies that will be gathered against Israel: the Soviet-Arab alliance from the north, the Egyptian-Arab alliance from the south, the revived Roman confederacy from the west, and Oriental confederacy from the east. They seem to have accomplished their goal of conquering Israel because verse 1 says, "Thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee," referring to Jerusalem (indicated by the feminine pronoun personifying the city and its mention in the next verse).

3. The taunting

It was uncommon for an enemy to conquer a place and then divide the spoil in the midst of it; usually an army would haul it off. But those who successfully besiege Israel will have such a sense of victory and confidence, they will start divvying up the booty right there on the spot, as if to taunt the remaining inhabitants of Jerusalem. At that very moment, however, Jerusalem's extremity will become God's opportunity.

B. Described (vv. 2-8)

1. The gathering by God (v. 2a)

"I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle."

It may be a little surprising to Israel to learn that God Himself gathered the nations against Jerusalem. Their enemies are not pursuing their independent objectives, or even solely accomplishing the will of Satan. God will use the Battle of Armageddon to purge the unbelieving from Israel and to judge the nations, just as Israel was used as an agency of judgment when it entered the Promised Land.

Revelation 16 indicates the means God will use to gather the armies to Jerusalem: "I saw three unclean spirits, like frogs, come out of the mouth of the dragon [Satan], and out of the mouth of the beast [the Antichrist], and out of the mouth of the false prophet. For they are the spirits of demons, working miracles, that go forth unto the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty.... And he gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon" (vv. 13-14, 16). Demons are going to gather rulers from all over the world to lead the great armies against Israel. But ironically those agencies of judgment will be judged themselves. The focal points of the battle will be Jerusalem and the plain of Megiddo in the north, although the battleground will extend throughout the land of Israel.

2. The assault of the armies (v. 2b)

"The city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city."

Jeremiah 30:7 talks about "the time of Jacob's trouble," using Jacob as a metonym for the nation Israel. It refers to an unprecedented time of national calamity. The situation will seem beyond hope when the city is invaded, its houses plundered, its women raped, and half its inhabitants taken as prisoners of war. But God promises that "the residue" (the remnant or remainder) will be spared. I believe the half that is killed or taken away will be unbelievers and the surviving half will be the believing remnant, although it's hard to say for sure. Zechariah has already told us that two-thirds of the nation would perish, and now here we learn that half of the city of Jerusalem will perish. One reason believers would be spared is so they can populate the earthly Kingdom.

3. The return of the Redeemer (vv. 3-8)

a) His defense (v. 3a)"Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle."God is not about to allow the enemy to destroy those who are ready to put faith in the Messiah. They will be like those who were baptized by John the Baptist, a people prepared for His coming (Matt. 3:5-6). To prevent the eradication of that remnant, the Lord personally will intervene to fight against those nations. It will be "as when he fought in the day of battle." That is a general reference to other Old Testament reference of when God fought for His people, such as Joshua's at Gibeon (Josh. 10:14), the conquest of Canaan (23:3), and the defeat of Sisera (Judg. 4:15). Just as the Lord has fought for His people in the past, so He will do in the future. Like Joseph, who made himself known to his brothers in their hour of deepest distress, so will God come in the time of Jacob's trouble in the Person of the Lord Jesus Christ.b) His descent (vv. 4-8)(1) Its place (4a)"His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east."When the Lord returns to deliver His people He will land on the Mount of Olives. That verse is a tremendous affirmation of the deity of Jesus Christ. In Acts 1:11 the angels told those who witnessed Christ's ascension to heaven that He would return to the same place (the Mount of Olives) in the same way (in a personal visible form). I don't think the mention of His return to that place is symbolic.

Jesus will literally return to the Mount of Olives as Zechariah prophesied and the angels verified.

If Only the Mount of Olives Could Talk!

That's the same mountain where Jesus shed so many tears night after night, where He uttered so many of His prayers, and where He held many precious conversations with His disciples. It supported His weary feet as they walked its paths and witnessed the agony and bloodshed of His arrest and crucifixion, along with the exhilaration of His resurrection and ascension. What wonderful things it could tell us if it could talk. That same mountain will one day experience His return and receive those same feet.

(2) Its product (v. 4b)"The Mount of Olives shall cleave in its midst toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south."That will be some earthquake! Such seismic upheavals are not uncommon when God announces His coming in judgment.(a) Supportedi) Nahum 1:5--When the Lord comes in judgment "the mountains quake before him, and the hills melt, and the earth burned at his presence, yea, the world and all that dwell in it."ii) Micah 1:2-4--"Hear, all ye peoples; hearken, O earth, and all that is in it; and let the Lord God be witness against you, the Lord from his holy temple. For, behold, the Lord cometh forth out of his place, and will come down, and tread upon the high places of the earth. And the mountains shall be melted under him, and the valleys shall be cleft, like wax before the fire, and like the waters that are poured down a steep place."iii) Revelation 16:18-21--The apostle John saw a vision of the final judgment upon the earth before Christ's return: "There were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great. And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell; and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath. And every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. And there fell upon men great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent [100 lbs.]" A supernatural earthquake will generate a worldwide cataclysm.(b) StatedWhen the feet of Jesus Christ touch down on the Mount of Olives at His return, there will be a release of power very unlike His quiet first coming as a baby born in a manger. Immediately the world will know He arrived and many will scream for the rocks and the mountains to fall on them to hide them from His face, knowing the judgment He brings (Rev. 6:16).One resulting phenomena of this earthquake will be the creation of a valley running east and west as the mountain is pulled northward and southward. Although it offers some protection, the Mount of Olives is the greatest obstacle to an eastern escape from Jerusalem. But this large new valley going straight out from Jerusalem to the east will offer a quick route of escape for the besieged inhabitants of Jerusalem.I believe that valley is "the Valley of Jehoshaphat," which Joel also calls "the valley of decision" (Joel 3:12, 14). That is where God will gather all the nations and judge them after His people have fled to safety. He will devastate the armies of the world as they attempt to pursue the remnant of Israel that will have just escaped eastward through the valley He created for that purpose. It will probably be similar to the judgment of Pharaoh's army as it tried to cross the sea God had opened up for Israel's escape from Egypt--God's judgment will come crashing down on them when the armies enter that mighty valley.(3) Its purpose (v. 5a)"Ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azel; as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah, king of Judah."The Lord now calls the valley He just created "the valley of the mountains," for it was created when the Mount of Olives split in half. The valley shall reach unto "Azel [Heb., 'be near to']." In Zechariah's day there apparently was a place known by that name on the east side of Jerusalem. The implication is that the valley will possibly begin near a gate to the city, thus providing a quick escape from it to prevent the need to run down and up any inclines to get to the valley."The earthquake in the days of Uzziah" is mentioned in Amos 1:1, but we don't know anything more about

it. Apparently it was a terrible earthquake that caused the people of Jerusalem to flee the city. The flight at the Lord's return will be like that of King Uzziah's day.(4) It participants (v. 5b)"The Lord, my God, shall come, and all the saints with thee."That is another great statement affirming the deity of Christ. The One whose feet will land on the Mount of Olives at His bodily, visible return is the same Lord called "the Lord, my God." And, as many New Testament verses indicate, He will be accompanied by the saints.(a) 1 Thessalonians 3:13--Believers will be established unblamable in holiness "at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints." Paul was exhorting the Thessalonians to be spiritually ready for Christ's return.(b) Colossians 3:4--Believers who have already gone to be with the Lord will be a part of that returning group of saints: "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with him in glory."(c) Jude 14--Jude said, "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints."At the time Christ comes from heaven with all the saints dressed in white robes and riding on white horses (Rev. 19:14) is when I believe the remnant of Israel will look up and recognize the One whom they pierced, and will mourn for Him as an only son (Zech. 12:10). That is when victory over the armies and the mourning and repentance of chapter 12 will take place, and when the fountain of chapter 13 will be opened. What a fantastic day for the nation of Israel!(5) Its peculiarity (vv. 6-8)(a) The appearance of the sky (v. 6)"It shall come to pass, in that day, that the light shall not be clear, nor dark."When Jesus comes the stars, the sun, and the moon will fade. Elsewhere Scripture mentions such changes in the heavens at the end times.(i) Isaiah 13:9-10--"The day of the Lord cometh, cruel both with wrath and fierce anger For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light; the sun shall be darkened in its going forth, and the moon shall not cause its light to shine" (cf., Isa. 24:23; Joel 3:14-16; Matt. 24:29-30).(ii) Revelation 6:12-14--"The sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became like blood; and the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind. And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together."In the midst of the blackness comes the blazing revelation of Jesus Christ with all His saints. At that moment Israel is going to look upon their Messiah in repentance and be wonderfully saved and gathered into the Kingdom. The rest of the world will cry out in terror and be judged (Rev. 6:15-16).(b) The arrival of the Savior (v. 7)"But it shall be one day which shall be known to the Lord, not day, nor night; but it shall come to pass that, at evening time, it shall be light."The Hebrew word translated "one" means "unique." That day will like no other day. The laws of nature will go out of balance. Night and day will be suspended at that point. The light from the sun will be replaced by the light of Christ's blazing glory, which will fill the earth. He will arise as "the Sun of righteousness ... with healing in his wings" (Mal. 4:2). There will be salvation for all who submit to that Light in faith, but judgment for those who curse it.(c) The alteration of the surroundings (v. 8)"It shall be, in that day, that the living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea; in summer and in winter shall it be."Jerusalem will be dramatically different. Right in the middle of Mount Moriah, where the Jerusalem Temple would have been, God will create a gushing spring that will send rivers to both the east and the west. I believe that will be real water because Isaiah says the desert will "blossom like the rose" (Isa. 35:1). If a skeptic doubts that there is water under the ground over there, that's immaterial because God can create it at the time He needs it. I also believe this is a prophetic picture of how blessing will flow from Jerusalem, which will be the center of the Kingdom.

II. THE CORONATION OF THE LORD AS KING (vv. 9-11)

A. The Primacy of the Potentate (v. 9)

"The Lord shall be king over all the earth; in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one." The first thing that happens after Christ arrives is His coronation. He'll be King not only in heaven, but also on earth. His return to reign over an earthly Kingdom is a promised reality. There will be "one Lord, and his name one." That is, there will be only one religion in the entire world

during the Millennial Kingdom. Christ, who will rule with a rod of iron (Rev. 19:15), will have done away with all false religions spawned by Satan. The world will worship our unique and incomparable Lord alone, the only wise God and Savior (1 Tim. 1:17; Jude 1:25), the Lord Jesus Christ.

B. The Prominence of the Palatial City (v. 10)

"All the land shall be turned like the Arabah from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem; and it shall be lifted up, and inhabited in its place, from Benjamin's gate unto the place of the first gate, unto the corner gate, and from the tower of Hananel unto the king's winepresses."

When Christ comes in judgment upon the nations, the tremendous earthquake that takes place will create the valley running east and Mount Moriah will be split open so that water starts to flow, allowing the entire land from Geba in the north to Rimmon in the south (a distance of about forty miles) is going to become like the Arabah. The Arabah is the longest, deepest, and flattest valley in the world. It runs from the Sea of Galilee southward beyond the Dead Sea, where it is as low as 1300 feet below sea level. Zechariah is prophesying that all the mountainous terrain around Jerusalem will be as low the Arabah. The result will be that Jerusalem will stick up like a solitaire diamond on a ring.

Then God will rebuild the city of Jerusalem according to the dimensions given in verse 10. From the gates to the tower to the winepresses were the dimensions the city once was in its glory before the nation's exile. Jerusalem won't be a small village like it was in Zechariah's time. It will be a prominent city in appearance and the royal city containing the throne of Jesus Christ. It will be exalted in both place and purpose.

C. The Peace Among the People (v. 11)

"Men shall dwell in it, and there shall be no more utter destruction; but Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited."

What an incredible day for Jerusalem--no more destruction, no more curse, no more idolatry, and no more apostasy! Not only will the Lord be crowned on that day, but the city of Jerusalem itself will be crowned and become the jewel of the earth.

III. THE CONQUEST OF THE NATIONS (vv. 12-15)

A. Its Elements (vv. 12-14a)

"This shall be the plague with which the Lord will smite all the peoples that have fought against Jerusalem: their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their holes [sockets], and their tongue shall consume away in their mouth. And it shall come to pass, in that day, that a great tumult from the Lord shall be among them; and they shall lay hold every one on the hand of his neighbor, and his hand shall rise up against the hand of his neighbor. And Judah also shall fight at Jerusalem."

Having seen the glorious results of our Lord's return, Zechariah now describes what will happen to the godless and how Israel will be able to gain the victory.

1. A deadly plague

This plague will cause the nation's flesh, eyes, and tongues to rot while they are standing. Those who are judged will depart into everlasting punishment, while the believing remnant will hear Christ say, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you" (Matt. 25:34).

2. A terrible confusion

At some point during the Lord's judgment--and it's difficult to know the exact sequence of events here--a "tumult" of confusion will result among the armies and cause them to slay themselves.

3. A super-human strength

While the enemies of Israel suffer, God will give His people great strength thus enabling them to victoriously assist in the battle.

B. Its Effect (v. 14b)

"The wealth of all the nations round about shall be gathered together--gold, and silver, and apparel--

in great abundance."

The tables will be turned immediately: instead of the nations counting all their booty acquired from Israel (v. 1), the wealth of all the nations will be gathered and brought into the hands of God's people.

C. Its Extent (v. 15)

"So shall be the plague of the horse, of the mule, of the camel, and of the ass, and of the beasts that shall be in these tents, as this plague."

The plague of destruction that afflicts God's enemies will even extend to their livestock.

IV. THE CHARACTER OF THE KINGDOM (vv. 16-21)

A. Its Worship of the Lord (vv. 16-19)

1. The pilgrimage (v. 16)

"It shall come to pass that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles."

I believe there will be a believing remnant from even the nations who turned to Christ when came or at some point during the Tribulation. Such believers will make an annual pilgrimage to Jerusalem to worship the Lord and keep the Feast of Tabernacles. That feast celebrated the time when God dwelt (Heb., sakan, "tabernacled") with Israel in the wilderness. And it will be celebrated in the future, for God in the Person of His Son will again dwell among His people.

2. The punishment (vv. 17-19)

a) An absence of rain (v. 17)"It shall be that whoever will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain." Nations who refuse to come to Jerusalem to worship Christ will experience a drought. Such a condition could result in disaster. b) An affliction by plague (vv. 18-19)"If the family of Egypt go not up, and come not, that have no rain, there shall be the plague, with which the Lord will smite the nations that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles. This shall be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all nations that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles." One nation that might not care if it didn't rain is Egypt. It hardly ever rains there and the Nile River supplies all the water it needs. Such nations will be afflicted by a plague.

B. Its Way of Life (vv. 20-21)

"In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD; and the pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar. Yea, every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness unto the Lord of hosts; and all they that sacrifice shall come and take of them, and boil in them; and in that day there shall be no more a Canaanite in the house of the Lord of hosts."

The phrase "holiness unto the lord" was engraved on a gold plate attached to the high priest's turban. It signified that he was set him apart from every other man. He had a uniquely holy function. There was no one like the high priest. Zechariah prophesies that everything--even mundane and ordinary things like the bells that decorate horses and common pots and pans--will be as holy as the high priest and the altar bowls once were to Israel in days gone by. The Kingdom won't be like the world is today with its division between sacred and secular. Everything will be sacred.

The promise that there will no longer be "a Canaanite in the house of the Lord" is a euphemistic way of saying that the morally and spiritually unclean person will be excluded from entering the millennial Temple. Before Israel conquered the Promised Land, the vile Canaanites inhabited it. The term "Canaanite" became proverbial in Israel for a morally degenerate person.

In the Kingdom the whole world will be considered holy to the Lord. The Lord wants a holy people and He has called His church to be holy. In Ephesians 5 the apostle Paul tells believing husbands, "Love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it ... that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (vv. 25-27). God wants a holy church

and a holy people. And in that day He's going to have it!

Focusing on the Facts

1. Although the nation of Israel is being gathered by God while still in a state of unbelief, what are they being prepared for?
2. What is the opening scene of Zechariah 14?
3. What does "the day of the Lord" refer to?
4. What will the seemingly victorious armies do in the midst of Jerusalem (v. 1)?
5. Explain God's objectives for bringing the nations against Israel. According to Revelation 16, what agency does He use to accomplish that?
6. Although the battleground will probably cover the entire land of Israel, where will the focal points of the final battle be?
7. What will happen to Jerusalem when the siege is successful (v. 2)? Whom might "the residue of the people" be?
8. What will happen to protect those people (v. 3)?
9. List other biblical victories in which the Lord played a decisive part.
10. Identify the place of the Lord's return to deliver His people and give New Testament confirmation of that.
11. Describe what happens the moment the Lord touches ground (v. 4).
12. Who will accompany the Lord at His return? Support your answer with Scripture (v. 5).
13. What will happen to the appearance of the sky at Christ's second coming? What will those peculiar changes highlight (vv. 6-7)?
14. What will the literal fountain in Jerusalem be symbolic of (v. 8)?
15. Describe the religious focus in the Millennial Kingdom (v. 9).
16. Describe how the status of Jerusalem and the topography around it will be changed (v. 10).
17. What are three elements that will play a part in the conquest of the nations (vv. 12-14)?
18. How will the tables be turned when the nations are conquered (v. 14)?
19. What will the believing remnant from the nations do on an annual basis in the Millennium? What will happen to those who fail to come (vv. 16-19)?
20. How will life on earth in the Kingdom be different from what it is now (vv. 20-21)?

Pondering the Principles

1. Christ is the theme of the book of Zechariah. In chapter 1 He is the Riding One. In chapter 2 He is the Measuring One. In chapter 3 He is the Cleansing One. In chapter 4 He is the Empowering One. In chapter 5 He is the Judging One. In chapter 6 He is the Crowned One. In chapter 7 He is the Rebuking One. In chapter 8 He is the Restoring One. In chapter 9 He is the Kingly One. In chapter 10 He is the Blessing One. In chapter 11 He is the Shepherding One. In chapter 12 He is the Returning One. In chapter 13 He is the Smitten One. In chapter 14 He is the Reigning One. Zechariah saw Christ. Did you catch his vision? Ezra 6:14 tells us that the people of Israel "prospered through the prophesying of ... Zechariah." Have you? Now that you've gone through this study, read the entire book of Zechariah straight through. Make sure you know the Christ Zechariah looked so forward to, and share Him with those around you.
2. God's purpose throughout history has been to show man that he is a sinner in need of a Savior. That theme will come to a climax at the return of Christ to judge the nations and deliver the believing remnant. Knowing His goal is to establish a people "holy and blameless before Him" (Eph. 1:4), are you living your life in a way that reflects that noble goal? Meditate on 1 John 3:2-3 and 2 Peter 3:10-15. Commit yourself to being more sensitive to sin in your life, and more willing to confess and repent of it. Seek now to be a holy example of the perfection we will experience in His Kingdom.

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