

The Day of the Lord

Zechariah 14

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Zechariah 14:1-15 – The Day of the Lord

Behold, the day of the Lord is coming, and your spoil will be divided in your midst.

² *For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem; The city shall be taken, the houses rifled, and the women ravished. Half of the city shall go into captivity, but the remnant of the people shall not be cut off from the city.*

³ *Then the Lord will go forth and fight against those nations, as He fights in the day of battle.*

⁴ *And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east. and the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, from east to west, making a very large valley; Half of the mountain shall move toward the north and half of it toward the south.*

⁵ *Then you shall flee through My mountain valley, For the mountain valley shall reach to Azal. Yes, you shall flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Thus the Lord my God will come, and all the saints with You.*

⁶ *It shall come to pass in that day that there will be no light; The lights will diminish.*

⁷ *It shall be one day which is known to the Lord— Neither day nor night. But at evening time it shall happen That it will be light.*

⁸ *And in that day it shall be that living waters shall flow from Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea and half of them toward the western sea; In both summer and winter it shall occur.*

⁹ *And the Lord shall be King over all the earth. In that day it shall be— “The Lord is one,” And His name one.*

¹⁰ *All the land shall be turned into a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem. Jerusalem shall be raised up and inhabited in her place from Benjamin’s Gate to the place of the First Gate and the Corner Gate, and from the Tower of Hananel to the king’s winepresses.*

¹¹ *The people shall dwell in it; and no longer shall there be utter destruction, but Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited.*

¹² *And this shall be the plague with which the Lord will strike all the people who fought against Jerusalem:*

Their flesh shall dissolve while they stand on their feet, Their eyes shall dissolve in their sockets, And their tongues shall dissolve in their mouths.

¹³ *It shall come to pass in that day that a great panic from the Lord will be among them. Everyone will seize the hand of his neighbor, and raise his hand against his neighbor’s hand;*

¹⁴ *Judah also will fight at Jerusalem. And the wealth of all the surrounding nations shall be gathered together: Gold, silver, and apparel in great abundance.*

¹⁵ *Such also shall be the plague on the horse and the mule, on the camel and the donkey, and on all the cattle that will be in those camps. So shall this plague be.*

v1 – What is the Day of the Lord?

This is the day Jesus will universally be revealed to the world as the Creator-God of all creation when He returns to the earth to establish the Millennial Kingdom.

Consequently, this term also refers to the Tribulation, the 7-year preparation of His return when God pours out His wrath on the earth.

How is it the spoil of Israel will be divided at the Day of the Lord?

There will be no direct material benefit from God delivering Israel from their enemies... they will lose everything. All they will have at the Lord’s coming will be their lives and the Lord Himself.

v2 – Could this have been fulfilled in history?

I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem:

No, it has to be yet future when Jerusalem will be surrounded and attacked by an international force.

- The Romans came against Jerusalem in 70 A.D. with a multinational army but there was no deliverance as Zechariah describes.

Could this refer to the battle of Armageddon at the end of the Tribulation?

No, there will be no Jews living in the city of Jerusalem at that battle, because Antichrist will have killed every Israelite, he can lay hands on after he desecrates the Temple in the Abomination of Desolation.

The Jews who do escape will flee into the mountains (which Jesus commanded them to do in Matthew 24:15-21). Most believe will be the ancient city of Petra located in modern-day Jordan and was once in the territory of Edom.

Revelation 12:6 – *Then the woman fled into the wilderness, where she has a place prepared by God, that they should feed her there one thousand two hundred and sixty days.*

But why then does the passage say that Israel goes “into captivity”?

“Into captivity” is the Hebrew word “bag·gō·w·lāh,” and its definition is “exile or exiles.” The definition of “exile” is: The state or a period of forced absence from one’s country or home; it is voluntary absence, not a compulsorily one as implied by translating the word as captivity.

- “Exile” is most certainly the appropriate translation to the verse. An exile doesn’t have to mean that they are taken by force to another country. It can very well mean that these people are able to flee to a safe harbor as exiles when this attack happens, which would certainly fit what happens after the Abomination of Desolation.

How is it that ‘all nations’ will be coming against Jerusalem, when it is only Antichrist and his forces?

It is likely that the Antichrist’s military wing will be something like the United Nations Peacekeeping Forces representing all the nations of the earth.

Why do we believe that Israel will shelter in Petra following the Abomination of Desolation?

This possibility is strongly implied by historical events, circumstantial evidence...

- Jesus said in Matthew 24:16 that Israel should flee to the mountains... The only reasonably safe area would be the mountains along the shores of the Dead Sea – the highest and most inaccessible mountains being south of the Dead Sea at Petra.
- Josephus wrote that groups of Jews fled to Edom and Petra during both the Babylonian invasion of Judah in the 6th century BC, and also when the Romans destroyed the city and the temple in 70 AD.
- Petra is about 136 miles (as the crow flies) to the southeast of Jerusalem.
- The Jews will know Jordan to be a safe refuge not directly controlled by the Antichrist: *“He shall also enter the Glorious Land [Israel], and many countries shall be overthrown; but these shall escape from his hand: Edom, Moab, and the prominent people of Ammon”* (Daniel 11:41).

What will happen to the Jews who do not flee to the mountains at the Abomination of Desolation?

One can be certain that in Jerusalem at the beginning of the siege, when *“the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished,”* will see many Jews killed in the process.

Who is not cut off from Jerusalem following the Abomination of Desolation?

The *“residue of the people”* that remains in the city refer to the Arabs and other people of differing nationalities that reside there along with the Antichrist’s international UN forces. They will be stationed there for the first three and one-half years of the Tribulation enforcing the “covenant” treaty that started the seven-year Tribulation. It is these very same “peacekeeping” forces that do the plundering, raping, and killing.

v3 – When will the LORD will go forth and fight against the enemies of Israel?

Just when it seems that all hope is gone for Jerusalem and the people of Israel, then the Lord will fight for His people. Notice that the Lord fights for Israel before He sets foot on earth...

v4 – Where will Jesus physically return to earth?

His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives ... And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, from east to west: This speaks of the LORD - Jesus, as God the Son - materially returning to a material earth and setting His feet on the Mount of Olives. At that time a great split will cut the Mount of Olives in two.

Where will we be when Jesus returns to the earth?

Thus the LORD my God will come, and all the saints with You: We will be with Him... Jesus will touch His feet to the Mount of Olives when He returns in glory with all the saints, the armies of heaven...

Revelation 19:14 – *And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses.*

This was the type of arrival the Jews in Jesus' day hoped for. When the Roman armies surrounded Jerusalem in 70 A.D. there was a misunderstanding of prophecies like this made the Jews overly confident that the Messiah would deliver them then.

- They did not recognize that the nation had to first come to repentance as Zechariah mentioned in 11:12-13 and 12:10.

We usually refer to the final battle of the Tribulation just prior to Jesus setting foot on earth as Armageddon because of:

Revelation 16:14, 16 – *For they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the earth and of the whole world, to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty... And they gathered them together to the place called in Hebrew, Armageddon.*

But Armageddon is located north of Jerusalem, how do we reconcile this with the Lord setting foot on the Mount of Olives which is Southeast of Jerusalem and Joel 3:12-17 which says the final battle will be in the Valley of Jehoshaphat which is the Kidron Valley adjacent to the Mount of Olives?

There are also passages making reference to this final battle involving Bozrah in the land of Edom such as Isaiah 34:1-8 and there is also this:

Isaiah 63:1-4 – *Who is this who comes from Edom, with dyed garments from Bozrah... I have trodden the winepress alone... For I have trodden them in My anger, and trampled them in My fury; Their blood is sprinkled upon My garments, and I have stained all My robes. For the day of vengeance is in My heart, and the year of My redeemed has come.*

And this brings to mind a summary of God pouring out His wrath culminating in a bloody final battle...

Revelation 14:19-20 – *So the angel thrust his sickle into the earth and gathered the vine of the earth, and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God. And the winepress was trampled outside the city, and blood came out of the winepress, up to the horses' bridles, for one thousand six hundred furlongs.*

This refers to a river of blood 160 miles long... about the distance (in river miles) from the Kidron Valley down to Bosrah which is about 25 miles from Petra and about midway between the Dead Sea and Petra.

I take it that while Armageddon is a staging area for the armies of the world, the main battle of the forces under the Antichrist will be directed at Israel as they close in on them at Petra getting as far as Bozrah. The Lord executes the battle from the air destroying the forces at Armageddon and those closing in on Petra from Bozrah to Jerusalem. This final battle is all but over when Jesus sets foot on the Mount of Olives.

v5 – What direction will the Jews go when they flee Jerusalem at the Abomination of Desolation?

They will flee to the South... this reinforces the idea that they will hole-up in Petra.

v6-7 – What does this say about how things will be different during the Millennial Kingdom?

At evening time it shall happen that it will be light: Now Zechariah looks forward to the glory of Jerusalem in the Messiah's kingdom. The lights we guide our lives by will diminish, but God will bring His own light.

- This could also be literally fulfilled foreshadowing the Eternal State where we will have no need for light from the sun (S-U-N) because we will have the light of the Son (S-O-N).

v8 – How else will Jerusalem be different during the Millennial reign?

Living waters shall flow from Jerusalem: Jerusalem will no longer be a dry city, but a glorious river will flow from the city and branch off both east and west, and it will be a never-ending flow (in both summer and winter it shall occur).

- God will gloriously save and restore Jerusalem, making it the capital city of the millennial earth.
- Ezekiel 47 records a vision that may describe this scene. Ezekiel saw a river flowing from the throne of God and down to the Dead Sea, bringing life and vitality everywhere.

v9 – What can the world look forward to when Jesus returns?

Jesus will rule the earth from Jerusalem. And this will result in...

Habakkuk 2:14 – *For the earth will be filled With the knowledge of the glory of the Lord, As the waters cover the sea.*

v10 – What will the topography around Jerusalem be like?

All the land shall be turned into a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem: Since the mountains around Jerusalem are no longer needed as a defense, they will be flattened into a plain. And this probably happens during the Tribulation as part of the 7th bowl judgment...

Revelation 16:18-20 – *there was a great earthquake, such a mighty and great earthquake as had not occurred since men were on the earth... every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.*

v11 – How will the inhabitants of Jerusalem benefit from the Lord's presence?

Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited: This will be the first time in a long time that Jerusalem will be a safe place to live.

- This is what we pray for when we pray for the peace of Jerusalem as commanded in Psalm 122:6.

v12 – What will happen to the enemies of Israel?

Their flesh shall dissolve while they stand on their feet: In the glorious deliverance the Messiah brings, the enemies of God and His people are destroyed by the brightness of the Lord's coming.

Revelation 19:21 – *And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh.*

Could the reference to flesh dissolving be describing the effects of nuclear weapons?

Certainly, nukes may be used at some point during the Tribulation as a foreshadowing of the Lord's return...but the enemies destroyed at the Lord's return will probably be supernatural.

v13 – How else will the Lord destroy Israel's enemies?

Friendly fire... a hallmark of God's intervention on Israel's behalf. Recall Gideon's valiant 300 against the 135,000-strong Midianites (Judges 6-7).

v14 – With the Lord's supernatural defeat of Israel's enemies, why would Judah also fight?

- In God's grace He always gives us an opportunity to be involved in what He is doing.

That is what a relationship is all about; two parties working together toward a common goal... it is not all on one even though God does all the heavy lifting.

Matthew 11:29-30 – *Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light*

What is the significance of all the wealth of the nations being present when the Lord delivers Israel?

The wealth of all the surrounding nations shall be gathered together: The nations of the world will be "all-in" when it comes to the destruction of Israel... all their wealth will go into that effort. And as we shall see, it will all be destroyed...

v15 – What is the plague on the animals of those encamped against God's people?

This refers back to verse 12... God will also destroy the provisions and equipment of Israel's enemies. From the perspective of an agrarian economy, the animals represent their wealth.

Why would God destroy all the wealth of the nations that would become plunder for Israel?

Israel would not need the plunder since they have the Lord Himself. Also, they would not really gain any benefit of have a reminder of those who came against them.

Zechariah 14:16-21 – The Nations Worship the King

¹⁶ *And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.* ¹⁷ *And it shall be that whichever of the families of the earth do not come up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, on them there will be no rain.* ¹⁸ *If the family of Egypt will not come up and enter in, they shall have no rain; they shall receive the plague with which the Lord strikes the nations who do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.* ¹⁹ *This shall be the punishment of Egypt and the punishment of all the nations that do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.*

²⁰ *In that day "HOLINESS TO THE LORD" shall be engraved on the bells of the horses. The pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar.* ²¹ *Yes, every pot in Jerusalem and Judah shall be holiness to the Lord of hosts. Everyone who sacrifices shall come and take them and cook in them. In that day there shall no longer be a Canaanite in the house of the Lord of hosts.*

v16 – What does this tell us about the Millennial Kingdom?

Shall go up from year to year to worship the King: Instead of coming to Jerusalem for battle now the nations come to honor God and to remember His faithfulness to Israel in the wilderness by keeping the Feast of Tabernacles.

- Jesus told us to go to the ends of the earth with the gospel but in the millennium the earth will come to Jerusalem to worship and honor God.

v17 – What incentive will there be to observe the Feast of Tabernacles?

Whichever of the families of the earth do not come up to Jerusalem ... on them there will be no rain: God won't make people worship Him during the millennium, but the advantages of worshipping and honoring God will be more evident than ever.

v18-19 – Why is Egypt specifically mentioned here?

If the family of Egypt will not come up and enter in, they shall have no rain: Egypt is representative of all the Gentile nations since they were the first Gentile empire to oppress Israel... but all that changes during the Millennial Kingdom.

- Egypt is a nation not especially dependent on rain, yet they too would be punished if disobedient.

v20 – What is the significance of "HOLINESS TO THE LORD" being engraved on the bells of the horses?

In the glory of the Messiah's kingdom horses won't be needed for war any longer - now even they can wear the emblems of HOLINESS TO THE LORD.

- This was the great inscription on the metal band around the high priest's headpiece (Exodus 28:36).

What are the pots in the Lord's house?

These were the cooking utensils used by worshippers to cook for their own the sacrificial meat intended for them from the peace offerings. The bowls before the altar were used to gather and sprinkle sacrificial blood on the altar.

- These show that animal sacrifice will continue in the millennium, but not as atonement for sin which was perfectly satisfied by the atoning work of Jesus.
- Sacrifice in the Millennial Kingdom will be a memorial looking back to the perfect work of Jesus.

This is reinforced in Ezekiel's description of the Millennial temple:

Ezekiel 46:24 – These are the kitchens where the ministers of the temple shall boil the sacrifices of the people.

v21 – How is it that every pot in Jerusalem and Judah shall be holiness to the LORD of hosts?

In the glory of the Messiah's kingdom, what was previously common is made holy; the holy is made holier; and the profane is forever shut out.

- At the end of it all, there is no longer any distinction between the holy and profane. All is set apart to God and His purposes.
- The point is that the people and the city will be so holy that even these insignificant things will be fully dedicated to the Lord.

What is the principle here in regarding everything to be holy?

There is a right way and a wrong way to eliminate the line between the holy and the profane: you can make everything holy (set apart to the LORD), or you can make everything profane (set apart to sin and self).

- Zechariah ends his prophecy making it clear that God's way is the make everything that was once common or profane holy instead.

How is it there will no longer be a Canaanite in the house of the Lord?

Only believers will be allowed to visit the Millennial temple...

Ezekiel 44:7 – When you brought in ... uncircumcised in heart ... to be in My sanctuary to defile it—My house ... they broke My covenant because of all your abominations.

This certainly foreshadows the Eternal State speaking of the New Jerusalem...

Revelation 21:27 – there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb's Book of Life.

What principles stand out from our discussion today?

- The Day of the Lord culminates in the return of Jesus following a great battle involving all the nations of the world gathered to fight God and His people Israel.
- Jesus will physical return to earth to deliver His people and establish the Millennial Kingdom.
- Israel comes to repentance as a nation before God delivers them from their enemies.
- The Millennial Kingdom will be characterized by peace and giving Christ glory by the nations.
- As we can see the stage being set for the Tribulation, it helps us see how close we are to the end of the Age and gives us a sense of urgency to get on with whatever the Lord has called us to do.