

"THE DAY OF THE LORD"

I. Introduction

- A. The same event can take on very different meanings depending on your perspective.
 - 1. We saw this after the recent presidential election.
 - 2. Once the results were known, some people were delighted, some were infuriated, and some didn't know what to think.

- B. The day of the Lord is an event that will have vastly different meanings for people depending on their perspective.
 - 1. For those who are waiting for the return of Christ with the eager longing that is born of faith, the day of the Lord will be utterly glorious and filled with unspeakable joy.
 - 2. But for those who are living as if the things of this world are the only things that really matter, the day of the Lord will be a horrific shock.

- C. The reason why the Bible contains passages like Zechariah 14 is to help us maintain the right perspective as we sojourn through this world.
 - 1. God wants us to remember that history is going somewhere.
 - 2. He wants us to see that the things that consume most people's thoughts and energies are not the things that are of ultimate importance.
 - 3. There is a bigger picture, and if we are going to live faithfully as God's people in this world we need to view the world through the lenses of that bigger picture.

4. In other words, living the Christian life requires the cultivation of an otherworldly perspective.
5. This is not escapism.
6. It is realism.
7. As one writer explains, "Otherworldliness is escapism only if there is no other world. If there is, it is worldliness that is escapism." [Peter Kreeft, cited in *Dual Citizens*, 121]
8. As we study the closing chapter of Zechariah this morning, we will see how it immerses our imaginations in images that express the awesome wonder of the day of the Lord, that great and dreadful day that has already been inaugurated and will one day be consummated.

II. The Coming of the Lord

- A. In the first part of the chapter, we see that the day of the Lord is the day when God comes to deliver his people from their enemies.
 1. They will be in sore need of deliverance.
 2. This is made clear in our text by the vivid description of the suffering that God's people will face as the end draws near.
 3. The holy city will be taken, the houses will be plundered, the women will be raped.
 4. These were the very things that happened when Jerusalem fell to the Babylonians nearly seventy years before this prophecy was written.
 5. The main point here is not that the literal city of Jerusalem will once again go through an attack like that at the end of history, though it is true that the city did experience such an attack when it fell to Rome in A.D. 70.

6. The main point is that at the end of history, the church of Jesus Christ spread throughout all the earth will come under intense and brutal attack from the world as it organizes itself around the goal of destroying the people of God.
 7. The world is working towards this goal even now on a smaller scale right now.
 8. The world always hates the church, because it hates being confronted with God's truth.
- B. The ironic twist about this climactic battle is that it will actually be the Lord who gathers the nations for it.
1. Thus we see that it is when the forces of the world are at the height of their power, and when the church seems utterly doomed, that the Lord will return and fight the battle on our behalf.
 2. This reminds us that there is no winning this contest by engaging the world on its own terms.
 3. The fight in which we are engaged is a spiritual battle, and we must fight with spiritual weapons.
 4. As Paul told the Christians in Corinth, "For though we walk in the flesh, we are not waging war according to the flesh. For the weapons of our warfare are not of the flesh but have divine power to destroy strongholds." (2 Cor 10:3-4 ESV)
 5. In this present age, God graciously causes the proclamation of his Word to break down strongholds in rebellious hearts and bring people to saving faith.
 6. And at the end of this age, the Lord will return in glory and bring a final end to all who have opposed him.
- C. Zechariah the return of Christ by saying that our Lord will descend to the very place from which he left the earth when he ascended into heaven:

the Mount of Olives. (see Acts 1:12)

1. And this will result in a splitting of the mountain in two, opening up a wide valley in between the two halves.
2. Note the similarity with the deliverance that God brought about for the Israelites when he parted the Red Sea.
3. Zechariah is reminding us of the Lord's power to deliver his people from anything that threatens us, even from situations that appear to be completely hopeless.

III. The New Creation

- A. In the next part of the chapter, beginning in verse 6, the focus is upon the new world that will be brought about by the coming of the Lord.
 1. The coming of the Lord will usher in a unique day, a day unlike anything we have previously known.
 2. It will be a day with no more darkness.
 3. Even in the evening, there will be light.
 4. We see something similar to this in the description of the New Jerusalem at the end of the book of Revelation.
 5. John says that "there will be no more night there", and "They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever." (Rev. 21:25; 22:5)
- B. One characteristic of the New Jerusalem is that it will be a source of living water for all the earth.
 1. Sanctuaries are often described this way in the Bible.
 2. We see the same thing in the descriptions of Eden, of the eschatological temple in the prophecy of Ezekiel, and of the New

Jerusalem in Revelation.

3. This image symbolizes the blessing of eternal life that flows out from the place where God makes his presence dwell in the midst of his people.
 4. And as we know from Jesus' teaching in the Gospel of John, he himself is the source of this living water. (see Jn. 4:10, 14; 7:38)
- C. The new creation is also described by Zechariah as a world where the reign of the one true God will be worldwide and unopposed.
1. It says in verse 9, "And the LORD will be king over all the earth. On that day the LORD will be one and his name one."
 2. Of course, Jesus is already king over all the earth.
 3. As he told his disciples after his resurrection, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." (Mt. 28:18)
 4. Nevertheless, we do not yet see everything in subjection to Jesus Christ.
 5. Many people in this world despise, distort, or ignore Jesus.
 6. Yet the Bible assures us that when he returns in glory, every knee will bow before him and every tongue will confess that he is Lord.
- D. The last thing that is said about the new creation in this section is that it will be exalted, prosperous, and secure.
1. The exalted status of New Jerusalem is symbolized by saying that all the land around it will be turned into a plain.
 2. As we read earlier from Isaiah 2, "It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be lifted up above the hills". (Isa. 2:2)

3. The prosperity of the city is underscored by the assertion that though it had previously been made desolate it will again be inhabited.
4. As Isaiah 2 continues, “and all the nations shall flow to it, and many peoples shall come and say: ‘Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths.” (Isa. 2:2-3)
5. And the security of the city is made certain by the promise that it will never again be subject to threats or judgments.
6. As the psalmist puts it, “God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved”. (Ps. 46:5)

IV. The Subjugation of the Nations

- A. We turn now to the third section of the chapter, where the focus is upon the subjugation of the nations.
 1. This section begins in verse 12 with a description of a horrific plague that will afflict the enemies of God’s people.
 2. Here is another connection with God’s deliverance of his people at the time of the exodus, which was preceded by the plagues that came upon the Egyptians because of Pharaoh’s refusal to heed God’s word.
 3. The plague that Zechariah describes is one that will result in the rotting away of people’s bodies.
 4. It is a disgusting and terrifying picture.
 5. This is a symbolic way of describing the state that human beings will be in when they are in hell.

6. Some people seem to think that hell won't be so bad because they will have family and friends there.
 7. What such people fail to realize is that everything that was good and enjoyable about those whom they loved in this world will be taken away if they are condemned to eternal judgment in hell.
 8. The residents of that dreadful place will be utterly loathsome, having lost all vestiges of the image of God.
- B. After another description of the last battle, verse 16 speaks of survivors from the nations who will make an annual pilgrimage to Jerusalem to worship the Lord during the Feast of Booths.
1. We might wonder how this could take place if Jesus has already returned for the final judgment.
 2. What we have to remember is that the day of the Lord is a reality that began to unfold with the first coming of Christ.
 3. We see this in Acts 2, where Peter interprets Joel's prophecy of the day of the Lord as coming to fulfillment on that very day.
 4. This makes it clear that the day of the Lord is both already and not yet.
 5. And this means that our text is not talking about a literal pilgrimage to Jerusalem by Gentiles during some earthly golden age.
 6. It is simply speaking in the terms that Jews of Zechariah's era would have been able to understand.
 7. Zechariah cannot be speaking of a central sanctuary in Jerusalem because Jesus told the Samaritan woman that the temple would no longer be localized in the new covenant era.

8. Instead, this prophecy is referring to the ingathering of the Gentiles during the church age.
 9. The Feast of Booths was an appropriate symbol for this because it was a harvest festival.
 10. This marks the fulfillment of Zechariah 2:11, where the Lord said, "And many nations shall join themselves to the LORD in that day, and shall be my people. And I will dwell in your midst".
- C. This also helps us to make sense of the warnings that are issued in verses 17-19.
1. God says that those who do not go up to Jerusalem to worship him will be subject to drought and plague.
 2. This is describing the curses that will be experienced throughout the church age by all of those in the unbelieving world who refuse to come to Christ.
 3. While the church also experiences suffering in this present age, God uses our trials to refine and perfect us, as we saw in chapter 13.
 4. But for the people of the world, the sufferings of this life are judgments from God.

V. The Cosmic Sanctuary

- A. Our text concludes with a paragraph that depicts a world where everything is holy.
1. Even something as mundane as the bells worn by horses will be inscribed with the words, "Holy to the LORD."
 2. This is the same inscription that was engraved on the gold plate that was fastened to the turban worn by Israel's high priest. (Ex. 28:36-38)

3. Even the pots that people use in everyday life will be ritually holy.
 4. In God's new creation, there will no longer be a distinction between the common and the sacred.
 5. Everything will be elevated to sanctuary status, because the whole new creation will be a temple.
- B. The last thing that is said in our text is that there shall no longer be a trader in the house of the Lord on that day.
1. As the footnote in many Bibles will tell you, the Hebrew word for "trader" can also be translated as "Canaanite."
 2. Whether it is referring to those who sometimes found a way to gain access into the sanctuary for business purposes or to those who were non-Jews, the point being made is that no one will be able to defile God's temple in the new creation.
 3. As it says of the New Jerusalem in Revelation 21, "nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life." (Rev 21:27)

VI. Conclusion

- A. We need to remember that the curtain will one day fall upon this world.
- B. A new day is coming, and it is already dawning.
- C. For the wicked, that day will be a day of reckoning, a day of doom, a day from which there will be no possibility of escape.
- D. Yet for those who belong to Jesus Christ, that day will be the day when we come into our glorious inheritance.
- E. Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!