

The Day of Yahweh

SERMON

By

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TEXT: Zechariah 14

PROP: Because God both judges and delivers we must come to Christ to escape judgment and rejoice in his gracious deliverance.

Zechariah 14 (ESV)

The Coming Day of the Lord

¹ Behold, a day is coming for the Lord, when the spoil taken from you will be divided in your midst. ² For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city shall be taken and the houses plundered and the women raped. Half of the city shall go out into exile, but the rest of the people shall not be cut off from the city. ³ Then the Lord will go out and fight against those nations as when he fights on a day of battle. ⁴ On that day his feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives that lies before Jerusalem on the east, and the Mount of Olives shall be split in two from east to west by a very wide valley, so that one half of the Mount shall move northward, and the other half southward. ⁵ And you shall flee to the valley of my mountains, for the valley of the mountains shall reach to Azal. And you shall flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the Lord my God will come, and all the holy ones with him.

⁶ On that day there shall be no light, cold, or frost. ⁷ And there shall be a unique day, which is known to the Lord, neither day nor night, but at evening time there shall be light.

⁸ On that day living waters shall flow out from Jerusalem, half of them to the eastern sea and half of them to the western sea. It shall continue in summer as in winter.

⁹ And the Lord will be king over all the earth. On that day the Lord will be one and his name one.

¹⁰ The whole land shall be turned into a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem. But Jerusalem shall remain aloft on its site from the Gate of Benjamin to the place of the former gate, to the Corner Gate, and from the Tower of Hananel to the king's winepresses. ¹¹ And it shall be inhabited, for there shall never again be a decree of utter destruction. Jerusalem shall dwell in security.

¹² And this shall be the plague with which the Lord will strike all the peoples that wage war against Jerusalem: their flesh will rot while they are still standing on their feet, their eyes will rot in their sockets, and their tongues will rot in their mouths.

¹³ And on that day a great panic from the Lord shall fall on them, so that each will seize the hand of another, and the hand of the one will be raised against the hand of the other. ¹⁴ Even Judah will fight against Jerusalem. And the wealth of all the surrounding nations shall be collected, gold, silver, and garments in great abundance. ¹⁵ And a plague like this plague shall fall on the horses, the mules, the camels, the donkeys, and whatever beasts may be in those camps.

¹⁶ Then everyone who survives of all the nations that have come against Jerusalem shall go up year after year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Booths. ¹⁷ And if any of the families of the earth do not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, there will be no rain on them. ¹⁸ And if the family of Egypt does not go up and present themselves, then on them there shall be no rain; there shall be the plague with which the Lord afflicts the nations that do not go up to keep the Feast of Booths. ¹⁹ This shall be the punishment to Egypt and the punishment to all the nations that do not go up to keep the Feast of Booths.

²⁰ And on that day there shall be inscribed on the bells of the horses, "Holy to the Lord." (קֹדֶשׁ לַיהוָה) And the pots in the house of the Lord shall be as the bowls before the altar. ²¹ And every pot in Jerusalem and Judah shall be holy to the Lord of hosts, so that all who sacrifice may come and take of them and boil the meat of the sacrifice in them. And there shall no longer be a trader in the house of the Lord of hosts on that day.

We have often spoken of the great benefits of belonging to Christ. Who can even begin to know the joy of being with the Savior forever in the new creation? To rest in Yahweh, to stand on the surety of the promises of our God is marvelous indeed. The blessing of fellowship with the saints now and forever and the filling of the Holy Spirit are cause enough to move us to say with the psalmist, "*Praise the Lord! Oh give thanks to the Lord, for he is good, for his steadfast love endures forever! Who can utter the mighty deeds of the Lord, or declare all his praise?*" (Psalm 106:1-2, ESV)

However, we need to take account of the other side of the coin namely, the judgment of God. It is a topic that most people shun. How can a loving God send people to hell forever? Isn't it enough to experience hell on earth? Isn't it enough to live through war and bloodshed, to be subjected to the pain and misery of disease and death? How about the evil of divorce or the abomination of abortion? How can there be torment in the flames of hell forever? Is God unjust? Is he insensitive to our sufferings? Indeed, the existence and experience of pain is a great problem to many.

The day of the Lord, or as it is in the original Hebrew text -- **the day of Yahweh**, is usually associated with judgment, and in particular, the judgment of the world before the

throne of God on the last day. But the question is raised, "What is the day of Yahweh?" We will see that the day of Yahweh is both a day of judgment and a day of deliverance. It is a day that concerns both Jew and Gentile but let us see how the phrase "the day of Yahweh" is used in Scripture.

The day of Yahweh is concerned with the final judgment of mankind and the second coming of Christ. *"Now concerning the times and the seasons, brothers, you have no need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves are fully aware that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. While people are saying, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them as labor pains come upon a pregnant woman, and they will not escape."* (1 Thessalonians 5:1-3, ESV) *"But the **day of the Lord** will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed."* (2 Peter 3:10, ESV) So it is clear that the phrase "day of the Lord" concerns things that will occur on the last day of the existence of the universe as we know it. But the day of the Lord is also associated with a period of time.

For example speaking of the heathen nations God says, *"For my sword has drunk its fill in the heavens; behold, it descends for judgment upon Edom, upon the people I have devoted to destruction. The Lord has a sword; it is sated with blood; it is gorged with fat, with the blood of lambs and goats, with the fat of the kidneys of rams. For the Lord has a sacrifice in Bozrah, a great slaughter in the land of Edom. Wild oxen shall fall with them, and young steers with the mighty bulls. Their land shall drink its fill of blood, and their soil shall be gorged with fat. **For the Lord has a day of vengeance, a year of recompense for the cause of Zion.**"* (Isaiah 34:5-8, ESV)

The day of Yahweh is also associated with the first coming of Christ as seen in these texts, *"And I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and columns of smoke. The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes. And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved. For in Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there shall be those who escape, as the Lord has said, and among the survivors shall be those whom the Lord calls."* (Joel 2:30-32, ESV) Now that certainly sounds like Joel is speaking of the second coming of Christ but consider this statement made on the day of Pentecost, *"But Peter, standing with the eleven, lifted up his voice and addressed them, "Men of Judea and all who dwell in Jerusalem, let this be known to you, and give ear to my words. For these men are not drunk, as you suppose, since it is only the third hour of the day. But this is what was uttered through the prophet Joel: " 'And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh,*

and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams; even on my male servants and female servants in those days I will pour out my Spirit, and they shall prophesy. And I will show wonders in the heavens above and signs on the earth below, blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke; the sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day. And it shall come to pass that everyone who calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." (Acts 2:14-21, ESV)

The great focus of the day of the Lord is the final Day of Judgment, the destruction of the present universe and the creation of the new heavens and the new earth. But the events leading up to it are also in view. We are in the last days now, "*Long ago, at many times and in many ways, God spoke to our fathers by the prophets, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.*" (Hebrews 1:1-2, ESV) The day of Yahweh has begun. His judgment is in progress. When believers die their souls go immediately to be with the Lord and their bodies return to dust. This is known as the intermediate state of the blessed. On the last day the bodies of believers are raised incorruptible and rejoined with their souls. They then live forever with God in the new creation known as the eternal state of the blessed.

On the other hand, when unbelievers die, their souls are not annihilated as many believe but they go immediately to the intermediate state of the damned known as Hades and their bodies return to dust. On the last day their bodies are raised, rejoined with their souls and they are cast forever into Gehenna, the lake of fire, along with Satan and all his angels. We learn of these things in passages such as Luke 16 where Jesus tells of Lazarus and the rich man and Jesus statement in John 5, "*Do not marvel at this, for an hour is coming when all who are in the tombs will hear his voice and come out, those who have done good to the resurrection of life, and those who have done evil to the resurrection of judgment.*" (John 5:28-29, ESV)

We come now to the text in Zechariah 14. Living in the sixth century BC Zechariah delivered the word of God to those who returned to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem. Both Israel and Judah had long since been plundered and the survivors taken into captivity. As we see here there will be more unfaithfulness and more judgment in the days to come, in the day of the Lord ahead of them.

1. The day of Yahweh is a day of judgment.

"Behold, a day is coming for the Lord, when the spoil taken from you will be divided in your midst. For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city shall be taken and the houses plundered and the women raped. Half of the city

shall go out into exile, but the rest of the people shall not be cut off from the city."
(Zechariah 14:1-2, ESV)

Jerusalem was abominated in the second century BC by the Greek emperor Antiochus Epiphanies and then by the Romans in 70AD. At that time the temple was destroyed and was never rebuilt. In both cases Zechariah's prophecy was fulfilled. In each case the day of the Lord had come and he judged them for their sins. In the first case Greece ruled the world and in the second case Rome so in a real sense the Gentile nations battled against Jerusalem. To this day the Muslim nations are hostile to Israel and to the church of Jesus Christ which is Zion and Jerusalem.

There is a great difference between God's judgment of sin and God's testing of his people. The judgment of sin ends in eternal destruction in hell but testing produces patience and patience, its perfect work in heaven. From the one we flee to Christ for salvation and for the other we count it all joy because it prepares us for an eternity in the new creation. In a sinful world we must learn to live with pain and suffering. Often our human pain is the result of our own sin. In other cases it is the result of our stand for Christ.

The gracious Yahweh God sifts his people to refine them and make them stronger and purer. Notice the last verses of the previous chapter. *"Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, against the man who stands next to me," declares the Lord of hosts. "Strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered; I will turn my hand against the little ones. In the whole land, declares the Lord, two thirds shall be cut off and perish, and one third shall be left alive. And I will put this third into the fire, and refine them as one refines silver, and test them as gold is tested. They will call upon my name, and I will answer them. I will say, 'They are my people'; and they will say, 'The Lord is my God.' "*
(Zechariah 13:7-9, ESV)

What Zechariah describes concerning Jerusalem was seen previously during the days of the kings of Israel and Judah. All of his people, even the remnant who were faithful to him, were taken into captivity. Even though his people had to endure the suffering and humiliation of enslavement in Babylon or Assyria God kept them and delivered them. And all through history though his people were persecuted or the nations in which they lived were judged for sin, God delivered them and kept them. His faithful remnant will never be cut off from the city of God, that is from his church and from his fellowship.

2. The day of Yahweh is a day of deliverance.

"Then the Lord will go out and fight against those nations as when he fights on a day of battle. On that day his feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives that lies before Jerusalem on the east, and the Mount of Olives shall be split in two from east to west by a very wide valley, so that one half of the Mount shall move northward, and the other half southward. And you shall flee to the valley of my mountains, for the valley of the mountains shall reach to Azal. And you shall flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the Lord my God will come, and all the holy ones with him." (Zechariah 14:3-5, ESV)

Many believe that this prophecy is to be fulfilled in a future historical period of 1000 years. They believe that this deliverance will take place after the second coming of Christ. If this is to be taken literally we would understand that Jesus will be subjected once again to the horrors and suffering of warfare. He will endure a great earthquake as he stands upon the Mount of Olives so much so that the entire mountain will be split in two from east to west resulting in a large valley. The Mount of Olives is actually a ridge running north and south about a half mile directly east of Jerusalem. Refugees from the battle in Jerusalem will escape through the rift caused by the earthquake.

Furthermore there will be no light and the distinction between day and night will be removed. Then living water will flow from Jerusalem eastward toward the Dead Sea and westward toward the Mediterranean Sea presumably through the rift caused by the earthquake. Since the Mount of Olives is directly to the east of Jerusalem the city itself would be significantly affected by the earthquake. There Yahweh will reign as king over all the earth and Israel's foundational confession will be fully understood. This confession is the Shamah Israel, "Hear O Israel, Yahweh is our God, Yahweh is One."

A great plain will stretch north from Jerusalem through Geba to Rimmon about 10 miles and a similar distance south of the city an area about the size of Pittsburgh and its suburbs. Into this all the survivors of the nations who were at war with Jerusalem will be gathered and at this point include all the families of the earth. None of the modern means of transportation are mentioned only horses, mules, camels, donkeys and cattle. Upon these a great plague shall come but there will be peace in the valley around Jerusalem and in her city environs.

This does not sound like any city we are familiar with. Certainly, modern Jerusalem is quite different than this. Like the dimensions of the new Jerusalem the characteristics of this earthly Jerusalem and its environs are quite extraordinary. Moreover, the Bible nowhere indicates that the glorious risen Yahweh Christ will once again be involved with enduring a sinful human world of cities, bloodshed and suffering. What is the point of rebuilding the temple and observing the Feast of Tabernacles. True, the sin sacrifices are not mentioned here, only the sacrifices of joy and thankfulness to

God for his blessings. But there is to be a new Jerusalem and the temple of God is no longer here on earth.

It is for these reasons that many of us understand this prophecy to be fulfilled in the church. Though Jesus is Yahweh, in this Old Testament perspective it is the feet of Yahweh God not explicitly the feet of the Messiah that cause the Mount of Olives to split in two. This therefore may be understood to mean that God will deliver his people from their enemies and punish his enemies and ours for their sin and particularly for their opposition to the church. His deliverance will be seen through the preaching of the gospel through which his people will drink the water of life and never thirst again.

A similar picture is given to us in Revelation just following the description of the glorious new Jerusalem which is the bride of Christ or the church. *"Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever."* (Revelation 22:1-5, ESV)

Many thousands are being tortured and put to death for the sake of Christ throughout the Mideast Islamic nations. How can they find relief. How will they be encouraged and given hope. Can we not take comfort in the promise of God to fight our battles for us. Will not the Lord of the universe and the Savior of his church provide a means of escape. The very mountains of trouble that surround us will be broken in two and we shall escape. Yahweh our God will come to us and all the saints with him. From Yahweh who is one and his name one shall come rivers of water which will be life to us. The God who loves us and shed his own blood for us even while we were yet sinners will bring peace and life to his church. As Israel escaped their bondage in Egypt with the gold and silver of their tormentors so shall the church escape her enemies with gold, silver and apparel in great abundance for we shall be clothed with the righteousness of Christ and lay up treasures in heaven through our love for Christ and his kingdom.

Nearly 50 years ago, Nate Saint, Jim Eliot, Roger Youderain, Ed McCully, and Peter Flemming felt god's call to bring the gospel of Christ to the Huaorani people of Ecuador. Every previous encounter with these people had ended in death. Though these missionaries were aware of this history of violence they decided to make contact with them and to seek to evangelize them.

So the men spent time learning the Huaorani language and planned an attempt to meet with them. After initial friendly contact, the missionaries felt confident that the people has accepted them favorably. But instead all five men were brutally attacked and killed by the Huaorani.

By God's grace, Rachel Saint (sister of Nate) and Elisabeth Eliot (wife of Jim) later went to live with the very people who had killed their beloved family members. Through these two women God enabled the Huaorani to finally hear the gospel and the whole tribe now confesses Jesus as their Savior. Steve Saint, the son of Nate Saint is now working hand-in-hand with Tementa, the man who killed his father. My friends, that is the gold and silver that we shall lay at the feet of King Jesus.

Qadosh Yahweh, **Holiness to Yahweh** will no longer be on the turban of the high priest alone but will inscribed everywhere in every nation. Every knee shall bow and every tongue confess that Jesus is Yahweh to the glory of God the Father. In that day there will no longer be a Canaanite or unbeliever in the house of Yahweh of Hosts. In the end, the church will be entirely righteous and the influence of the enemies of God will be reduced to nothing. What a blessed hope. What relief and encouragement. The church will increase and her enemies shall decrease. We will be thankful and rejoice in the Lord with an eternal Succoth. The gracious Feast of Tabernacles will enjoyed forever. O Praise the Lord. May he hasten the blessed day of Yahweh.