

Chapter 68

“The Day of the Lord”

“Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee.” (Zechariah 14:1-21)

“*Behold, the day of the Lord cometh!*” — With those words Zechariah calls our attention to the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. These twenty-one verses, with which the prophet of God concludes his great prophecy, are all about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and those things that would be accomplished by him in that great day of which the prophets spoke so much (Isaiah 2:12; 13:6, 9; Jeremiah 46:10; Ezekiel 13:5; 30:3; Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11; 3:14; Amos 5:20; Obadiah 1:15; Zephaniah 1:7, 14; Zechariah 14:1). Every time “*the day of the LORD*” is mentioned in the New Testament, the phrase refers to the glorious second advent of our Lord Jesus Christ, when he shall destroy all his enemies and ours and make all things new (1 Corinthians 5:5; 2 Corinthians 1:14; 1 Thessalonians 5:2; 2 Peter 3:10). But the Old Testament prophets, it seems to me, always use this phrase to describe the whole of our Savior’s work of redemption and grace, from his first advent to and including his second coming, from his incarnation to that day of which Paul speaks in 1 Corinthians 15:24-28.

Without question, when Zechariah speaks of “*the day of the LORD*” in this 14th chapter of his prophecy, he has in his mind’s eye the whole of these last days, this entire gospel age. Some of the things he says here cannot refer to anything other than that which our Lord is doing in this great day of grace. Other things in this chapter clearly refer to that which shall come to pass only when our Lord Jesus comes again in his glorious second advent at the consummation of the age. And there are some things in these verses that clearly refer to both this present gospel day and that great day that is yet to come, when our Lord Jesus Christ shall appear in his glory, “*in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ*” (2 Thessalonians 1:8).

I readily acknowledge that there are things in this prophecy that I do not understand, things that God the Holy Spirit has not yet been pleased to teach me. And those things that I do not understand I will not attempt to explain. That which God has taught me, I declare to you; but, when I have told you all that I know, there will be much that I have not explained. Let me show you 8 things in this chapter.

Jerusalem Spoiled

First, Zechariah speaks of the spoiling of Jerusalem by her enemies in a time of great woe.

“Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and 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” (vv. 1-2).

It may be that these two verses have reference to the invasion of Jerusalem by the Syrian King Antiochus Epiphanes in 168 BC, when he invaded, occupied, and destroyed Jerusalem. His soldiers went into the temple, slaughtered a hog on the altar, and demanded that the Jews eat the hog. Those who refused were butchered. Their tongues were cut out of their mouths, they were scalped, and their hands and feet were cut off and burned on the temple's altar.

Perhaps Zechariah had reference to the invasion and final destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD by Titus, which our Lord Jesus spoke of in Matthew 24:2-21. Clearly, this is what our Lord Jesus spoke of in Matthew 22:2-7, when he spoke of God sending forth his armies to destroy those people and burn up their city because they murdered his Son. The wrath of God came upon the Jews to the uttermost, because they filled up the measure of iniquity, crucifying the Lord Jesus, murdering their own prophets, and persecuting the saints of God (1 Thessalonians 2:14-16).

Which of these historic events Zechariah had in mind when he wrote this prophecy is not certain; but he certainly had in his mind's eye a remnant according to the election of grace for whose sake the days of misery were shortened, for he tells us about "*the residue of the people*" who would not be cut off. God always has his remnant, "*the residue of the people*," who are spared and kept by his distinguishing grace.

If we read Zechariah's prophecy with a spiritual eye, referring to the great, on-going battle of the ages between the seed of the serpent and the woman's Seed, between Christ and Satan, between God's Church (the true Jerusalem) and Babylon, we have here a blessed promise suited to God's elect in every age. — Antichrist shall do no harm to God's chosen. Though his witnesses be slain in the streets, after three days God shall revive them, and the remnant who have been terrified by the apparent power and success of the beast shall rejoice again and give "*glory to the God of heaven*" (Revelation 11:1-13).

Christ our Defender

The second thing we see here is Christ our Savior intervening as our mighty Defender, as "*the Captain of our Salvation.*" — "*The LORD is a man of war: the LORD is his name*" (Exodus 15:3). Isaiah wrote, "*The LORD shall go forth as a mighty man, he shall stir up jealousy like a man of war: he shall cry, yea, roar; he shall prevail against his enemies*" (Isaiah 42:13). That is how Zechariah describes him in verse 3. — "*Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle.*"

These words are spoken for the comfort of God's saints in times of great woe. When it is time for God to arise, that his enemies may be scattered and those that hate him flee before him, he will arise and have mercy upon Zion. He will awake, as in the days of old. He will come forth from his holy place to the deliverance of his people. The wicked, whom he gathers against us in his providence, are specifically called his sword (Psalm 17:13). But those who turn upon us shall be turned upon by our God; and he will make even their violent wrath against his people a matter of praise to his name (Psalm 76:1-10).

Zechariah 14:3 refers to the first advent of our blessed Savior, when he made bare his holy arm in the redemption of our souls and makes bare his holy arm by the saving power of the gospel

calling out his elect. These things were typified in his miraculous intervention for Israel at the Red Sea, for Joshua, Jehoshaphat, and Hezekiah. And that which he has done, he will do for us (Isaiah 52:10; 53:8-54:1; Romans 1:15-17; Revelation 20:8-10).

The Mount of Olives

Third, in verses 4 and 5 Zechariah speaks of our Lord Jesus Christ standing upon the Mount of Olives. Here, it seems to me, the Spirit of God inspired his prophet to declare our Savior's mighty works in his first advent, throughout this gospel age and in his glorious second coming.

“And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which *is* before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof 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. And ye shall flee *to* the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the LORD my God shall come, *and* all the saints with thee” (vv. 4-5).

The Mount of Olives is situated at the east of Jerusalem, being separated only by the brook Kedron and the valley of Jehoshaphat. Here it was that David (typifying the Lord Jesus) went up barefoot and weeping when he fled from Absalom, just as our Savior went by it when he entered Gethsemane, passing over the same brook of Kedron (2 Samuel 15:22-30; John 18:1; Matthew 26:30-46).

You might be surprised to discover that this Mount, so memorable to David, was terribly profaned by Solomon his son. You will remember that when Solomon was old, he loved many strange wives who led him into idolatry. He built a high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, upon that very Mount in the hill that is before Jerusalem. He also erected a high place for Moloch, the abomination of the children of Ammon, upon the Mount of Olives (1 Kings 11:1-7). Solomon so polluted the Mount of Olives with idolatry that it became known as the Mount of Corruption (2 Kings 23:13). Many years later, the good king Josiah (another type of Christ) destroyed those idols and purged the Mount of corruption (2 Kings 23:12-14).

In the light of those historic facts, it is not at all surprising to see so much of our great Savior's life and ministry connected with the Mount of Olives. Luke tells us that our Lord Jesus “*went, as he was wont, to the Mount of Olives*” (Luke 21:37). This was the place to which he often came; and his disciples often followed him there. When the Pharisees sought to kill him, our Savior “*went unto the Mount of Olives*” to save that poor woman who was caught in the very act of adultery (John 8:1-11). Our Savior sat down on the Mount of Olives to give us his great Olivet Discourse in Matthew 24 and 25. It was in that great discourse that he spoke of the destruction of Jerusalem, his glorious second coming, the parable of the fig tree, the parable of the wise and foolish virgins, the parable of the wise and foolish servants, and the great separation of the sheep and goats in the Day of Judgment. After establishing the Lord's Supper with his disciples, while Judas went out to betray him, the Lord Jesus and his disciples sung a hymn and “*went out into the Mount of Olives*” (Matthew 26:30). Then, our blessed Savior went into Gethsemane and from there

to Calvary! And forty days after his resurrection, the Lord Jesus ascended to heaven from the Mount of Olives (Acts 1:8-12), receiving power over all flesh from his Father to give eternal life to his blood-bought people (John 17:2).

The Mount of Olives was called the Mount of Olives, because it was covered with olive trees. Olive oil was used to light the lamps in the tabernacle and in the temple (Exodus 25:31-37; 1 Kings 7:48-50). The priests and kings in Israel were anointed with olive oil (Leviticus 8:12; 1 Samuel 16:13; 1 Kings 1:39). The Good Samaritan in our Lord's parable poured oil and wine into the man left by the wayside (Luke 10:33-34). And our Savior was anointed for his burial with Mary's precious ointment, a spikenard, a perfume of oil (Matthew 26:12-13).

In all these things oil was used to typify God the Holy Spirit, the Anointing and Unction of grace, poured out upon chosen, redeemed sinners by Christ, our ascended King and enthroned Savior, who, standing upon the Mount of Olives as our Redeemer, split the mountain, flooded its valley with grace, and causes his people to flee to the valley of the mountains. There the Lord our God comes with all his saints! Using the figurative language of verses 4 and 5, Zechariah describes the powerful presence of God and his omnipotent grace in the outpouring of his Spirit upon his elect, which was manifestly done at Pentecost (Joel 1:14-15; 2:1-3, 27-32; 3:13-17; Acts 2:16-21).

Why should we think Zechariah's language here is figurative? Zechariah is telling us that this great day of God's grace flowing to sinners far exceeds the glory that appeared upon Mount Sinai at the giving of the law, when the mountains skipped like rams, and the little hills like lambs (Psalm 114:6). So terrible was that sight that Moses said, "*I exceedingly fear and quake*" (Hebrews 12:21). The Lord Jesus Christ, our great Josiah, has taken away both the curse of Sinai's law and the corruptions of his people by his finished work of redemption. By coming to the earth in our nature, obeying all the will of God, dying as our Substitute, and ascending from the Mount, he has split open the mountain where our offenses abounded and created the mighty river of mercy and grace for our souls in "*the valley of the mountains!*" Where sin abounded grace much more abounds! Let the sweet tidings of grace vibrate through the earth. Because Christ has come and finished his work, "*Whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved!*"

Yet, Zechariah's vision reaches even further. It reaches to that day when our Savior shall appear in his glory, descending again to the earth with all his saints (Acts 1:9-12; Jude 14-15; Job 19:25-27).

A Mixed State

Fourth, this day of grace, this last day, the period of time between the first and second advents of Christ is for God's people a mixed state of darkness and light.

"And it shall come to pass in that day, *that* the light shall not be clear, *nor* dark: 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" (vv. 6-7).

The light of God's Word is perfect; but the light given to us is not. We do not have such darkness that we fear that God has forsaken us, or that we are not his. Yet, we do not have the light

and understanding we desire. In all things, “*we see through a glass darkly*” (1 Corinthians 13:12). Yes, “*we walk in the light as he is in the light and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth us from all sin*” (1 John 1:7). Yet, we have much darkness (Isaiah 50:10).

Ours is not the darkness of the unbelieving, who walk in sparkles of light, sparkles with which they dazzle themselves. Their sparkles of light are struck from their own hearts of flint and soon go out, requiring them to strike the flint again and dazzle themselves with new sparkles of light (Isaiah 50:11).

Still, the experience of God’s people in this world is a mingled state of grace and corruption. We often lie down in sorrow, too; but in “*the evening time it shall be light!*” The Lord graciously gives light to brighten up the darkness in the evening time of trial and soul trouble, in the evening time of heavy cares, and in the evening time of life.

Living Waters

Then, *fifth*, Zechariah assures us that throughout this day of grace living waters flow out to God’s elect from the Lord Jesus, the Fountain opened for our souls. — “*And it shall be in that day, that 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*” (v. 8).

The living waters, flowing from the Lord giving life, come to the relief of our darkness and our languishing spirits. Free grace flows in all directions through the earth, as the Lord appoints, both in winter and in summer (Ezekiel 47:1-5; Revelation 22:1; John 4:10-14).

Christ the King

Sixth, Zechariah clearly identifies his prophecy in these verses as having reference to this day, telling us that Christ is enthroned as King (vv. 9-15). Truly, Christ is King over all; and he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet (Isaiah 45:20-25). — “*And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one*” (v. 9). And when the Lord Jesus Christ establishes his throne in the hearts of men, subduing them by his grace, he makes all things new. He takes away all destruction. Jerusalem is safely inhabited; and all her enemies are destroyed.

“All the land shall be turned as a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem: and it shall be lifted up, and inhabited in her place, from Benjamin’s gate unto the place of the first gate, unto the corner gate, and *from* the tower of Hananeel unto the king’s winepresses. And *men* shall dwell in it, and there shall be no more utter destruction; but Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited. And this shall be the plague wherewith the LORD will smite all the people 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, 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 neighbour, and his hand shall rise up against the hand of his neighbour. And Judah also shall fight at

Jerusalem; and the wealth of all the heathen round about shall be gathered together, gold, and silver, and apparel, in great abundance. And so shall be the plague of the horse, of the mule, of the camel, and of the ass, and of all the beasts that shall be in these tents, as this plague” (vv. 10-15).

The Feast of Tabernacles

Seventh, Zechariah speaks of our worship in this gospel day as spiritually keeping the feast of tabernacles.

“And 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. And it shall be, *that* whoso 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. And if the family of Egypt go not up, and come not, that *have* no *rain*; there shall be the plague, wherewith the LORD will smite the heathen that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles” (vv. 16-18).

The feast of tabernacles (Leviticus 23:34) was intended to typify the human nature of Christ. As Israel during the feast dwelt in tabernacles, so God in Christ (the true Tabernacle) tabernacled among us in our nature (John 1:14; Hebrews 8:2). All true worship is the celebration of our great Redeemer, the God-man, our Mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ (Philippians 3:3). And in that great eternal day yet to come, it shall be the same (Revelation 21:1-5).

The End

Eighth, in verses 20-21 Zechariah brings us to the end, when Christ delivers up the kingdom to God, even the Father.

“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 see the therein: and in that day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the LORD of hosts.”

Without question, this is applicable to our present state (Romans 12:1-2; 1 Corinthians 6:19-20; 1 Peter 2:5); but these two verses must have their fulfillment in another world. Christ is that Holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. He is our Holiness. Everything (everyone) in his kingdom is made holy in him. When the prophet tells us that the Canaanite shall be destroyed out of the land, it is obvious that he is using the word “*Canaanite*” in a figurative, allegorical way, because Canaan was long ago destroyed. Zechariah is simply declaring that everything that is unclean, or loves, or makes a lie shall be destroyed. None shall enter heaven’s glory, except those who have been made perfectly holy in and by the Lord Jesus Christ, whose names “*are written in the Lamb’s book of life*” (Revelation 21:27). In heaven’s eternal glory everything shall be holy, in the holiness of Christ, and all God’s elect shall be delivered from all corruption. Oh! Blessed, blessed day! O Lord, I pray, Thy kingdom come!