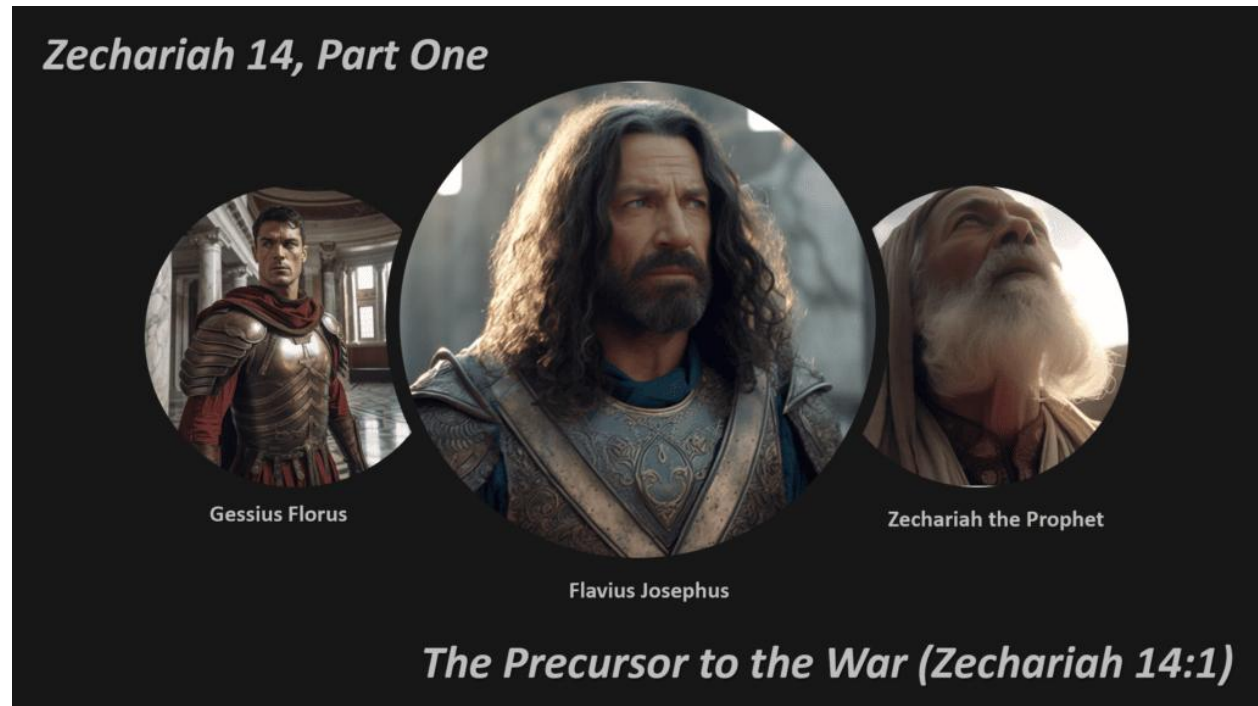


# Zechariah 14

Bob Cruickshank Jr.

## Zechariah 14, Part 1: The Precursor to the War (Zechariah 14:1)



[Robert Cruickshank](#) 8/19/2023

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***“Behold a day is coming for the Lord, when the spoil taken from you will be divided in your midst” (Zechariah 14:1, ESV<sup>L</sup>).***

If one were to ask Doctor Google what Zechariah 14 was about, the results would yield a major misdiagnosis. In a typical internet search on the passage, the answers given are characteristic of the modern penchant to interpret fulfilled prophecy as unfulfilled. The inclination to approach such texts in this manner is the disease that plagues the Church today.

A tell-tale symptom of this disease is the tendency of modern “**prophecy experts**” to take the reader on a wild goose chase throughout the Bible. In so doing, they seldom actually deal with the specific passage that they claim to be addressing. Ideas and concepts, imported from other portions of Scripture, are strung together in a haphazard manner, leaving the reader in a dizzy state of confusion. Modern treatments of Zechariah 14 are a prime example of this interpretive approach.

### **The Popular Approach to Zechariah 14**

When perusing prophecy websites, one will typically encounter the claim that Zechariah 14 is about the “*Antichrist’s assault on Jerusalem at the end of the Tribulation period.*”<sup>[2]</sup> Supposedly, Zechariah is explaining “*what will happen when Jesus returns to set up His millennial rule on earth.*”<sup>[3]</sup> Another writer informs us that the passage “*has something to do with Gog and Magog, Leviathan, the Antichrist, and the End of Days.*”<sup>[4]</sup>

If one were to list every item in these statements that is **not** mentioned in Zechariah 14, the list would look like this:

1. The antichrist
2. The tribulation period
3. The millennial reign
4. Gog and Magog
5. Leviathan
6. The end of days.


In other words, the list would include every item mentioned in the above statements – none of which are included in Zechariah 14. As stated above, those items must be imported from elsewhere in Scripture.

### **Seeing Past the Dispensational Filter**

Compounding this problem is the fact that today’s average believer will find it difficult to “unsee” what isn’t in the text to begin with; like a judge instructing a jury to disregard a particular statement, you can’t “unhear” the statement. Acting like a neurological blocker, preventing the brain from receiving the signals that the eyes are sending, the dispensationalist paradigm clouds our vision as the passage is read. It functions like a filter through which everything in the Bible is viewed and interpreted.

This being the case, taking an unfiltered look at the passage is not always easy. Stripping away man-made traditions and doctrines can not only be difficult, but uncomfortable—


perhaps even painful! Nonetheless, this is what we as students of the Word must do. The road to healing and recovery is often uncomfortable and painful. Like all true healing and recovery, however, the reward is worth it in the end.


This series of articles invites readers to embark on such a journey through a verse-by-verse survey of Zechariah's 14<sup>th</sup> chapter. In this first installment, the focus will be [Zechariah 14:1](#) .

### **Spoils Divided in their Midst**

Regardless of how one views the timing of fulfillment, the picture Zechariah paints in verse 1 is hard to miss. God's people are being assaulted and plundered in plain sight, and the atrocities against them are being committed in full view. Unlike robbers who ransack homes at night and return to their hideaway to divvy up their sordid gain in private, the Jews' assailants would openly flaunt the rewards of their conquest in the Jews' very "midst." Past or future, this is a public plundering of the Jewish people, and most commentators understand this.[\[5\]](#)

With that said, Sook-Young Kim serves as a good example of those who see the passage as still ahead in our future, as well as the problems that go along with that approach. True to the course of this line of interpretation, Kim stretches the passage far beyond its contextual limits. Rather than seeing this plundering as exclusive to the Jewish people, she takes it a step further and includes the entire world. From there, she claims this is somehow beneficial for those who are being plundered. She writes:

*"Zechariah brings great encouragement to us who are living in this time of the end. The first two verses seem to describe the situation shortly before the door of mercy closes. The final issue will be an economic one. Those faithful to God's commandments will have their possessions taken, no matter where in the world they live. Because of an economic crisis buying and selling will be restricted to those who receive the mark of the beast ([Rev 13:16-18](#) ).[\[6\]](#)*

It's hard to ascertain how having our "*possessions taken, no matter where in the world we live,*" is somehow a "*great encouragement to us.*" Rather than finding this encouraging, rational people should find it problematic – at the very least. Even more problematic is the fact that Kim imposes [Revelation 13:16-18](#)  upon the text of Zechariah 14. Zechariah mentions neither the beast nor his mark. Again, the propensity to jump all over the Bible and string unrelated passages together runs rampant in the Futurist view. The most problematic part of Kim's treatment of Zechariah 14, however, is the operating assumption that the prophecy remains unfulfilled and is all about us.

### **It's Not About Us**

The truth is, there really couldn't be a more apt summary of the events of the first-century Roman-Jewish War than what is succinctly contained in [Zechariah 14:1-2](#)<sup>[9]</sup>. As Brent Kercheville writes, [Zechariah 14:1-2](#)<sup>[9]</sup> is a “graphic description” of “what would take place in the Roman assault upon the city of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.”<sup>[12]</sup>

As the fourth-century Christian historian Eusebius wrote, “Zechariah writes this prophecy after the return from Babylon, foretelling the final siege of the people by the Romans, through which the whole Jewish race was to become subject to their enemies: he says that only the remnant of the people shall be saved, exactly describing the apostles of our Savior.”<sup>[8]</sup> Specifically, [Zechariah 14:1](#)<sup>[9]</sup> foretells the particular actions of the 7th Roman procurator of Judea, Gessius Florus – actions which, among other circumstances, helped to prompt the war, according to Josephus.

### The Actions of Gessius Florus

No single conflict in history has ever had one, single, root cause. Just Google “the causes of World War II,” for instance.<sup>[9]</sup> Throughout his writings, Josephus identifies at least 10 different factors as contributing causes of the Roman-Jewish conflict.<sup>[10]</sup> These were all triggers which would eventually converge, resulting in all-out war. Among the earliest of these triggers were the criminal acts and abuses of power by Gessius Florus<sup>[11]</sup> in the 12<sup>th</sup> year of Nero’s reign. What Josephus recounts in this regard is virtually a commentary on [Zechariah 14:1](#)<sup>[9]</sup>.


Whereas the former procurator did his cheating and fraud “in private,” writes Josephus, “Gessius did his unjust actions to the harm of the nation after a most pompous manner.”<sup>[12]</sup> Rather than getting “money out of single persons,” Gessius “spoiled whole cities” and did “publicly proclaim it all the country over.” He had given great liberty to the Roman soldiers to “turn robbers” in order that he might “share with them in the spoils they got.”

Josephus speaks of Gessius’s “greediness of gain,” from which he “became a partner with the robbers

themselves.” Gessius was bent on the purpose “to show his crimes to everybody” and make a “pompous ostentation of them to our nation,” writes Josephus. “It was Florus who necessitated us,” he continues, “to take up arms against the Romans.” Whereas robbers

AD 66  
Gessius Florus, Roman procurator, ruler of Judea.  
Seized silver from the temple.  
A.D. 66, he sent troops into Jerusalem who  
massacred 3,600 citizens.  
Florus’s action touched off an explosive rebellion—  
the First Jewish Revolt—that had been sizzling for  
some time.

normally sneak into homes in the dead of night and divide up their acquisitions in private, the spoil of Gessius's unjust acts were "*divided*" in the Jews' very "midst!"

This very public plundering of the Jews coincides perfectly with what Zechariah describes in verse 1, and it pulls us to the far distant *past* rather than the near *future* to find the prophecy's fulfillment. [Zechariah 14:1](#)  also sets the stage for all that follows in the remainder of the chapter. Accordingly, **we should continue to look to ancient history for the passage's fulfillment, rather than to tomorrow's headlines.** In part two of our survey of Zechariah 14, we will continue our journey into the past to reap the rewards of understanding fulfilled prophecy in the here and now. And these rewards will yield a two-fold benefit.

### **Why This is Important**

First, if today's prophecy experts and cyber-land Bible scholars are correct about Zechariah 14, the immediate future is not only bleak for modern day Jews in the land of Israel, but also terrifying and horrific. Yet, these same teachers claim to be "*friends of Israel*" as they encourage Jews to return to their homeland, rebuild the temple, and kick start prophecies such as this into motion.

The unbelieving Jews of today should hear a much better message coming from us, and they should not have to suffer at the hands of the Antichrist for their distant ancestors' sins. Misunderstanding the timing of passages like Zechariah 14 sends the wrong message on both counts.

Second, if Zechariah 14 was indeed fulfilled in **the events leading up to and including the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70**, this has tremendous apologetic value for Christian believers. The fact that Zechariah predicted these events nearly 600 years before they transpired is de facto evidence for **divine inspiration**. It demonstrates that the Bible is exactly what it claims to be, and people need to take its claims seriously. Sadly, this great apologetic tool sits unused, collecting dust, as God's People continue to misinterpret fulfilled prophecy as unfulfilled.

In simple terms, the popular approach to Bible prophecy is like a virus which has infected nearly 90% of the American Christian world. Perhaps this partially explains why the Church in America has become so *impotent and ineffective*? The net effect of the dispensational method has manifested almost 200 years of failed predictions and false hopes. This cuts to the very heart of the meaning and message of the Bible itself and **taints its reliability**. Additionally, it greatly impacts our own perceived meaning and purpose *in* the world, as well as our message *to* the world. The same world that we're trying to reach is relying on us to get this right.

We can't heal the nations until we take off our own filters and see Bible prophecy again – for the first time This series of articles invites the reader to do just that as we make our journey through Zechariah's 14<sup>th</sup> chapter.

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[1] Special thanks to Brian Martin, of *Fulfilled Magazine*, for this early editing, review, and suggestions regarding the original draft of the introduction in this article.

[2] <https://www.sermoncentral.com/sermons/destruction-of-antichrist-armies-richard-tow-sermon-on-judgment-269768>

[3] <https://dailyverse.knowing-jesus.com/zechariah-14-4>

[4] <https://www.bethimmanuel.org/scripture-references/zechariah-14>

[5] Ron Daniels is a rare exception. He writes, “Israel is given some good news: After thousands of square miles have been stolen from them, after countless priceless treasures have been plundered throughout the years, after millions of Jews have been robbed of their fortunes, heirlooms, and personal possessions, everything will be given back. The land will be theirs again, the treasures will be restored, and the wealth stolen from the Jews will be returned.” <https://rondaniel.com/library/38-Zechariah/Zechariah1401.php>

This is, however, a clear misunderstanding of the context of the verse. For example, Anthony R. Petterson comments: “While Webb (2003: 178) understands this verse to anticipate the final victory when God’s people who survive the battle will divide up the plunder they have taken (cf. v. 14), the immediate context suggests that it is the inhabitants of Jerusalem who will be plundered” (Schaefer 1993a: 171)” (Anthony R. Petterson, *Apollos Old Testament Commentary 25: Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi* [Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2025], p. 289.).

[6] <https://www.revivalandreformation.org/bhp/en/bible/zec/14>

[7] [https://westpalmbeachchurchofchrist.com/old-testament/zechariah/zechariah\\_14.html](https://westpalmbeachchurchofchrist.com/old-testament/zechariah/zechariah_14.html)

[8] *Proof of the Gospel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 1981), 1:98.

[9] <https://www.history.com/topics/world-war-ii/world-war-ii-history>

[10] <https://www.josephus.org/causesOfWar.htm>

[11] <https://www.josephus.org/causesOfWar.htm>

[12] Antiquities of the Jews, XX: 11: 1; The Wars of the Jews, ii: xiv: 2; all that follows in this and the next paragraph is taken from these two sources in Josephus's writing.

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## Zechariah 14, Part 2: The Siege of the City



[Robert Cruickshank](#) 8/26/2023

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Continuation from [Part 1: The Precursor to the War \(Zechariah 14:1\)](#)

***“For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city will be taken, 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 14:2 ESV<sup>L</sup>).***

Verse 2 opens with a horrific scene: *“the city will be taken, the houses plundered, and the women raped.”* After this, the prophet tells us that *“half of the city will be exiled.”* Like the previous verse, this verse pulls us to the distant past to find the prophecy’s fulfillment. As one commentator notes, the disturbing events described in this verse are *“identical to those that happened during the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. (i.e., city conquered and plundered by a consortium of armies and auxiliaries from throughout the empire; women raped; many enslaved, some freed).”*<sup>[2]</sup>

**All Nations Attack Jerusalem**

The passage says that “*all the nations*” will come “*against Jerusalem*” in “*battle.*” Arguing from the Futurist perspective, Tommy Ice says, “*This does not sound like the Romans in A.D. 70,*” and it “*does not fit with what happened to Jerusalem in A.D. 70 when the Romans conquered Israel.*”<sup>[3]</sup> Likewise, Alex Dodson concurs: “*Of course, Jerusalem was invaded in 70 AD but...what happened in 70 AD doesn’t seem to fit.*”<sup>[4]</sup> One popular website informs us that all “*the nations of the world*” will be involved in this attack upon Israel.<sup>[5]</sup> The argument boils down to the notion that Zechariah 14 describes an attack by “*all the nations of the earth, not just the Romans.*”<sup>[6]</sup>

On the surface, this reasoning may seem valid. However, there is no need to press this language to the extreme and imagine that it speaks of every single nation on the face of the planet. Scripture interprets Scripture, and this just isn’t how the expression, “*all nations,*” is used in the Bible.

### **The Phrase “All Nations” in the Bible**

In its Scriptural usage, the phrase “*all nations*” is merely used, contextually, to refer to the nations adjacent to the subject. For example, [1 Chronicles 14:17](#)<sup>L</sup> says that the Lord brought the fear of David upon “*all nations.*” Likewise, [2 Chronicles 32:23](#)<sup>L</sup> says that Hezekiah, the king of Judah, was exalted in the sight of “*all nations.*” Speaking of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, [Jeremiah 27:7](#)<sup>L</sup> says, “*all nations shall serve him.*” It’s simply not the case that every nation in the entire world feared David, exalted Hezekiah, or served Nebuchadnezzar. **The language is localized to mean the nations in proximity to Israel and not every nation from around the globe.**<sup>[7]</sup>

Likewise, in [Psalm 118:10](#)<sup>L</sup>, David says, “*All nations surrounded me; In the name of the Lord, I will surely cut them off.*” Did every single nation that existed literally “*surround*” David? Did he literally cut off each and every nation on earth? The answer is “no,” and of course everyone recognizes this in passages such as these. With Scripture itself as our guide, it’s best to understand the phrase “*all nations*” as meaning “*all manner of nations,*” rather than “*each and every nation.*”<sup>[8]</sup> Considering these observations, Zechariah would be saying that Jerusalem will be attacked by all manner of nations within the city’s geographical proximity.

### **A Consortium of Nations in AD 70**

This is exactly what happened in AD 70. As Ken Gentry writes: “[Zechariah 14:1–2](#)<sup>L</sup> pictures the Roman imperial forces joining the various client kings who engage the Jewish War AD 67–70. This war is conducted by an empire of ‘nations’ (v 2), consisting not only of the Romans but the lands of Syria, Asia Minor, Palestine, Gaul, Egypt, Britain, and others. Client

*kings, such as Antiochus, Agrippa, Sohemus, Malchus, and Alexander, provide auxiliary forces for Rome during the Jewish War.”<sup>[9]</sup>*

When Zechariah therefore speaks of “*all nations*” coming against Jerusalem, it is a fitting term for the league of nations accompanying Rome’s decimation of the city. With this in mind, the actions of the Romans and their auxiliary cohorts would be considered war crimes by today’s standards. As the saying goes, “*war is war,*” and the collateral damage of the Roman-Jewish War reflects our passage from Zechariah.

### **Some Horrific Details**

A dive into any of the historical writings that recount the events of the Roman-Jewish War reveals how identical those events truly were to Zechariah’s prediction. For example, 4 Ezra (also known as 2 Esdras) is a post-AD 70 Jewish writing preoccupied with the devastating effects of the city’s destruction in the aftermath of the war.<sup>[10]</sup> Stressing the most lamentable results of the Roman onslaught, one passage from 4 Ezra in particular reads like a commentary on [Zechariah 14:2](#)<sup>[L]</sup>:

*“Our psaltery is laid on the ground, our song is put to silence, our rejoicing is at an end, the light of our candlestick is put out, the ark of our covenant is spoiled, our holy things are defiled, and the name that is called upon us is almost profaned: our children are put to shame, our priests are burnt, our Levites are gone into captivity, our virgins are defiled, and our wives raped; our righteous men carried away, our little ones destroyed, our young men are brought in bondage, and our strong men are become weak” (4 Ezra 10:22<sup>[L]</sup>).<sup>[11]</sup>*

The themes of devastation, exile, and rape, loom large in both [4 Ezra 10:22](#)<sup>[L]</sup> and [Zechariah 14:2](#)<sup>[L]</sup>. These texts are mirror images of each other – one written before the fact, the other written after the fact.

### **A Revolting Image**

Perhaps the most revolting image, in both 4 Ezra and [Zechariah 14:2](#)<sup>[L]</sup>, is that of rape. As Caryn A. Reeder points out, “*Rape is nearly a synonym for the capture of a city*” in ancient times,<sup>[12]</sup> and was a “*consistent expectation in war.*”<sup>[13]</sup> Roman imperial art often highlights rape to show the “*abasement of Rome’s enemies.*”<sup>[14]</sup> Steve Mason describes a modern relic from history’s past that demonstrates how rape served as a badge of honor for the Romans in their conquest of other nations. Intriguingly, “*the Judeans*” are specifically mentioned in the inscription:

*“A temple from Nero’s reign in Aphrodisias (modern Turkey) sported a football-field-sized promenade along which imperial victories over the world’s ethnē were portrayed. On the northern façade were statues of some fifty nations; by chance the inscription for the*

*‘ethnos of the Judeans’ is one of the few to have survived. The southern façade hosted mythical scenes portraying the emperors. In one, a heroically naked Tiberius escorts a bound prisoner half his size. In another Claudius, naked as a God, looms over a supine and helpless Britannia, grabbing her long hair as she struggles beneath him, one of her breasts exposed. Another scene features Nero towering over naked and distraught Armenia. These are potent images... soldiers lie dead, dying, and headless. Women, disheveled after implied rape, desperately try to protect their children.”[\[15\]](#)*

All of these potent, revolting, and horrific images were telegraphed by Zechariah in the Old Testament centuries before they happened. Zechariah’s words were then echoed in the New Testament, centuries later, by Jesus Himself.

### **The Siege, the Houses, and the Women**

Zechariah’s reference to the women of the city is the third item identified on his list of shocking events. The prophet highlights three key elements precisely in this order:

- 1) the siege of the city,**
- 2) the reference to houses, and**
- 3) the mention of women. Part of interpreting Scripture is recognizing patterns.**

This being the case, it’s no small coincidence that all three of these key elements occur, in the exact same sequence, in Jesus’ Olivet Discourse ([Mk. 13:14-17](#)<sup>L</sup>).

Jesus speaks of the siege of the city ([Lk. 21:20](#)<sup>L</sup>) and the urgency of evacuating one’s house ([Lk. 21:21](#)<sup>L</sup>; cf. [Matt. 24:17](#)<sup>L</sup>; [Mk. 13:15-16](#)<sup>L</sup>) and shows a heightened concern for women during this time ([Lk. 21:23](#)<sup>L</sup>). In fact, the



Roman temple images of raped women “desperately” trying “to protect their children” reflect Jesus’ own words: “woe to those who are with child and to those who nurse babes in those days” ([Lk. 21:23](#)<sup>L</sup>). Jesus echoes Zechariah, and both of their voices were echoed in AD 70.

As Jonathan Menn states, “the Olivet Discourse is a ‘retelling’ of Zechariah 14.”<sup>[\[16\]](#)</sup> **Coffman’s Commentary on the Bible** puts it this way: “the subject under discussion” in Matthew 24 “is exactly the same as the theme of Zechariah here...There is such a resemblance between this chapter in Zechariah and that of Matthew 24, that it is safe to suppose that Jesus’ words in the New Testament may actually be understood...as

*an expansion and elaboration of this very prophecy.*<sup>[17]</sup> In other words, whatever Zechariah 14 is talking about, Jesus is talking about (Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21), and they're both talking about the events leading up to and including the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

### **Half the City is Exiled and Half Remains**

Zechariah's next statement continues the trend of a perfect match with the Olivet Discourse. He says, *"half of the city will be exiled but the rest of the people will not be eliminated from the city."* Jesus put it this way: *"At that time there will be two men in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one will be left"* ([Matt. 24:40](#)<sup>[18]</sup>).

These are two different ways of *saying* the same thing, and Zechariah and Jesus are both *speaking* of the same thing. Having said that, the context of both of their words once again coincides with the events of the first century. The idea of half the city being taken into exile is an apt depiction of the Jews' situation at the end of the Roman-Jewish War. Those who remained in the city were killed and those who were taken were exiled. As D. A. Carson notes, there was never *"so high a percentage of a great city so thoroughly and painfully exterminated and enslaved as during the Fall of Jerusalem."*<sup>[18]</sup>

According to Josephus, 97,000 Jews were taken prisoner by the Romans.<sup>[19]</sup> As if this were not jarring enough, the *reason* they were taken as prisoners is even more jarring. When all was said and done, Titus' soldiers had *"grown weary"* and were *"quite tired"* of killing them.<sup>[20]</sup> From there, the story goes from jarring to saddening. Having lost the interest and strength to continue murdering the Jews, Josephus tells us that the soldiers had *"hoped to get some money by sparing them" but ended up selling "the rest of the multitude, with their wives and children, at a very low price."*<sup>[21]</sup>

The low price was because those to be sold *"were very many"* but *"the buyers were few."*<sup>[22]</sup> Thus, they were *"sold for little or nothing."*<sup>[23]</sup> In short, they were sold *"for a trifling price per head, as supply was far in excess of demand,"* as Josephus puts it.<sup>[24]</sup> At that point, it wasn't even worth the Romans' time to try and sell them anymore. In the end, the vast multitude of Jews remaining alive were simply put into bonds and taken to the mines of Egypt to work as free labor.<sup>[25]</sup> The final fate of these first-century Jews is as tragic as it is heartbreaking, and it fulfills yet a third Biblical prophecy that's not been mentioned up to this point.

### **Back to Egypt: Prophecy Comes Full Circle**

When all was said and done, the remaining Jewish captives had come full circle and returned to where it all began with their ancestors so long ago. They returned to Egyptian

oppression because no one else would even pay money to have them as slaves. Hauntingly, this fulfills the prophecy of Moses in [Deuteronomy 28:68](#)<sup>[1]</sup>. Moses foresaw their apostasy centuries before and foretold of their eventual fate to the very last detail:

*“And the Lord will bring you back to Egypt in ships, by the way about which I said to you, ‘You will never see it again!’ And there you will offer yourselves for sale to your enemies as male and female slaves, but there will be no buyer”* ([Deut. 28:68](#)<sup>[1]</sup>).

In the end, it ended where it all began – just as Moses had foreseen.

### **Closing comment**

What Moses, Zechariah, and Jesus spoke of in signs and portents, Josephus recorded as history. This prophecy is fulfilled on the pages of history, not on the headlines of today. While one can do nothing but grieve for those Jews of so long ago, the good news for modern-day Jews is that the rape, plunder, and exile prophesied by Zechariah do not lie ahead in their inevitable future. The good news for modern-day believers is that the precise fulfillment of Zechariah’s prophecy, along with the prophecies of Jesus, and Moses, serves as a tremendous apologetic demonstrating the divine inspiration of Scripture. From the siege of the city to the sad outcome of the survivors, it was all foretold in exact detail by God’s prophets long before it happened.

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[1] Special thanks to Daniel E. Harden for his input and suggestions.

[2] “Deciphering [Zechariah 14:5](#)<sup>[1]</sup>: The Truth Hidden Right in Front of Our Eyes” (February 10, 2010): <http://zechariahfourteenfive.wordpress.com/> Q: Gary DeMar, “Making Prophetic Sense of Zechariah 14” (Unpublished Work in Progress, October 1, 2020), p. 9.

[3] [https://jashow.org/articles/preterism-and-zechariah-12-14/#cite\\_note-2](https://jashow.org/articles/preterism-and-zechariah-12-14/#cite_note-2)

[4] <https://www.oneplace.com/ministries/watchman-radio-hour/read/articles/the-meaning-of-the-attacks-on-jerusalem-in-zechariah-12-14-part-2-12153.html>

[5]

[6] <https://www.pre-trib.org/other-articles-by-dr-thomas-ice/message/preterism-and-zechariah-12-14/read>

[7] Gary DeMar, “Making Prophetic Sense of Zechariah 14” (Unpublished Work in Progress, Copyright © Gary DeMar October 2, 2018), p. 13.

[8] In and of itself, the “all” in Scripture is most often best understood in the relative sense (all manner of) rather than the absolute sense (each and every). For example, Paul’s

meaning in 1 Corinthians 10:23 is that all manner of things are lawful for him. In [Romans 14:2](#), the meaning is that one person has faith to eat all manner of things. In [1 Timothy 2:4](#), we are to pray for all manner of men. In other words, men from differing ranks and classifications in society. In these three examples, understanding “all” in the absolute sense would lead to absurdity.

[9] <https://postmillennialworldview.com/2021/05/11/zechariah-14-in-postmillennialism-2/> Likewise, Daniel Morais comments: “In vs. 2, Zechariah predicts that the LORD will ‘gather all the nations to Jerusalem to fight against it.’ The Roman army that attacked Jerusalem in A.D. 70 was not exclusively Roman. It consisted of a number of auxiliary cohorts. These auxiliary cohorts consisted of soldiers that were not Roman citizens and thus were comprised of a diverse array of ethnic groups.” <https://www.revelationrevolution.org/zechariah-14-fulfilled-a-preterist-commentary/#easy-footnote-3-156>

[10] <https://pseudepigrapha.org/docs/intro/4Ezra>

[11] <http://thelostbooks.org/4-ezra/>

[12] Reeder, Caryn A. “Wartime Rape, the Romans, and the First Jewish Revolt.” *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 48.3 (2017), p. 370.

[13] *Ibid.*, p. 364.

[14] Reeder, *Ibid.*, p. 364. See also:

[15] Steve Mason, *A History of the Jewish war: AD 66-74* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2016), p. 103.

[16] Jonathan Menn, *Biblical Eschatology*, 2nd ed. (Eugene, OR: Resource Publications, [2013] 2018), p. 446; Q: Gary DeMar, “Making Prophetic Sense of Zechariah 14” (Unpublished Work in Progress, October 1, 2020), p. 9.

[17] <https://www.studylight.org/commentary/zechariah/14-1.html>

[18] Q: <https://postmillennialworldview.com/2021/05/11/zechariah-14-in-postmillennialism-2/>

[19] Wars, 6.9.3. Regarding the accuracy of this number, Steve Mason writes, “Josephus claims that 1.1 million Judaeans died in the siege of Jerusalem, most having come from outside, and that another 97,000 were taken prisoner. Admitting that his numbers will seem incredible, he cites the dodgy census that Cestius requested from the priests to convince Nero (6.414–28; Chapter 5). But the walled city, only about 2.5 km<sup>2</sup> (1 sq. mi), lacking highrise buildings and including large public spaces, could not have accommodated more

than about 20,000 to 30,000, perhaps 50,000 including all surrounding villages” (Steve Mason, *A History of the Jewish War: AD 66-74* [New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2016], p. 438).

[20] Wars, 6.8.2; 6.9.2

[21] Wars, 6.8.2.

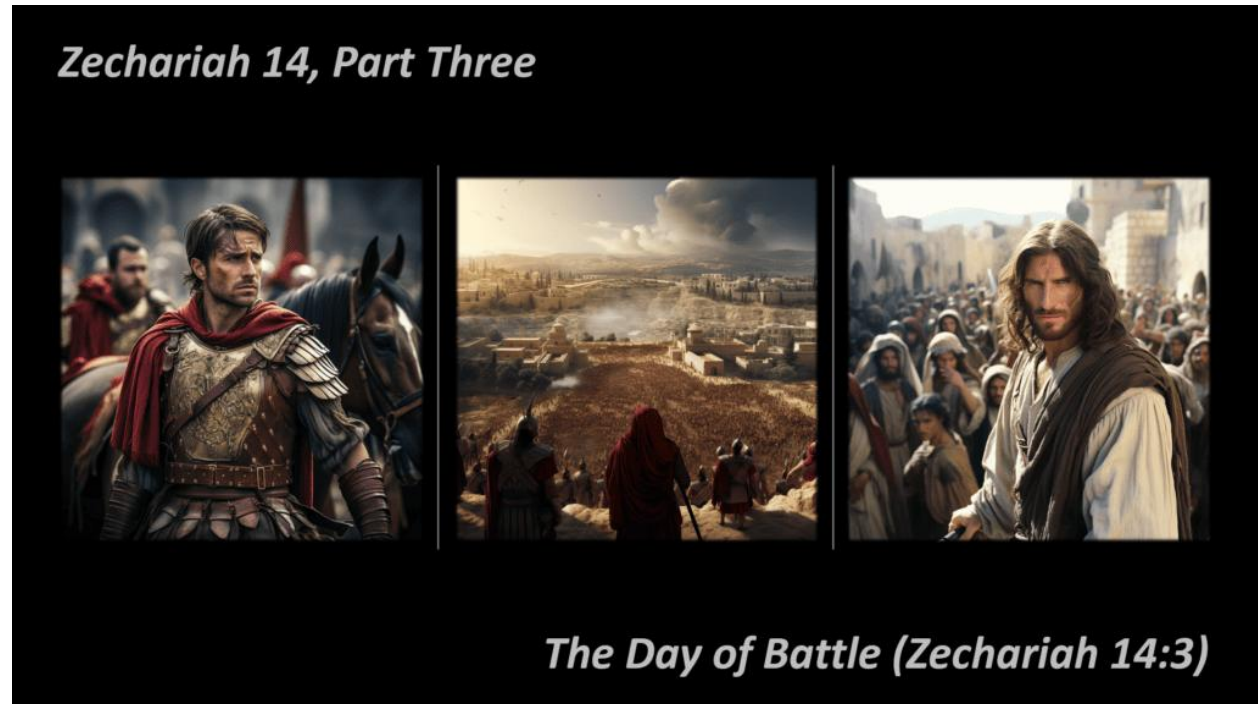
[22] Josephus, *Ibid.*

[23] Flavius Josephus, *The War of the Jews and the Destruction of Jerusalem*, p. 484, note 28.

[24] <https://www.revelationrevolution.org/zechariah-14-fulfilled-a-preterist-commentary/#easy-footnote-3-156>

[25] Wars, 6.9.2.

## Zechariah 14, Part 3: The Day of Battle (Zechariah 14:3)



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***“Then the Lord will go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fights on a day of battle” (Zechariah 14:3<sup>L</sup>).***

For most futurists, this verse is the key as to why (in their view) Zechariah 14 can't be about the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. The passage speaks of the city's deliverance and not its decimation, they argue. In [Zechariah 14:3<sup>L</sup>](#), God fights **against** those nations that mount an assault upon Jerusalem. As the reasoning goes: the Romans were successful in AD 70; therefore, the passage must be speaking of sometime in the future – a time when the nations of the world *attempt* an attack upon Israel, but God intervenes and defeats them. Obviously, God did not “*fight against those nations*” that stormed the city in AD 70.<sup>[1]</sup> Consequently, this verse serves as the basis for rejecting the idea of past fulfillment in Zechariah 14.

From there it is argued that anything in the Gospels that might possibly speak of the upcoming *destruction* of Jerusalem in AD 70 is, consequently, incompatible with Zechariah 14. Since Zechariah predicts Israel's rescue rather than its ruination, Zechariah cannot be telling of the same events as Jesus in such instances. Weeding through the reasoning of

this claim is somewhat cumbersome but necessary to ascertain if there is any merit to it. If such merit exists, and Zechariah 14 is about *modern* Israel's future rather than *first-century* Israel's future, this is important on at least two levels.

### **The Significance of Getting Zechariah's Prophecy Right**

As mentioned in previous posts, the timing Zechariah 14 is significant for both Jews and Christians living today. If Zechariah 14 remains unfulfilled, the Jewish people have some horrific events before them in the inevitable future – rape, destruction, and captivity ([Zech. 14:2-4](#)), to name but a few. This certainly isn't good news. On the other hand, if Zechariah 14 was fulfilled in the distant past, none of these atrocities await today's Jew in God's predetermined prophetic plan.

For today's Christian believer (both Jew and Gentile alike), past fulfillment of the passage has tremendous apologetic value. It would mean that Zechariah, along with Jesus in the Olivet Discourse, foresaw and foretold of AD 70 with incredible accuracy. This being the case, divine inspiration alone accounts for the precision of both of their predictions. Prior to the rise of Dispensationalism in the mid to late 1800s, Jesus's Olivet Discourse was seen as "*absolute and irresistible proof of the divine origin of Christianity*," as George Peter Holford put it in 1805.<sup>[2]</sup> Since Zechariah's topic was the same as Jesus's topic (i.e., the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70), Zachariah 14 carries the same apologetic value for the believer as does Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21.

The interweaving of Zechariah's prophecy with Jesus's prophecy, however, is precisely where Futurists think they've found an "out" which allows them to sever the two prophecies from one another. Specifically, they believe Luke's version of the Olivet discourse contains an escape clause of sorts. With this supposed loophole in Luke, Zechariah 14 is then catapulted into the future, disconnected from AD 70, and robbed of its worth in defending the faith.

### **Zechariah 14 and the Olivet Discourse**

In an earlier installment, the point was made that Jesus's Olivet Discourse, found in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21, is basically His version of Zechariah 14. Whatever the Olivet Discourse is about, Zechariah 14 is about, and vice versa. As Don K. Preston notes, "*The parallel between the passages can hardly be doubted.*"<sup>[3]</sup>

Even most Futurists would agree with this, but they see neither Jesus nor Zechariah describing the events of the Roman-Jewish War of the first century. For them, Jesus and Zechariah are both describing the events leading up to and including the end of the world, rather than the events leading up to and including the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

This creates a problem for them, however. If such is indeed the case, this leaves Jesus saying virtually nothing about one of the most significant happenings in the near future of His original audience. It seems inconceivable that He wouldn't have mentioned the upcoming calamity at some point during His earthly ministry.

This being so, some Futurists will actually concede that Luke 21 is about the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, but to exclusion of Matthew 24 and Mark 13. To put it another way, Luke 21 is in fact in the past from our perspective while Matthew 24 and Mark 13 still lie in our future – according to them. From there, it is argued that what Luke describes in Luke 21 (i.e., AD 70) is drastically different from what Zechariah describes in Zechariah 14; therefore, Zechariah cannot be speaking of the events of AD 70. This in turn gives the Futurist a workaround to detach Jesus's words from Zechariah's words *whenever* Jesus is prophesying about the city's first-century destruction.

### **Luke 21 vs. Zechariah 14**

Tommy Ice is a good example of those who try to break the connection between Zechariah 14 and Luke 21. While Ice agrees that that [“Luke 21:20-24”](#) *prophesied the A.D. 70 Roman destruction of Jerusalem,* he contends that there is a significant contrast between Luke and Zechariah which renders the two passages incompatible.[\[4\]](#)

Ice reasons that *“Jerusalem”* is *“destroyed”* in Luke, but Jerusalem is *“redeemed”* in Zechariah.[\[5\]](#) Consequently, the argument is that Zechariah and Luke must be speaking of two different events entirely. The city cannot be destroyed and redeemed at the same time, or so the reasoning goes.

This juxtaposition between destruction (Luke) and redemption (Zechariah) may appear compelling on the surface, but Luke 21 also speaks of redemption. In Luke, Jesus says, *“Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near”* ([Lk. 21:28](#)). Thus, Luke speaks of both destruction ([Lk. 21:20](#)) and redemption ([Lk. 21:28](#)) at the same time. In other words, the same contrast which Ice claims sets Luke and Zechariah apart, exists within Luke's very passage itself. If positing destruction against redemption necessitates two distinct contexts, this distinction does more than merely set Luke at odds with Zechariah, it sets Luke at odds with himself.

### **Is Luke Contradicting Himself?**

The question now becomes: is Luke contradicting himself within the space of eight verses? How can a city be ruined and rescued at the same time? What sense can be made of this? The key to answering these questions is, of course, [Luke 21:21](#) and the flight to the mountains.

When the time came, the people inside the city had a choice to make between the Zealots' message and Jesus's message. In their insane delusion that they could somehow overcome the Roman onslaught, the Zealots were marshalling the Jews to stay inside the city and fight. Jesus's followers, on the other hand, would have heeded His advice and "got the heck out of Dodge," so to speak. So, desolation and redemption coexist within the same context. While some met an awful fate trapped inside the city's walls, others fled to freedom and escaped that same fate. Retribution and relief were simultaneous, and Luke's words are not conflicting.

Those who clung to old earthly Jerusalem, in hopes of successfully defending her, were destroyed and defeated. Those who clung to Jesus's words, and were becoming part of the new heavenly Jerusalem, were rescued and rewarded. Both elements coexist in Luke 21, and they are side by side in Zechariah 14 as well. Zechariah informs us that some would go down with the city and/or be captured ([Zech. 14:2<sup>L</sup>](#)), while others would flee to the safety of God's mountains ([Zech. 14:5<sup>L</sup>](#)). This dovetails with the events of AD 70, precisely. Those who followed Jesus's advice didn't die within the city's walls, nor were they captured or exiled. Old Jerusalem was destroyed while the members of the New Jerusalem were rescued.

The apparent contradictions and conflicting outcomes raised by Ice are a non-issue in either passage. In Luke 21 and Zechariah 14, there is both destruction and deliverance, slaughter and salvation, retribution and redemption. It all depended upon which message the people in question chose to listen and obey—the message of the Zealots or the message of Jesus. There is no internal contradiction in Luke, and there is certainly no external contradiction between Luke and Zechariah.

### **Against Those Nations or With Those Nations?**

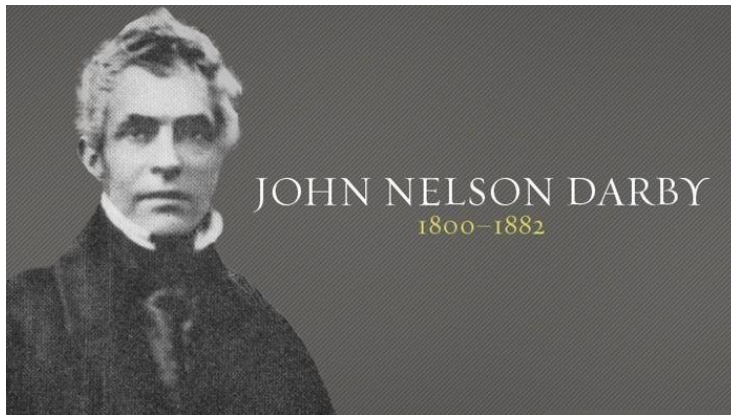
These issues aside, the question still remains as to how it could be said that God fought "*against those nations*" that came against Jerusalem in battle in 70 AD. The Romans were in fact successful in their campaign rather than vice versa. This much is true. If God was fighting "against" them, one would think the outcome would have been the other way around.

As is often the case, the English rendering of a single word can make all the difference regarding what a particular verse is or isn't saying. There's a well-known translational problem here that would alter the connotation of the verse significantly. Rendered literally, the text simply reads, "*the Lord will fight in nations.*"<sup>[6]</sup> This sounds awkward to us. To smooth things out in English, translators drop the preposition "*in*" and add the

word “*against*.” In so doing, the sense of the verse drastically changes. In fact, this translational choice turns the passage on its head.

As George L. Klein points out, in his commentary on Zechariah: “*The statement that ‘the LORD will ... fight against those nations’ contains a significant ambiguity that has the potential to alter the meaning of the verse dramatically...The question turns on the meaning of the preposition b?. This preposition commonly means ‘in’ or ‘among’ (Zech. 6:5<sup>L</sup>). If this is the intended meaning of the preposition, it would mean that the Lord continues to fight with the nations against Jerusalem.*”<sup>[7]</sup>

### John Nelson Darby Got It Right on [Zechariah 14:3<sup>L</sup>](#)



In a bit of historical irony, John Nelson Darby, who is responsible for bringing Dispensationalism to the world, translated the verse as follows: “*And Jehovah will go forth and **fight with those nations**, as when He fought in the day of battle.*”<sup>[8]</sup> He gets God’s name wrong, it’s Yahweh and not Jehovah, but “*fight with those nations*” is a much better English rendering of the original Hebrew than “fight against those nations.” So, Darby deserves credit there.

Darby’s translational choice of wording is supported by the Septuagint. The Septuagint is the ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, and it was written by Jewish scribes who understood their language. That said, they rendered the verse: “*And the Lord shall go forth, and fight **with** those Gentiles as when he fought in the day of war.*”<sup>[9]</sup>

Taken in this light, the meaning is that “*the Lord fought with those nations as his tools to punish Jerusalem or that he sided with those nations against Israel to punish Israel as when he brought Babylon against Israel to punish her for her transgressions.*”<sup>[10]</sup> This comports well with other Scriptural examples of God using pagan nations to execute judgment upon His People.

### God Uses the Nations to Judge His People

In Ezekiel 21, the prophet is told to set his “*face toward Jerusalem*” and “*prophecy against the land of Israel*” ([Ez. 21:1](#)). God tells the people of Israel that He is “*against*” them and says, “*I will draw My sword out of its sheath and cut off from you the righteous and the wicked*” ([Ez. 21:3](#)). The theme of God drawing His sword against His own people is repeated several times in the verses that follow ([Ez. 21:4-5](#), [9-14](#)). Then, in verse 19, it is revealed that this would be accomplished through “*the sword of the king of Babylon*” ([Ez. 21:19](#)). In other words, the punishment of God’s people came through the hands of the armies of Babylon.

In the same way, God calls Assyria “*the rod of My anger. And the staff in whose hands is My indignation, I send it against a godless nation. And commission it against the people of My fury. To capture spoils and to seize plunder, and to trample them down like mud in the streets*” ([Isa. 10:5-6](#)).

Just like God used the Assyrians and the Babylonians against His People in the Old Testament, He would do the same with the Romans and their allies in AD 70. The Lord fought “with” those nations in AD 70 just as He had fought “with” the nations, against His own disobedient people, in the Old Testament.

### **God Judges Those He Uses to Judge His People**

Having said this, God nevertheless judged the Assyrians and the Babylonians, whom He used against His people, and He would judge the Romans as well.

*“With regard to Assyria, the Lord says, ‘I send it against a godless nation and commission it against the people of My fury to capture booty and to seize plunder, and to trample them down like mud in the streets.... So it will be that when the Lord has completed all His work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, He will say, ‘I will punish the fruit of the arrogant heart of the king of Assyria and the pomp of his haughtiness’”* ([Isa. 10:5-6](#), [12-13](#)).

Likewise, once the Lord has used the Babylonians to accomplish His purposes, judgment would come upon them as well:

*“Behold, I am going to stir up the Medes against them, Who will not value silver or take pleasure in gold. And their bows will mow down the young men, They will not even have compassion on the fruit of the womb, Nor will their eye pity children. And Babylon, the beauty of kingdoms, the glory of the Chaldeans’ pride, Will be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah”* ([Isa. 13:17-19](#)).

### **The Romans Didn’t Avoid Eventual Judgment**

Thus, the Lord punishes those whom He uses as instruments to judge His disobedient people. What is important to point out, at this juncture, is that these punishments were not

meted out instantly. If past precedent is any indication, God's retribution upon the Romans would not have been instantaneous either.

As Gary DeMar writes,

"The fall of Assyria did not immediately follow its plunder of Israel," *and* "it took time for Babylon's judgment by the Medes and Persians to occur (5:1-31). Jerusalem fell in 586 BC and Babylon fell in 539 BC, nearly 45 years later. The same is true of God's use of Rome to judge Israel."<sup>[11]</sup> *DeMar continues:*

"It is significant that the decline of the Roman Empire dates from the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70. Thomas Scott concurs: 'It is also observable, that the Romans after having been thus made the executioners of divine vengeance on the Jewish nation, never prospered as they had done before; but the Lord evidently fought against them, and all the nations which composed their overgrown empire; till at last it was subverted, and their fairest cities and provinces were ravaged by barbarous invaders.'"

"There may have been an early indication of what was going to happen to Rome with the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in Pompeii in AD 79 where an estimated 16,000 people perished. Earlier earthquakes had occurred in AD 62 and 64. They were mostly ignored since they were a common occurrence. Pliny the Younger wrote to the historian Tacitus that the 'earth tremors' leading up to the disaster at Pompeii 'were not particularly alarming because they are frequent in Campania.' Josephus writes that earthquakes were common calamities. He describes one earthquake in Judea of such magnitude "that the constitution of the universe was confounded for the destruction of men."

"In AD 80, the capital city encountered another disaster, another great fire in Rome following the one that ravaged Rome under Nero's reign that burned for six days in AD 64."<sup>[12]</sup>

### **Zechariah's Day of Battle is Behind Us**

In the end, not even the Romans walked away unscathed. As in the case of Assyria and Babylon, however, divine retribution came over time. Nonetheless, the point of [Zechariah 14:3](#)<sup>L</sup> is that God would fight "with" the nations that came against rebellious first-century Israel, rather than fight "against" them. Either way, the passage finds its fulfillment in history's past and not in our future.

The attempt to discredit this approach by positing [Zechariah 14:3](#)<sup>L</sup> over and against [Luke 21:20](#)<sup>L</sup> fails in that both Biblical writers equally portray a desolation and redemption taking place simultaneously within each of their respective contexts. Like verses 1 and 2 before it, [Zechariah 14:3](#)<sup>L</sup> concerns itself with events that are now almost 2000 years behind us

on the historical landscape. This means modern-day Israel is not destined for the doom Zechariah describes. For modern-day Christians, this means we have a powerful tool to use in defending the faith, as Zechariah's prophecy finds detailed fulfillment in AD 70 and the events surrounding it. The Lord fought "*with those nations*" that came against Jerusalem in "*the day of battle*" – in AD 70.

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[1] <https://www.pre-trib.org/other-articles-by-dr-thomas-ice/message/preterism-and-zechariah-12-14/read>

[2] George Peter Holford, *The Destruction of Jerusalem: An Absolute and Irresistible Proof of the Divine Origin of Christianity* (Nacogdoches, TX: Covenant Media Press, 2001 [1805]).

[3] <https://donkpreston.com/the-eschatology-of-zechariah-14-1/>

[4] <https://www.pre-trib.org/other-articles-by-dr-thomas-ice/message/preterism-and-zechariah-12-14/read>

[5] Ibid.

[6] DeMar, "Making Prophetic Sense of Zechariah 14," p. 20.

[7] George L. Klein, *Zechariah: The New American Commentary* (Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2008), p. 402; Q: DeMar, Ibid.

[8] <https://www.christianity.com/bible/drb/zechariah/14>

[9] <https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Zechariah%2014&version=DARBY> <http://qbible.com/brenton-septuagint/zechariah/14.html#:~:text=Brenton%27s%20Septuagint%20%28LXX%29%20-%20Holy%20Name%20KJV%20LXX,Yahweh%2C%2020%20and%20their%20spoils%20sh all%20be%20holy.>

[10] <https://modelsofeschatology.com/zechariah-14/>

[11] Gary DeMar, "Making Prophetic Sense of Zechariah 14" (Unpublished Work in Progress, October 1, 2020), p. 25.

[12] Ibid., p. 26.

## Zechariah 14, Part 5: The Flight to the Mountains



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Ron Cuzzort (Editor)

***“And you shall flee to the valley of my mountains, for the valley of the mountains shall reach Azel. 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 14:5 ESV<sup>L</sup>).***

Previous installments of this series have noted the correspondences between Zechariah 14 and Jesus’ Olivet Discourse. Perhaps nothing highlights the connection between these two passages more than the theme of the flight to the mountains. Amidst the calamities that come upon Jerusalem when the city is taken ([Zech. 14:2<sup>L</sup>](#)), God’s people are to flee to the valley of His mountains ([Zech. 14:5<sup>L</sup>](#)). Similarly, Jesus told His first-century listeners:

*“But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let those who are inside the city depart, and let not those who are out in the country enter it, for these are the days of vengeance, to fulfill as all that is written” ([Lk. 21:21-22<sup>L</sup>](#)).*

The flight to the mountains, as the Christians exited the city and the judgments that were befalling it, is reminiscent of the Israelites' flight from Egypt and the judgments that befell it. In this sense, Jesus and Zechariah are both very much describing a new exodus event. As Milton Terry wrote, *"As God signally interposed to rescue His chosen people at the beginning of their national history, and both their exodus from Egypt and their entrance into the promised land opened for them a pathway through the waters (Exod. xiv, 22; Josh. lii, 14-17), so in the great day of their messianic salvation will He cleave the mountains for their help (comp. Hab. lli, 6)."*<sup>[1]</sup>

### **The New Exodus**

Seeing the departure from earthly Jerusalem as a *new exodus* makes sense considering the progressive revelation of the New Testament. In the book of Revelation, John says Jerusalem is *"spiritually called Sodom and Egypt"* (Rev. 11:8<sup>L</sup>). Old Jerusalem had become the new Egypt, and the members of the New Jerusalem were making the new exodus. Peter J. Leithart paints a wonderful picture of the exodus theme being depicted in the words of Jesus and Zechariah.

*"Luke 21 also describes a siege of Jerusalem (v. 20), an escape for the faithful (v. 21), and a coming of the Lord (v. 27). Like Zechariah 14, Jesus prophesies the collapse of a universe (v. 25). Luke is describing a series of events in the first century (vv. 32-33), the events leading up to and including the destruction of the temple in AD 70. In the light of Zechariah 14, however, we can look at this incident in a different way. These are 'days of vengeance' (v. 22) against those who attack the disciples of Jesus, but these events are also a new exodus, a deliverance of the future Israel. When the disciples of Jesus follow His instructions and flee Jerusalem, they become the streams of water flowing to the nations. The Lord's coming is a moment of judgment and destruction, but also a moment of deliverance, the beginning of the discipling of the nations."*<sup>[2]</sup>

The description of the original disciples' flight from Jerusalem as "streams of water flowing to the nations" is somewhat reminiscent of a passage in Josephus. According to Josephus, *"many of the most eminent of the Jews swam away from the city, as from a ship when it was going to sink."*<sup>[3]</sup> The Church historian, Eusebius, describes the exodus from Jerusalem like this:

*"The whole body, however, of the Church at Jerusalem, having been commanded by a divine revelation, given to men of approved piety there before the war, removed from the city, and dwelt at a certain town beyond the Jordan, called Pella. Here those that believed in Christ, having removed from Jerusalem, as if holy men had entirely abandoned the royal city itself, and the whole land of Judea; the divine justice, for their crimes against Christ and*

*his Apostles finally overtook them, totally destroying the whole generation of these evildoers from the earth.”[4]*

Just as their ancestors fled the slavery and oppression of Egypt, these first-century Jews fled the slavery and oppression of the crumbling Old Covenant system (cf. [Acts 15:10](#)<sup>L</sup> ; [Gal. 5:1](#)<sup>L</sup>). As Rabbi Julie Zupan writes, regarding the first Exodus: “*In the Book of Exodus (3:8), God promises to take the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt to a ‘good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey.’ The Hebrew word for Egypt is mitzrayim, which literally means ‘narrow places.’ In other words, a life of slavery is constricted and oppressive, while living in freedom in Israel is wide and spacious. A land so fertile that it flows with milk and honey stands in contradiction to the place of oppression.*”[5] In the New Exodus, Jesus’ first-century followers demonstrated their faith in Him, and the freedom that He offers, by obeying His command to flee to safety in Pella when they saw Jerusalem being surrounded by armies.

### **Safety at Pella**

Pella is a suitable location for pinpointing Jesus’ admonishment to flee *from* Judea and to the mountains ([Lk. 21:21-22](#)<sup>L</sup>). As J. Julius Scott, Jr. points out, “*The site of ancient Pella lies among rugged hills and sharp valleys in the modern country of Jordan, about 2.5 miles east of the Jordan River and 17 miles south of the Sea of Galilee.*”[6] Craig Koester concurs, stating: “*it is worth noting that Pella lies in the foothills of the Transjordanian highlands and could have fulfilled this requirement.*”[7] Archeologist Mark Wilson believes that the phrase, “*the mountains,*” is such a precise description of Pella’s situated location that Jesus’ terminology could have been a nuanced reference to the very site itself. Wilson writes:

*“Jesus, while looking over the temple mount in Jerusalem shortly before his death, prophesied that its beautiful stones would be thrown down within a generation. He warned that the residents should flee Jerusalem to the mountains when they saw the Roman armies surrounding the city. Jesus’ admonition is found in each of the Synoptic Gospels ([Matthew 24:15–22](#)<sup>L</sup>; [Mark 13:14–20](#)<sup>L</sup>; [Luke 21:20–24](#)<sup>L</sup>). Perhaps Jesus visited Pella during his visit to the Decapolis ([Mark 7:31](#)<sup>L</sup>) and Perea ([Matthew 19:1](#)<sup>L</sup>; [Mark 10:1](#)<sup>L</sup>), and recalling its secure location, cryptically referred to it in this prophecy.”[8]*

In Koester’s article on the topic, he goes on to highlight the fact that [Luke 21:21-22](#)<sup>L</sup> bears such a close resemblance to the flight to Pella that skeptics and critics have argued that Luke wrote his words after the fact.[9] “*Many scholars assume,*” writes Koester, “*that Luke has revised [Mark 13:14-16](#)<sup>L</sup> to reflect events surrounding the fall of Jerusalem in A.D.*”[10] For those who accept the authority of and divine inspiration of Scripture, there is

no need to see Luke's words as *vaticinium ex eventu*. Jesus foretold of the events, Luke recorded His words, and within a generation it all came to pass ([Lk. 21:32](#)). Jay Rogers does a nice job putting the historical pieces together:

*"...the Flight to Pella most likely took place in the autumn of AD 66 after the Jews had won a short-lived victory and had driven the Roman troops back to Caesarea. There the Roman general Cestius Gallus sent word to Nero of the defeat and promptly committed suicide. At this point, the early Christians fled the city, but the Jews rejoiced thinking God was favoring them in victory over the Romans. This peace lasted until the following year until the spring of AD 67, when Roman legions under Vespasian and Titus invaded Judea from the north and south. This campaign began in April of AD 67 and lasted another three-and-a-half years until the destruction of Jerusalem in September of AD 70."*<sup>[11]</sup>

When Jesus' followers saw the events of the war beginning to unfold all around them, they knew the exodus was here. The words of both Zechariah and Jesus were finally coming to pass, and it was time for them to flee to the mountains. Like their forefathers leaving Egypt centuries before, they would exit the city that had spiritually become Egypt and find redemptive freedom (cf. [Exod. 6:6](#); [Lk. 21:28](#)). Only this time, they would enter the last and final phase of redemptive history. Unlike the old and temporary covenant, the new and permanent covenant would not be weighed down with ritual, repetition, and the return of their sins. This is telegraphed by Zechariah's next phrase in [Zechariah 14:5](#).

### **Where or What is Azel?**

Zechariah says that the valley of God's mountains, where their flight takes place, "*shall reach to Azel.*" According to the IVP Bible Background Commentary, "*There is no clear consensus regarding the location of Azel.*"<sup>[12]</sup> A lexical search on the word will yield a vague answer: "*a place near Jerusalem, site presently unknown.*"<sup>[13]</sup> Scholars simply do not know what to do with this word.

Goerge Klien says, "*The precise meaning of 'Azel' is unclear*" and "*complicated by the fact that this is the only occurrence of this word in the Old Testament.*"<sup>[14]</sup> Kline continues: "*...the noun Azel represents a place name whose precise location has eluded interpreters.*"<sup>[15]</sup> Mark J. Boda notes that there is "*much speculation about the location of Azel.*" Anthony R. Petterson simply says, "*the location of 'Azel' is 'unknown.'*"<sup>[16]</sup> Paul L. Redditt takes it a step further and concludes, "*certainty about its meaning or location is impossible.*"<sup>[17]</sup>

All in all, pinning down the exact location of Azel has left commentators frustrated and confused. Perhaps they're looking in the wrong "*place,*" however, because it isn't really a "*place,*" per se? At this point, the prophet's messaging is not as much topographical as it

is theological. Zechariah's words here transcend literal geography and rise to the level of cosmic geography – based upon the structure of Israel's festivals.

### **The Festal Pattern in Zechariah 14**

As Mike Bull writes, *“The key to interpreting the prophecy is its structure. It follows a formula which is second nature to Jewish people: the process of Israel's annual feasts. If they had their wits about them, the Jews would hear these words and be able to say, ‘I see what you did there.’ Once they are recognized as literary art, these words are not only completely intelligible, they are also brilliant and beautiful.”*<sup>[18]</sup> With this in mind, Zechariah 14 comes to a close by highlighting the Feast of Tabernacles ([Zech. 14:17-19](#)<sup>L</sup>). Preceding the Feast of Tabernacles in Israel's ritual calendar is the Day of Atonement,<sup>[19]</sup> and this is where the reference to Azel ties in.

Regarding this word, Bull makes this observation: *“The mention of Azel possibly links this event with the ‘Azel’ goat on the Day of Atonement.”*<sup>[20]</sup> The connection between Zechariah's “Azel” and the “Azazel” goat on the Day of Atonement ([Lev. 16:8](#)<sup>L</sup>, [10](#)<sup>L</sup>) is perceptive since *“many commentators believe that Azazel originates from Azel,”* according to Andrew Paul Ward.<sup>[21]</sup> In fact, Tom Douglas shows that “Azazel” ([Lev. 16](#)<sup>L</sup>) is simply *“another form”* of the word “Azel” ([Zech. 14](#)<sup>L</sup>).<sup>[22]</sup> The reference to Azel, consequently, would make a conceptual connection to the Day of Atonement in the mind of Zechariah's original audience.

### **The Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16)**

On the Day of Atonement, in Leviticus 16, two male goats were reserved for the atonement rituals ([Lev. 16:5](#)<sup>L</sup>). One goat was sent aside for Yahweh, the other was set aside for Azazel ([Lev. 16:8](#)<sup>L</sup>). The goat set aside for Yahweh was killed, and its blood was sprinkled on the mercy seat in the Holy of Holies inside the Tabernacle ([Lev. 16:15](#)<sup>L</sup>). In the ritual ceremony, Israel's sins were transferred to the second goat ([Lev. 16:21-22](#)<sup>L</sup>), commonly called the *“scapegoat.”* The scapegoat then carried the people's sins away deep into the wilderness – *“to Azazel”* ([Lev. 16:10](#)<sup>L</sup>).<sup>[23]</sup> The problem was, those sins always came back. As Micheal Heiser put it, the Day of Atonement was *“essentially a reset button,”*<sup>[24]</sup> and the Israelites had to reboot the whole thing and start over again every year ([Lev. 16:29-32](#)<sup>L</sup>).

With Jesus, there is no *“reset button.”* Christ's atoning work on the cross was a *“finished”* work, once and for all ([Jn. 19:30](#)<sup>L</sup>). Zechariah says that the valley carved out by Jesus, when He splits the Mount of Olives in two ([Zech. 14:4](#)<sup>L</sup>), will *“reach to Azel”* ([Zech. 14:5](#)<sup>L</sup>). This is the theological messaging behind the imagery Zechariah is using: the finished work of Christ was going to cut all the way through to the other side

where our sins were taken. His atoning work was that complete and that comprehensive – it reached to Azel. When we put our faith and trust in the finished work of Christ, He carries our sins away, and those sins never return.

### **The Lord Comes with All His Holy Ones**

The conclusion of the [Zechariah 14:5<sup>L</sup>](#) says, “*Then the Lord my God will come, and all the holy ones with him.*” This is similar to the language of [Jude 14<sup>L</sup>](#) and the Lord coming “*with many thousands of His holy ones,*” which Jude makes applicable to his readers’ own day and time. Jude’s prophecy pertained to a judgment of “*these men*” ([Jude 14<sup>L</sup>](#)) who had “*crept in unaware*” ([Jude 4<sup>L</sup>](#)) among the assemblies of first-century believers ([Jude 12<sup>L</sup>](#)). Likewise, Jesus speaks of His cloud-coming in judgment, accompanied by His angels ([Matt. 24:30-31<sup>L</sup>](#)), before the first-century generation passed away ([Matt. 24:34<sup>L</sup>](#)). Earlier, He had told His Disciples that He would come “*in the glory of His Father with His angels*” before they had all passed away ([Matt. 16:27-28<sup>L</sup>](#)). Zechariah’s words coincide with the language of Jesus’ judgment-coming in the first century. Jesus came in judgment with His angles – with all His holy ones. There is no need to catapult the words of Zechariah, Jesus or Jude into the far-distant future.

### **Following the Path**

Following the path of the verses that precede it, [Zechariah 4:5<sup>L</sup>](#) mirrors Jesus’s Olivet Discourse and the events that were to befall the first-century generation ([Matt. 24:34<sup>L</sup>](#), [Mk. 13:30<sup>L</sup>](#); [Lk. 21:32<sup>L</sup>](#)). This includes everything from the coming of the Lord with His holy ones to the flight to the mountains. Jesus’ original followers in Judea did in fact flee the city, embarking upon the New Exodus, when the Romans began their assault. As such, they were the members of the first generation of believers whose sins never return because of their confidence in Christ’s completed work. Jesus carved the path, they walked the path, and we follow in their footsteps when we embrace Him as our Lord and Savior. Jesus’ original followers in Judea paved the way for us by ensuring that Christianity didn’t go down in flames with Jerusalem when they fled the city, just as Jesus had instructed them.

In the next installment, we will continue to pave our way through the passage with a look at the “*unique day*” and “*living waters*” of verses 6-8.

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The following two lectures on Zechariah 14 were presented at the Berean Bible Church 2024 Conference

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[1] Milton S. Terry, *Biblical Apocalyptic: A Study of the Most Notable Revelations of God and of Christ* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker House Books, [1898], 1989), p. 164.

[2] <https://www.patheos.com/blogs/leithart/2009/11/sermon-notes-44/>

[3] *Jewish War*, II.20.1

[4] Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 3:5.

[5] <https://www.jewishboston.com/read/ask-a-rabbi-why-is-israel-called-the-land-of-milk-and-honey/#:~:text=Indeed%2C%20Israel%20is%20referred%20to,land%20and%20a%20spiritual%20metaphor.>

[6] <https://godawa.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Scott-Did-Jerusalem-Christians-Flee-to-Pella.pdf>, p. 3.

[7] <https://godawa.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/04/Koester-The-Origin-and-Significance-of-the-Flight-to-Pella-Tradition.pdf>, p. 104.

[8] <https://www.biblicalarchaeology.org/daily/biblical-sites-places/biblical-archaeology-places/pella-a-window-on-survival/>

[9] Koester, *Ibid.*, p. 104; Koester cites these examples: g., Fitzmyer, Luke, 1343-44; F. W. Danker, *Jesus and the New Age* (St. Louis: Clayton, 1972) 212-13; W. G. Kümmel, *Introduction to the New Testament* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1975) 150.

[10] Koester, *Ibid.*, p. 104.

[11] Rogers, Jay. *In The Days of These Kings: The Book of Daniel in Preterist Perspective* (p. 202). Media House International, Inc.. Kindle Edition.

[12] John H. Walton, Victor H. Mathews & Mark W. Chavalas, Eds., *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: Old Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter Varsity Press, 2000), p. 808.

[13] <https://biblehub.com/hebrew/682b.htm>

[14] Klein, George. *Zechariah: 21* (The New American Commentary) (p. 563). B&H Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.

[15] *Ibid.*

[16] Anthony R. Petterson, *APOLLOS OLD TESTAMENT COMMENTARY 25: HAGGAI, ZECHARIAH & MALACHI*, p. 290.

[17] Paul L. Redditt, *International Exegetical Commentary on the Old Testament (IECOT): Zechariah 9-14* (Germany: W. Kohlhammer Druckerei GmbH + Co., 2012), P. 130.

[18] <https://www.biblematrix.com.au/the-festal-structure-of-zechariah-12-14/>

[19] <https://www.hebrew4christians.com/Holidays/Introduction/introduction.html>

[20] Ibid.

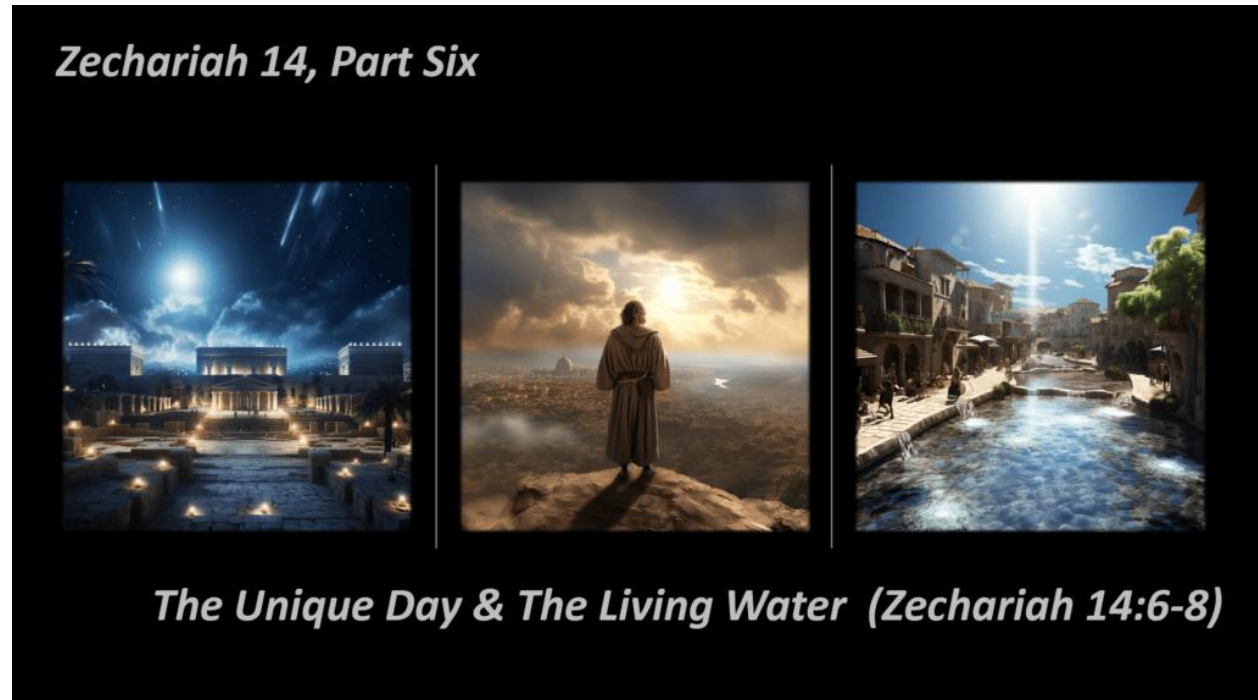
[21] *The One That Got Away: An Analysis of the Goat Sacrifice in Leviticus 16*, p. 6.

[22] Tom Douglas, *Scapegoats: Transferring Blame*, p. 7 (ePub version, p. 16 actual)

[23] As Brian Godawa explains: “The first goat was ‘for Yahweh’ and the second ‘for Azazel’ (v. 8). But whereas the first goat was a sacrifice, the second was not. As commentator Jacob Milgrom claims, ‘In pre-Israelite practice [Azazel] was surely a true demon, perhaps a satyr, who ruled in the wilderness—in the Priestly ritual he is no longer a personality but just a name, designating the place to which impurities and sins are banished.’ Milgrom then explains that in the ancient world, purgation and elimination rites went together. The sending out of the scapegoat to Azazel in the wilderness was a way of banishing evil to its place of origin which was described as the netherworld of chaos, where its malevolent powers could no longer do harm to the sender. This wilderness of ‘tohu and wabohu’ or emptiness and wasteland was precisely the chaos that Yahweh pushed back to establish his covenantal order of the heavens and earth, so it was where all demonic entities were considered to reside” (Godawa, Brian. *When Giants Were Upon the Earth: The Watchers, the Nephilim, and the Biblical Cosmic War of the Seed* [p. 213]. Embedded Pictures Publishing. Kindle Edition.

[24] <https://nakedbiblepodcast.com/wp-content/uploads/2015/12/Transcript-76-Leviticus-16.pdf>

## Zechariah 14, Part 6 (Zechariah 14:6-8)



[Robert Cruickshank](#) 9/23/2023

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***“On that day there will be no light; the luminaries will die out. For it will be a unique day which is known to the LORD, neither day nor night, but it will come about that at the time of evening there will be light. And on that day living waters will flow out of Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea and the other half toward the western sea; it will be in summer as well as in winter” (Zechariah 14:6-8<sup>L</sup>).***

Picking where the last installment left off, this sixth article on Zechariah 14 will cover verses 6-8. These three verses speak of disturbances in the natural order followed by living waters flowing out of Jerusalem year-round. Like the preceding verses, this section finds its fulfillment in the first century, with implications of ongoing fulfillment – as portions of Zechariah’s words speak to the realities of a fulfilled life under the New Covenant.

### **Day and Night are Reversed**

In verses 6 and 7, the prophet speaks of a “*unique day*” in which “*there will be no light*” and the created order is in disarray. It’s an ominous time of cosmic portents that will bring light at the time of the evening ([Zech. 14:6-7<sup>L</sup>](#)). When reading these verses, we’re immediately reminded of the words of another Old Testament prophet, Jeremiah, who prophesied

roughly 100 years prior to Zechariah.<sup>[1]</sup> Jeremiah explains exactly what this role reversal between day and night meant for Old Covenant Israel:

This is what the Lord says, *He who gives the sun for light by day, and the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, Who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar—* The Lord of armies is His name: *‘If this fixed order departs From Me,’ declares the Lord, ‘Then the descendants of Israel also will cease To be a nation before Me forever’*” ([Jer. 31:36-37<sup>L</sup>](#)).

*“The word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, saying: ‘Thus says the Lord: If you can break my covenant with the day and my covenant with the night, so that day and night will not come at their appointed time, then also my covenant with David my servant will be broken...and my covenant with the Levitical priests my ministers...Thus says the Lord: If I have not established my covenant with day and night and the fixed order of heaven and earth, then I will reject the offspring of Jacob and David my servant...’*” ([Jer. 33:19-20<sup>L</sup>](#), [25-26<sup>L</sup>](#)).

Andrew R. Angel succinctly summarizes Jeremiah’s words: *“...if the created order were ever to cease, then Israel would cease to be a nation.”*<sup>[2]</sup> Basically, Jeremiah is saying: if day turns into night, and night turns into day, this is an omen to ethnic Israel that God’s unique relationship with them was over. Zechariah is tracking on the same theme as the former prophet and letting his readers know that Jeremiah’s warning will in fact become a reality.

### **Day Turns to Night and Night Turns to Day**

Day would turn to night, and night would turn to day – signaling the end of the Old Covenant era and the dawn of a whole new age in redemptive history. During the 40-year transition period in the first century, God providentially made sure that both portents couldn’t possibly be missed by those who rejected their Messiah. The first premonition came when they hung Jesus on the cross:

*“And when they came to the place which is called The Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals one on his right and one on his left...And when it was about the sixth hour, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. And while the sun’s light failed, the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Then Jesus called out with a loud voice saying, ‘Father into your hands I commit my spirit!’ And having said this he breathed his last breath”* ([Lk. 23:33<sup>L</sup>](#), [44-46<sup>L</sup>](#); cf. [Matt. 27:45<sup>L</sup>](#)).

Day had turned to night when they sealed their own fate by crucifying the Lord of glory. Next, night turned into day as the events of the Roman Jewish war began. These are the very events that would precipitate the destruction of the temple and wipe away the last vestiges of the Old Covenant forever. Josephus speaks of *“star, resembling a sword, which*

stood over the city, and a comet, that continued a whole year.”<sup>[3]</sup> In conjunction with this occurrence, he specifically notes a phenomenon which turned night into day:

*“Thus also before the Jews’ rebellion, and before those commotions which preceded the war, when the people were come in great crowds to the feast of unleavened bread, on the eighth day of the month Xanthicus, 2 [Nisan,] and at the ninth hour of the night, so great a light shone round the altar and the holy house, that it appeared to be bright day time; which lasted for half an hour.”<sup>[4]</sup>*

A classic song from our modern era asks the question:

Sign, sign  
Everywhere a sign  
Blockin’ out the scenery  
Breakin’ my mind  
Do this, don’t do that  
Can’t you read the signs?<sup>[5]</sup>

This would have been a fitting tune for Josephus’ time. Sadly, he records the fact that most of the first-century Jews couldn’t read the signs as they unfolded.

### **Misreading the Signs**

The strange phenomenon emanating from the temple, on that fateful night, was completely misinterpreted by those who should have known better. Josephus informs us that *“this light seemed to be a good sign to the unskillful”* and they completely missed the fact that *“the signal foreshadowed the desolation that was coming upon them.”<sup>[6]</sup>* They should have read Jeremiah. They should have read Zechariah. They should have known what this meant, but they didn’t.

Josephus tells us that the Zealots who remained in the city, along with *“the miserable people”* who were *“persuaded by these deceivers...did not give credit to the signs that were so evident and did so plainly foretell their future desolation.”<sup>[7]</sup>* In other words, it went right over their heads. Josephus describes them as men *“without eyes to see”* or *“minds to consider”* the *“denunciations that God had made to them.”<sup>[8]</sup>* The signs weren’t meant to signal their triumph, they were meant to signal their defeat.

Jesus put it this way: *“The days are coming upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you, surround you, and hem you in on every side. And they will tear you down to the ground, you and your children with you. They will not leave one stone upon another, because you did not recognize the time of your visitation”* (Lk. 19:44<sup>L</sup>). The time of

their visitation had come when day turned into night at the cross, and night turned into day as the war began. Just as Jesus had foretold, most of them didn't recognize it.

### **The Time Between Night and Day**

The darkness at Christ's crucifixion should take our minds all the way back to the original darkness at the beginning of creation in [Genesis 1:2](#)<sup>L</sup>.<sup>[9]</sup> Jesus came to make all things new ([2 Cor. 5:17](#)<sup>L</sup>; [Rev. 21:5](#)<sup>L</sup>). He came to start all over again with a new creation. He established an infallible covenant, which would not be like the first one – that was fading away into darkness and obscurity ([Heb. 8:13](#)<sup>L</sup>). Between the transition of the Old Covenant's darkening and the New Covenant's dawning, Paul told the Romans: *"The night is almost gone, and the day is at hand"* ([Rom. 13:2](#)<sup>L</sup>).

They were living during this unique time between the *"night"* of the Old Covenant and the *"day"* of the New Covenant, that both Jeremiah and Zechariah had prophesied about in ages past. Accordingly, Peter tells His readers to *"pay attention"* to the *"prophetic word"* as *"to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your heart"* ([2 Pt. 1:19](#)<sup>L</sup>). And the light of that morning star shines forevermore in the hearts of true believers who live in the everlasting *"day"* of the New Covenant. There is *"no more night"* in the city ([Rev. 22:5](#)<sup>L</sup>),<sup>[10]</sup> and we are living out the fulfillment envisioned in [Isaiah 60:1-3](#)<sup>L</sup>:

*"Arise, shine; for your light has come, And the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. For behold, darkness will cover the earth, And deep darkness the peoples; But the Lord will rise upon you, And His glory will appear upon you. Nations will come to your light, And kings to the brightness of your rising"* ([Isa. 60:1-3](#)<sup>L</sup>).

Zechariah's *"unique day"* imagery was meant to telegraph the idea that a new day would dawn, and everything would change. In a manner of speaking, it was *"lights out"* for Old Covenant Israel as the light of the New Covenant began to break forth into the world. Ethnic Israelites could be a part of this new creation, but only by leaving the shadows of the old creation in the darkness as it passed away.

### **Living Waters**

In verse 8, Zechariah's imagery shifts from light and darkness to water and seasons. Zechariah says, *"And on that day living waters will flow out of Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea and the other half toward the western sea; it will be in summer as well as in winter"* ([Zechariah 14:8](#)<sup>L</sup>). It's impossible not to hear Zechariah's reference to *"living waters"* being echoed in the words of Jesus on the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles:

*“Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, ‘If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. The one who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, from his innermost being will flow rivers of living water” (John 7:37-38<sup>L</sup>).*

According to Jesus, He is citing “Scripture” when He says that “living water” will flow from a person’s “innermost being.” The word translated as “innermost being” is *koilia*, and it literally means “belly” or “stomach.” As any commentary on [John 7:37-38<sup>L</sup>](#) will reveal, interpreters hit a major roadblock when trying to pin down the source of Jesus’ quotation. Elisabeth Johnson summarizes the issue: *“The puzzling thing about Jesus’ statement in John 7:38<sup>L</sup> is that it is difficult to find a verse of Scripture that matches what Jesus says about rivers of living water flowing from the ‘belly.’ Many Scriptures have been suggested as a reference.”*<sup>[11]</sup>

David B. Curtis concurs: *“The problem is that these words do not exactly quote any one particular passage in either the Hebrew Tanakh or in the Greek Septuagint translation. Yeshua may have phrased it this way because He wanted us to think of several different passages that are relevant which reference flowing streams of spiritual water.”*<sup>[12]</sup> Indeed, there is consensus among scholars that “no one Old Testament text” alone “fits the quotation” of Jesus in this passage.<sup>[13]</sup>

Johnson and Curtis both point to [Zechariah 14:8<sup>L</sup>](#) as being among the passages which constitute Jesus’ combined Old Testament referent,<sup>[14]</sup> and this is certainly the case. In fact, [Zechariah 14:8<sup>L</sup>](#) fits the bill more so than any other Old Testament passage. This in turn has major implications regarding the timing of fulfillment with respect to Zechariah’s prophecy. In order to highlight the importance of [Zechariah 14:8<sup>L</sup>](#) as the preeminent passage in Jesus’ Old Testament quotation, it’s helpful to look at the other passages that are commonly believed to work into His words in [John 7:37-38<sup>L</sup>](#).

### **An Incomplete Picture**

Typically, [Isaiah 44:3<sup>L</sup>](#), [55:1<sup>L</sup>](#) and [58:11<sup>L</sup>](#) are thought to comprise the combined Old Testament background of Jesus’ statement.<sup>[15]</sup> While these three passages all contain elements of the spiritual-water motif, each of them falls short of completing the picture that Jesus presents in John 7.

[Isaiah 44:3<sup>L</sup>](#) speaks of water (i.e., God’s Spirit) being poured out on dry and thirsty ground (God’s people). [Isaiah 55:1<sup>L</sup>](#) speaks of water, wine and milk being given freely without cost. [Isaiah 58:11<sup>L</sup>](#) speaks of God’s provision being like “springs of water” and God’s people being as a “watered garden.” Without question, Jesus had Isaiah’s words in these verses in mind as part of the contextual backdrop for His proclamation in [John 7:38<sup>L</sup>](#).

Nonetheless, these passages all lack one key element that Jesus' statement includes. The Scriptural amalgam behind [John 7:38](#)<sup>L</sup> is left unfinished without Zechariah.

### **A More Complete Picture**

Zechariah provides the crucial ingredient to the mixture of Old Testament references that is missing in Isaiah. Jesus does not merely speak of water, but He specifically speaks of *living water*. As Glenn Balfour writes, [Zechariah 14:8](#)<sup>L</sup> "*holds a vital key,*" namely, it's "*reference to living water.*"<sup>[16]</sup> With this in mind, [Jeremiah 17:13](#)<sup>L</sup> also contains the "vital key" (i.e., living water) and should be considered as another source for Jesus' quotation:

*"O Lord, the hope of Israel, All who forsake You will be put to shame. Those who turn away on earth will be written down, Because they have forsaken the fountain of living water, even the Lord" (Jer. 17:13*<sup>L</sup>*).*

While Isaiah provides a general backdrop for Jesus' quotation, Jeremiah and Zechariah are more specific in that they mention not only "*water,*" but more precisely, "*living water.*" With that said, [Zechariah 14:8](#)<sup>L</sup> alone contains the last essential component in Jesus' statement that is missing in even the Jeremiah text.

### **The Final Piece of the Puzzle**

As mentioned above, Jesus says that these "*living waters*" would flow from the believer's "*belly*" or "*stomach.*" On the surface, this seems like a bizarre image – water flowing from a person's belly? As Michael Houdmann says, "*In [John 7:38](#)<sup>L</sup>, Jesus makes a seemingly odd metaphorical statement.*"<sup>[17]</sup> Joel Marcus refers to it as "*the strange circumstance that John describes,*"<sup>[18]</sup> and Maarten J.J. Menken states that "*almost every possible solution has been tried out*" to explain these words.<sup>[19]</sup>

After surveying the plethora of Old Testament texts that are thought to undergird the peculiar image of living water flowing from a person's belly, specifically, Menken concludes that [Zechariah 14:8](#)<sup>L</sup> is the single passage that "*best explains the final words of [John 7:38](#)<sup>L</sup>.*"<sup>[20]</sup> Perhaps, this is not immediately obvious? Jesus said the living waters would flow from the bellies of believers, and Zechariah said the living waters would flow from Jerusalem. At first glance, the correlation between the two passages might not be apparent to our modern eyes. Once we understand how the city of Jerusalem was viewed by an ancient Israelite, however, the connection becomes as crystal clear as the waters being spoken of in the passage.

### **The Naval of the Earth**

In his article on [John 7:37-38](#)<sup>L</sup>, Balfour emphasizes that Zechariah's "*living waters*" flow "*out of Jerusalem,*" and Jerusalem was regarded as "*the naval of the*

earth”[21] ([Ezek. 5:5](#); [38:12](#)). In fact, Paul Redditt points out that the boundary markers in [Zechariah 14:8](#) and [10](#) are specifically meant to highlight this “*depiction of Jerusalem as the navel of the earth.*”[22] The picture that Zechariah paints, then, is a picture of living water flowing from the naval of the earth.

Needless to say, water flowing from the belly and water flowing from the naval are nearly identical, for all intents and purposes. Consequently, Balfour’s article goes on to observe that Jesus “*replaces Jerusalem with something else.*”[23] With “[John 7:38](#) being a quotation primarily of [Zechariah 14:8](#),” writes Balfour, the “*imagery opens up*”[24] and the prophecy was “*transferred from Jerusalem to the believer.*”[25]

### **The People and the City**

Rather than a transferal “*from Jerusalem to the believer,*” a better way to understanding it might be as a transferal from the type or shadow to the antitype or reality. In other words, old earthly Jerusalem was merely a shadow or symbol of the new and heavenly Jerusalem. With that said, the New Jerusalem isn’t a literal city with geographical boundaries and physical walls; rather, the New Jerusalem is very much defined in terms of its citizenry – of its people.

This is most clearly seen by the dimensions of the city given in the book of Revelation. In John’s vision, the city is measured, and its length, height and width are all equal: 12,000 stadia ([Rev. 21:15-16](#)). This converts to 1500 miles long by 1500 miles wide by 1500 miles high.<sup>[26]</sup> While much can be said about the significance of these dimensions, for the purpose of this article, attention is called the city’s length and width.

Its longitude and latitude equal the approximate size of the Roman Empire in the first century,<sup>[27]</sup> the area that the Gospel had already reached by the time John penned the book of Revelation (cf. [Rom. 10:18](#); [16:25-26](#); [Col. 1:5-6](#); [23](#)). In other words, there were now born-again believers throughout the entire Roman empire by this point in time. Consequently, the golden city had already expanded that far. John’s messaging is clear: where God’s People are, God’s City is.

As Robert H. Gundry explains, in Revelation 21, John transforms “*Jerusalem into a symbol of the saints themselves... John is not describing the eternal dwelling place of the saints; he is describing them, and them alone.*”<sup>[28]</sup> Ken Gentry puts it this way: “*The new Jerusalem is a symbol of the redeemed people of God in whom God dwells ([Rev 21:3](#)), much like the ‘temple’ in Paul’s writing often represents the people of God and not a physical building ([1 Cor 3:16-17](#); [6:19](#); [2 Cor 6:16](#); [Eph 2:21](#)).*”<sup>[29]</sup>

The New Testament’s progressive revelation concerning the New Jerusalem as God’s People is epiphanic in unveiling the connection between [John 7:37-38](#) and [Zechariah](#)

[14:8](#). Zechariah’s living waters flowing from Jerusalem find their fulfillment in Jesus’ living waters flowing from His people, who comprise the New Jerusalem.

### **The Feast of Tabernacles and Zechariah 14**

The fact that Jesus spoke these words on that last day of the Feast of Tabernacles ([Jn. 7:37](#)) makes the connection to Zechariah 14 unmistakable. As Balfour puts it, “*the Feast is the pivot on which 7:38 swings,*” and “*Zechariah 12-14 was a central passage in the Feast’s liturgy*” with “*Zechariah 14 being one of its prophetic Haphtaroth.*”<sup>[30]</sup> The Haphtaroth was the reading from the Prophets that followed the reading from the Law. In other words, Zechariah’s words would have been fresh on His listeners’ minds when Jesus stood and uttered His own words on “*the last day of the great feast*” ([Jn. 7:37](#)).

The significance of the circumstances surrounding Jesus’ statement about “*living waters*” is impossible to miss at this point. With Zechariah’s words echoing in their heads, Jesus’ words fell on their ears. Undoubtedly, He wanted them to make the connection between what they were thinking about on that day, and what they were hearing as He spoke. In [John 7:37-38](#), Jesus is telling His followers that [Zechariah 14:8](#) is fulfilled, first through Him, and second through them. Jesus is the source of the living water, and His people will become the conduit through which that water flows. Given the time and setting of Jesus’ statement, His original audience would have gotten it right away.

### **Living Out the Fulfillment**

While the textual triggers in Jesus’ announcement recall a number of Old Testament passages, [Zechariah 14:8](#) alone incorporates all the key elements – making it the target text. If in fact Jesus was announcing the fulfillment of [Zechariah 14:8](#) in [John 7:37-38](#), the implications are as clear as they are devastating to the Futurist interpretation of Zechariah 14. In verse 39, John says, “*But this He said in reference to the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified*” ([Jn. 7:39](#)). That was then, this is now. Jesus has been glorified ([Acts 3:13](#)), and the Spirit has been given ([Acts 2:4](#)). Rather than waiting for the fulfillment of Zechariah’s words, we should be living it out.

The prophecy isn’t about literal water flooding the streets of earthly Jerusalem someday. It’s about living believers being the conduit through which God’s Spirit brings life to the lost and transforms the world. With the light of the morning star shining in our hearts ([2 Pt. 1:19](#)), and his glory upon us ([Isa. 60:1-3](#)), we illuminate the way for the nations ([Rev. 21:24](#)). As His image bearers in the new creation, the light of the lamb shines through us ([Rev. 21:3](#)), and the water of life flows from us ([Jn. 7:37-38](#); [Rev. 22:1](#)). If we miss this by misunderstanding and misapplying Zechariah’s prophecy, we will miss all that God intends

us to be. In this way, we're not much different than those first-century Jews who missed what the signs being shown to them were intended to mean.

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[1] See: William Cox, *Biblical Studies in Final Things* (Philipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Co., [1966] 1980), p. 62.

[2] , p. 138.

[3] <https://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0148%3Abook%3D6%3Asection%3D288>

[4] Ibid.

[5] From the song "Signs," by the Five Man Electric band (Lyrics by Les Emmerson, 1971).

[6] Ibid.

[7] *Wars*, 6.5.3.

[8] Ibid.

[9] I'm indebted to Dr. Amy Castillo and theologian Kim Burgess for their insights regarding what follows in this section.

[10] Allen Garrick Identifies the correlation between [Zechariah 14:7](#)<sup>L</sup> and revelation 22:5 as being among the "numerous texts from Rev 19–22 that use material from [Zech 14.7–11](#)<sup>L</sup>" (Allen, Garrick V. *The Book of Revelation and early Jewish textual culture*. Vol. 168. Cambridge University Press, 2017, p. 208).

[11] <https://www.workingpreacher.org/commentaries/revised-common-lectionary/day-of-pentecost/commentary-on-john-737-39>

[12] [https://www.bereanbiblechurch.org/transcripts/john/john\\_07\\_37-52\\_who-are-the-thirsty.htm](https://www.bereanbiblechurch.org/transcripts/john/john_07_37-52_who-are-the-thirsty.htm)

[13] Balfour, Glenn. "The Jewishness of John's Use of the Scriptures in [John 6: 31](#)<sup>L</sup> and [7: 37-38](#)<sup>L</sup>." *Tyndale Bulletin* 46 (1995), p. 371; see also: Marcus, J. (1998). "Rivers of Living Water from Jesus' Belly ([John 7:38](#)<sup>L</sup>)." *Journal of Biblical Literature*, 117(2), p. 328.

[14] Johnson, Ibid; Curtis, Ibid.

[15] D.A. Carson calls particular attention to [Isaiah 55:1](#)<sup>L</sup> (*The Gospel According to John* [Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991], pp. 322-323).

[16] Ibid., pp. 371, 373.

[17] <https://www.gotquestions.org/rivers-of-living-water.html>

[18] , *ibid.*, p. 329.

[19] Menken, Maarten JJ. “The origin of the Old Testament quotation in [John 7: 38](#).” *Novum Testamentum* (1996): 160-175, pp. 161-162.

[20] *Ibid.*, p. 170.

[21] *Ibid.*, p. 373.

[22] Paul L. Redditt, *International Exegetical Commentary on the Old Testament (IECOT): Zechariah 9-14* (Germany: Kohlhammer GmbH Stuttgart, 2012), pp. 133-134.

[23] *Ibid.*, p. 373.

[24] *Ibid.*, pp. 374-375.

[25] Balfour, *Ibid.*, p. 374.

[26] “These dimensions, if taken literally, would mean that the base of the city would be about fifteen hundred miles square—an urban center that would cover most of the western half of the United States—and that it would stretch fifteen hundred miles into space” (Craig R. Koester, *Revelation and the End of All Things* [Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2018], ePub, p. 217).

[27] See: Craig R. Koester, *Revelation and the End of All Things* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 2018), ePub, p. 95; Jeffrey Marshall Vogelgesang, *The Interpretation of Ezekiel in the Book of Revelation* (Harvard University, 1985), p. 97; N.T. Wright, *Revelation for Everyone* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011) p. 194.

[28] Robert H. Gundry, “The New Jerusalem: People as Place, Not Place for People” (*Novum Testamentum*, Vol. 29, Fasc. 3 [Jul., 1987], pp. 254-264), pp. 255-256.

[29] <https://postmillennialworldview.com/2014/05/23/dispensationalism-and-the-new-jerusalem/>

[30] Balfour, *Ibid.*, p. 376; see also: J. Thackeray, *The Septuagint and Jewish Worship: A Study in Origins* (London, Milford: OUP, 1920), pp. 64-67.

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## Zechariah 14, Part 7 (Zechariah 14:9-11)



[Robert Cruickshank](#) 9/28/2023

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Ron Cuzzort (Editor)

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***“And the Lord will be King over all the earth; on that day the Lord will be the only one, and His name the only one. All the land will change into a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem; but Jerusalem will rise and remain on its site from Benjamin’s Gate as far as the place of the First Gate to the Corner Gate, and from the Tower of Hananel to the king’s wine presses. People will live in it, and there will no longer be a curse, for Jerusalem will live in security” (Zechariah 14:9-11<sup>L</sup>).***

These verses speak of both the exclusiveness and the extent of Christ’s reign. Zechariah looks forward to a time when the Lord is the only one, and He is king over all the earth. This is accomplished through His people who comprise the New Jerusalem, which is pictured as rising above the rest of the land which becomes a flat plain. The exclusivity of the Lord among His people is reinforced by the idea that all accursed things are removed from the newly raised Jerusalem as God’s people dwell securely in Him.

### **An Old Problem**

Throughout Old Covenant Israel's history, God's people had a problem, and it wouldn't go away. They had a problem with the second commandment: "*You shall have no other gods besides me*" ([Exod. 20:3<sup>L</sup>](#)).

Despite all that the Lord had done for them, time and again, the ancient Israelites constantly reverted back to worshipping other gods. It started right away with the golden calf ([Exod. 32:1-10<sup>L</sup>](#)) and the goat demons in the wilderness ([Lev. 17:7<sup>L</sup>](#)) and continued until it sent them into exile ([Zeph. 4:1-6<sup>L</sup>](#)). By the time of the New Testament, Stephen informs us that nothing had changed. When he was dragged before the high priest and the synagogue council, Stephen recounted the apostate deeds of their ancestors and told them, "...*you are doing just as your fathers did*" ([Acts 7:40-43<sup>L</sup>](#); [Acts 7:51<sup>L</sup>](#)). It seems like polytheism was a persistent predicament under the Old Covenant – then Jesus stepped in and established a New Covenant.

Unlike the Old Covenant, the Writer to the Hebrews tells us that everything would change under the New Covenant – specifically with regard to the matter of worshipping other gods: "...*I will put My laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts. **And I will be their God, and they shall be My people***" ([Heb. 8:10b<sup>L</sup>](#)). The last line of this verse from Hebrews is nearly identical to the words of [Revelation 21:3<sup>L</sup>](#), describing the New Jerusalem: "*Behold the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, **and they will be his people and God himself will be with them as their God.***" As pointed out in the previous article, the New Jerusalem isn't a literal city with physical walls. The city is the people themselves, and the people are the city. Where God's people are, God's city is. God is present in and through His people, and His people worship Him exclusively. Old Covenant Israel's problem with polytheism doesn't exist under the New Covenant, in the New Jerusalem.

### **A New Solution**

From the beginning, this has been what God has always wanted: a human family who would exercise believing loyalty to Him and to Him alone. In order to do this, however, God Himself had to join His human family and establish an infallible covenant that couldn't be broken. As the late Dr. Michael Heiser wrote, "...*God's children needed new hearts and God's presence to help them believe. They needed a means to be saved from themselves and from a destiny that didn't include everlasting life with the God who loved them. There had to be a way for God to honor his covenant promises...and to help his people continue in their faith. God's solution to these problems was radical. He had to become a man. He had to join the human race. This is where Jesus enters the story. Jesus was God become man* ([John 1:1<sup>L</sup>](#), [14-15<sup>L</sup>](#); [Col 1:15-20<sup>L</sup>](#); [2:6-9<sup>L</sup>](#)). *He was the solution to every one of these obstacles.*"<sup>[1]</sup>

With the solution to our problems provided through the work of Christ, New Covenant believers are loyal to Him and Him alone. The true believer has no other gods besides Him. When we put our faith and trust in Jesus, He becomes *“the only one, and His name the only one”* ([Zech. 14:9b](#)). Zechariah’s prophecy was looking forward to the day when this would become a reality. That day became a reality when the New Covenant began to dawn through the atoning work of Jesus Christ. Centuries later, the light of that day continues to shine through us ([Isa. 60:1-3](#); [2 Pt. 1:19](#)), and the nations should be walking by the light that we provide ([Rev. 21:24](#)). We have the solution, and our job is to share that solution with the world around us.

### **King Over All the Earth**

Zechariah said that *“the Lord will be King over all the earth”* ([Zech. 14:9a](#)). These words are echoed in John’s words in Revelation when he says that *“Jesus Christ”* is *“the firstborn of the dead”* and *“the ruler of the kings of the earth”* ([Rev. 1:5](#)). As David Chilton wrote, *“As the Firstborn, Christ possesses the crown rights of all creation: ‘All authority in heaven and earth has been given to Me,’ He claimed ([Matt. 28:18](#)). All nations have been granted to Him as His inheritance, and the kings of earth are under court order to submit to Him ([Ps. 2:8-12](#)).”*<sup>[2]</sup> As New Covenant believers and His image bearers in the new creation, we are His representatives who are supposed to be issuing this *“court order”* to the world. We share the Gospel, we advance the kingdom, and we grow the city. The anticipation of [Zechariah 14:9](#) finds its fulfillment in [Revelation 1:5](#), and we should be getting the memo out: Jesus Christ is the King over all the earth.

### **The Rising of the City**

Christ’s kingship, as it is manifested through His people (the members of the New Jerusalem), is portrayed in verse 10 as Jerusalem being elevated while the land around is leveled. This is similar to the words of John the Baptist, where the geographical movements of mountains are clearly *not* meant to be understood literally ([Lk. 3:5](#)). Having said that, extreme literalism reaches new heights (pardon the pun) in its approach to the city of Jerusalem rising above all that it surrounds ([Zech. 14:10](#)). *“This amazing prophecy,”* we are told, *“will literally redraw the map of Africa and the Arabian region, as well as Israel.”*<sup>[3]</sup>

According to the latest theory, a somewhat recently discovered rift in the earth’s crust will cause tectonic activity resulting in the city of Jerusalem being physically raised in its elevation. *“In an astonishing turn of events,”* writes Jonna Marcaida Calagui, *“geologists discovered a major fault line composed of multiple fractures under Mount Olives in 1964 when the Jordanians tried to build a hotel on the fabled mountain.”*<sup>[4]</sup> In reaction to finding out about the fault line, Leisha Cole of Tandem Hope ministries exclaims, *“Did you know*

*about the geographical fault line near the Mount of Olives? I sure didn't. Hello, Prophecy! Hello, Reality.*"<sup>[5]</sup>

### **Cracks in the Road**

This newly detected fault line is the key to everything for extreme literalists. Josh Wander, of Israel 365, spends time making videos as he looks for “cracks in the road” on the Mount of Olives. Wander says that he is investigating as to whether this is the “*unfolding of the actual prophecy of Zechariah himself*”<sup>[6]</sup> One might question why the Mount of Olives doesn't just split already if in fact the prophesied fault-line rupture has begun. The Futurists assure us that we should not be dissuaded by this apparent lull in the action. According to Lisa Muhar, we are merely experiencing some prophetic “*down time*” before these splits “*eventually create the ‘very great valley’ that Zechariah predicted.*”<sup>[7]</sup> And these splits are critical to Jerusalem's rising in verse 10, or so we are told.

W.J.J. Glashouwer, chairman of Christians for Israel, informs us that when the Mount of Olives splits in two, “*geological activities will take place resulting in pushing up the earth's crust under Jerusalem.*”<sup>[8]</sup> This is all thought to work together to fulfill [Zechariah 14:4](#)<sup>[L]</sup> (the Mount of Olives splitting) and [Zechariah 14:10](#)<sup>[L]</sup> (the City of Jerusalem rising). Zechariah's words are often coupled with the words of the earlier prophet, Isaiah, who said:

*“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; and all the nations shall flow to it”* ([Isa. 2:2](#)<sup>[L]</sup>).

Both prophets speak of the rising of the mountain of the house of the Lord or Jerusalem, as well as the nations flowing to it. In Zechariah, this happens yearly during the Feast of Tabernacles ([Zech. 14:16](#)<sup>[L]</sup>). Envisioning a future fulfillment of these events, Professor Klaus Wengst writes:

*“Israel and its Messiah will come together. In the end, when the times of the nations come to an end, Israel will accept its Messiah and then the ‘kingdom for Israel’ will also be restored ([Acts 1:6](#)<sup>[L]</sup>; cf. [Mt 23:37-39](#)<sup>[L]</sup>; [Lk 21:24](#)<sup>[L]</sup>; [Rom 11:26](#)<sup>[L]</sup>). Then the great prophecy of [Isaiah 2:1-5](#)<sup>[L]</sup> will be fulfilled, that the nations of the world will stream up to Jerusalem to worship the God of Israel – what a tremendous perspective!”*<sup>[9]</sup>

Wengst's choice of words is *apropos*. He speaks of the nations streaming “up” to Jerusalem, which is exactly what they'll have to do – go up, way up. If Jerusalem is literally going to be raised above every other mountain in the world, this will be quite the climb!

### **Rocky Mountain High**

The highest point in the Rocky Mountains is almost 3 miles, the Himalayas reach 5 ½ miles in stature, and the tallest mountain on earth is Mauna Kea which is approximately 6 ½ miles high.<sup>[10]</sup> If these passages are to be understood literally, the new and improved Mount Zion would have to be higher in elevation than all of these. Do we really believe everyone in the world is going to climb this newly formed mountain? Additionally, aside from the height of the climb itself, there wouldn't be much room to move while making the climb. Every time the Feast of Tabernacles rolls around ([Zech. 14:16](#)), every single person on the face of the planet will show up, equipped with harnesses and mountain climbing gear, making the annual expedition up the world's largest mountain.

Of course, literalists *could* argue that people will fly to the mountain in planes and helicopters. This wouldn't be a very literal interpretation, however, since neither Zechariah nor Isaiah mention anything about planes and helicopters. Zechariah does mention "horses" several times, and Jack Kelley argues that the Hebrew word for horse "would be something like leaper in English" and could refer to "helicopters and planes."<sup>[11]</sup> So there's that. But this just creates even greater problems. Is there going to be enough room on the peak of this new mountain for all the helicopters and planes to land? This is especially the case because of all the hotels needed to accommodate the 8 billion people hanging out in Jerusalem for the week-long feast. Whether they fly or climb to get there, the literal interpretation is a "mountain" of a problem for the literalists.

Sensing this very problem, the authors of *The Beyond Today Bible Commentary* argue: "The nations going up annually to Jerusalem to observe the Feast of Tabernacles does not mean that every person in every nation is to go to Jerusalem every year. Rather, the Feast will be observed globally, with each nation sending a representation [sic] to Jerusalem."<sup>[12]</sup> The problem with this is that Zechariah specifically says, "whichever of the **families** of the earth does not go up to Jerusalem to worship the king, the Lord of hosts, there will be no rain on them" ([Zech. 14:17](#)). This being the case, any family on the earth could justly protest a drought due to their absence. After all, their national representative was there...right?

### **A More Down to Earth Approach**

Much like climbing the rough side of a mountain, an uber-literal understanding of the passage encounters insurmountable obstacles. Those who follow this approach never "top out" because the answer to each previous difficulty just presents a new "bouldering problem."<sup>[13]</sup> Akin to the effects of thin air at high altitudes, the popular approach to Zechariah 14 can leave a person feeling dizzy and confused. In comparison, a biblically *grounded* interpretation is like a breath of fresh air – closer to the *ground* where oxygen levels are higher.

Peeling away the layers of the futurist approach, the passage says nothing about national delegates, helicopters or even mountain climbers. Zechariah’s messaging isn’t topographical, it’s theological. Touching on the themes of both [Zechariah 14:10](#) <sup>L</sup> and [Isaiah 2:2](#) <sup>L</sup>, Ken Gentry writes:

*“The mountain of the house of the LORD. The ‘house of the LORD’ refers to the new covenant church ([1 Cor. 3:16](#) <sup>L</sup>; [6:19](#) <sup>L</sup>; [2 Cor. 6:16](#) <sup>L</sup>; [Eph. 2:19–22](#) <sup>L</sup>; [1 Pet. 2:5](#) <sup>L</sup>), which was ‘established’ (Heb., *kun* implies of permanent duration) on earth ‘in the last days’... It is a ‘mountain’ in that it is a city set on a hill ([Matt. 5:14](#) <sup>L</sup>; [Heb. 12:22](#) <sup>L</sup>). It is to be “the chief of the mountains” (v. 2d) in that it will eventually be the world’s leading influence. Contrary to dispensationalism, this is not to be taken literalistically, as if Jerusalem will physically be elevated higher than Mount Everest (with all the health difficulties that would bring).”<sup>[14]</sup>*

The rising of the mountain is simply imagery meant to capture the preeminence and prominence of the work accomplished by Jesus Christ in and through His people. Since no mountain in the world can truly depict the magnitude of that accomplishment, Isaiah describes it as being higher than any other mountain. In more modern terms, Marvin Gaye and Tammy Terrell would say, “*There Ain’t No Mountain High Enough*.” The work of Christ takes His people to new levels, and everything else is like a flat plain beneath them. Zechariah and Isaiah are using visual illustrations to paint the wonder of the reality of fulfillment in Christ.

### **Nothing Accursed in the New Jerusalem**

In verse 11, Zechariah says of the New Jerusalem: “*People will live in it, and there will no longer be a curse, for Jerusalem will live in security.*” Due to the wording of this verse in the English (NASB), the natural inclination is to recall the “*curses*” of Genesis 3. However, this is not the same word for “*curse*” that is used in Genesis,<sup>[15]</sup> and Zechariah is not promising that snakes will start walking upright ([Gen. 3:14](#) <sup>L</sup>) or that the ground will stop producing thorns and thistles ([Gen. 3:17](#) <sup>L</sup>).<sup>[16]</sup> The word translated “*curse*” in [Zechariah 14:11](#) <sup>L</sup> is *cherem* and it refers to “*a devoted thing*” that is “*put under a ban.*”<sup>[17]</sup> [Deuteronomy 7:25-26](#) <sup>L</sup> is the key verse in understanding the meaning of this word and the concept behind it:

*“The carved images of their gods as you shall burn with fire. You shall not covet the silver or the gold that is on them or take it for yourselves, lest you be ensnared by it, for it is an abomination to the Lord your God. And you shall not bring an abominable thing (*cherem*) into your house and become devoted to destruction (*cherem*) like it. You shall utterly detest and abhor it, for it is devoted to destruction” (*cherem*) ([Deut. 7:25-26, ESV](#) <sup>L</sup>).*

In this verse, the *cherem* or “*abominable things*” are the graven images of the false gods of the surrounding nations. When the Israelites take possession of the land, they are strictly forbidden to take possession of the former occupants’ objects of worship. Anyone who has ever read the Old Testament knows that ancient Israel didn’t always do so well in this regard. A classic example is found in Joshua chapters 6-7. Before the conquest of Jericho, the Lord tells His people:

*“But you, keep yourselves from the things devoted to destruction (cherem), lest when you have devoted (cherem) them you take any of the devoted things (cherem) and make the camp of Israel a thing for destruction (cherem) and bring trouble upon it” (Joshua 6:18<sup>L</sup>).*

Those who’ve read the story know that not everyone in the camp followed through, and the victory at Jericho was followed by a swift defeat at Ai ([Joshua 7:1-9<sup>L</sup>](#)). The reason for the defeat is spelled out in [Joshua 7:10-12<sup>L</sup>](#):

*“The Lord said to Joshua, ‘Get up! Why have you fallen on your face? Israel has sinned; they have transgressed my covenant that I commanded them; they have taken some of the devoted things (cherem); they have stolen and lied and put them among their own belongings. Therefore the people of Israel cannot stand before their enemies. They turn their backs before their enemies, because they have become devoted for destruction (cherem). I will be with you no more, unless you destroy the devoted things (cherem) from among you’” (Joshua 7:9-12<sup>L</sup>).*

This is exactly what Moses said would happen in [Deuteronomy 7:25-26<sup>L</sup>](#). Rather than devoting the pagan objects of worship to destruction, some in the camp took them, kept them, and brought them into their own households. When God’s people do this, they bring destruction upon themselves.

### **No Cherem for New Covenant Believers**

Zechariah is saying that under the New Covenant, in the New Jerusalem, there will be no *cherem*. Graven images, Idols, and false gods have no place in the life of a true believer. Whatever we “*worshipped*” before coming to Christ is to be “*devoted to destruction.*” He and He alone is first and foremost in our life, and we do all that we do unto the glory of God ([1 Cor. 10:31<sup>L</sup>](#)). This ties in perfectly with the theme of the exclusivity of the Lord introduced in verse 9, and this is what it is all about. The “old things are passed away, and all things become new” ([2 Cor. 5:17<sup>L</sup>](#)). We turn our backs on the gods of men and the idols that we worshiped before turning to the Lord. For the believer, “*the Lord*” is “*the only one, and His name is the only one*” ([Zech. 14:9<sup>L</sup>](#)). And even the common ordinary things in our life, right down to our means of transportation and cooking utensils in our kitchen, are to be “*HOLY*

TO THE LORD” ([Zech. 14:20-21](#)<sup>[18]</sup>). In the New Jerusalem, everything is sacred,<sup>[18]</sup> and there is no room for anything unsacred or profane.

This is identical to what John says regarding the New Jerusalem in the book of Revelation:

*“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”* ([Revelation 22:3-4](#)<sup>[19]</sup>).

The word translated “accursed” is *katanáthema*, and it refers to a thing “which is devoted or given over to a deity, accursed thing,” according to BDAG.<sup>[19]</sup> According to Thayer, it is “specifically, an offering resulting from a vow, which after being consecrated to a god was hung upon the walls or columns of the temple, or put in some other conspicuous place.”<sup>[20]</sup> It is a form of the same Greek word used to translate the Hebrew *cherem* in the Septuagint version of [Zechariah 14:11](#)<sup>[21]</sup>.

Thus, John and Zechariah are both tracking on the same idea. The meaning is not the reverse or removal of the Genesis curses, but the removal of anything that is “accursed” in the life of a true believer. As members of the New Covenant community, we don’t worship false gods anymore, nor do we make a false god out of anything in our life. For us, every aspect of our lives and all that we do is sacred, holy, and devoted to the Lord. The people of the New Jerusalem “*dwell securely*” by removing everything “*devoted to destruction*,” to not incur God’s anger and to ensure God’s blessing.

### **Rising Up and Moving Forward**

As Jesus’ representatives in the world that He has reclaimed, we exercise believing loyalty in Him and Him alone. In so doing, we extend the invitation to accept Christ to the world around us. As people embrace Him, His Lordship embraces every area of life. As that happens, the city continues to expand and elevate.

The prophecies of Zechariah and Isaiah aren’t about tectonic shifts in the earth’s crust, they are about paradigm shifts caused by transforming power of Gospel. It is life changing, not just individually but collectively, and should permeate every aspect of life. We don’t need to look for cracks in the road in modern-day Israel, but we should be looking to crack through every barrier and obstacle that stands in the way of advancing His Kingdom here on this earth: “*Destroying all arguments and all arrogance against the knowledge of God,*” we are to take “*every thought captive to the obedience of Christ*” ([2 Cor. 10:5](#)<sup>[22]</sup>).

As Abraham Kuyper said, “*There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry, Mine!*”<sup>[22]</sup> As Isaiah and Zechariah pictured the mountain rising, we must rise to meet the challenges in our

own lives personally and in the culture around us. Our message to the world should be: the Lord is “*King over all the earth*,” and “*His name is the only one*” ([Zech. 14:9](#)).

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[1] Heiser, Michael S. *What Does God Want?* (p. 32). Blind Spot Press. Kindle Edition.

[2] David Chilton, *The Days of Vengeance: An Exposition of the Book of Revelation* (Tyler, TX: Dominion Press, 1987), p. 63.

[3] <https://feedreader.com/observe/heiscomingblog.wordpress.com/2018%2F03%2F07%2Fzechariahs-prophecy-of-the-very-great-valley-widens-as-giant-fissure-splits-saudi-arabia-in-two-pics-videos%2F%3F+itemId=6987676067>

[4] <https://www.christianitydaily.com/news/cataclysmic-earthquake-rivaling-old-testament-disasters-to-hit-israel-within-our-lifetimes-scripture-expert.html>

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[8] Q: Jos M. Strengholt, “Zechariah 14: Why not take it literally?”, in Paas, Steven, ed., *Israelism and the place of Christ: Christocentric interpretation of Biblical prophecy*. Vol. 34. LIT Verlag Münster, 2017, p. 248.

[9] Prof. Klaus Wengst, “Theological Implications of the Land Promise” (JOURNAL FOR BIBLICAL STUDIES TO EQUIP THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH, January 2020, Issue 1), p. 23.

[10] <https://guinnessworldrecords.com/world-records/tallest-mountain>

[11] <https://gracethrufaith.com/ask-a-bible-teacher/soldiers-on-horseback/>

[12] <https://www.ucg.org/bible-study-tools/bible-commentary/bible-commentary-zechariah-14>

[13] <https://rockclimbingcentral.com/rock-climbing-glossary-217-climbing-terms-you-may-not-have-heard/>

[14] <https://postmillennialworldview.com/2023/05/09/quick-summary-of-isaiah-2/>

[15] The word in Zechariah is *cherem* while the word in Genesis is *arar*. These are two completely different terms and are unrelated to each other.

[16] These are the only two things that are cursed in Genesis 3. No curses are pronounced against Adam and Eve, per se. While the ground is cursed because of Adam, Adam himself is not cursed.

[17] ?????? (che.rem) ‘ in the STEP Bible App.

[18] See: Mike Bull, “The Festal Structure of Zechariah 12-14,” [https://www.biblematrix.com.au/the-festal-structure-of-zechariah-12-14/?fbclid=IwAR1snHStsi16PB\\_1o9YaO0u-s4nveT1ULUBgLlyRfFW3drU5FaoBTGI2ctE](https://www.biblematrix.com.au/the-festal-structure-of-zechariah-12-14/?fbclid=IwAR1snHStsi16PB_1o9YaO0u-s4nveT1ULUBgLlyRfFW3drU5FaoBTGI2ctE)

[19] BDAG, ??????????, p. 463.

[20] <https://studybible.info/strongs/G331>

[21] The word in the LXX is *anathema*, <https://studybible.info/interlinear/zechariah%2014:11>

[22] <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/99035-there-is-not-a-square-inch-in-the-whole-domain>

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## Zechariah 14, Part 8 (Zechariah 14:12-15)

### *Zechariah 14, Part Eight*



### *The Plague Upon the People (Zechariah 14:12-15)*

[Robert Cruickshank](#) 10/6/2023

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***“Now this will be the plague with which the Lord will strike all the peoples who have gone to war against Jerusalem; their flesh will rot while they stand on their feet, and their eyes will rot in their sockets, and their tongue will rot in their mouth. And it will come about on that day that a great panic from the Lord will fall on them; and they will seize one another’s hand, and the hand of one will be raised against the hand of another. Judah also will fight at Jerusalem; and the wealth of all the surrounding nations will be gathered, gold, silver, and garments in great abundance. And just like this plague, there will be a plague on the horse, the mule, the camel, the donkey, and all the cattle that will be in those camps” (Zechariah 14:12-15<sup>L</sup>)***

As the New Jerusalem rose up,<sup>[1]</sup> the Old Jerusalem would be torn down and reduced to rubble.<sup>[2]</sup> Those inside the city would suffer greatly in their vain attempt to save it. These verses speak to the sad reality that befell them as they clung to that which was fading away rather than embracing the new reality materializing through Jesus Christ. The popular approach of our day doesn’t see it this way, however. Instead of Zechariah’s words describing horrors of the past, today’s pop-prophecy pundits spin these verses as horrors

still awaiting our future. Fittingly, the scenario they describe is very much like a futuristic sci-fi thriller – or even a horror movie.

### **Nuclear War, End Time Zombies, and The Big Screen**

In his article “**Zechariah Prophecy & The Neutron Bomb**,” Marshall Beeber informs us: “*This prophecy seemed like a horrific fantasy until the dawn of the nuclear age. In the 1970s Samuel Cohen, a nuclear physicist, invented a new tactical nuclear weapon called the ‘neutron bomb’ which would have the exact effect that Zechariah’s prophecy stated.*”<sup>[3]</sup>

What is extremely *relevant* for those seeking to truly understand Zechariah’s prophecy in its historical context is just how extremely *irrelevant* the prophecy would have been to Zechariah’s original audience – if Beeber is correct. More the point, it was apparently *irrelevant* to anyone living prior to the 1970s!

The real irony here is that those who argue that Zechariah foretells a nuclear war also argue that the New Testament’s time statements<sup>[4]</sup> merely mean that Jesus *could* come “*at any moment*,” rather than meaning that He *would* come in the first-century. As the popular lingo of our day goes, Christ’s return has been “*always imminent*.”<sup>[5]</sup> By this, they mean that Christ could have come back at any time during the last 2000 years – stretching right up to the present.

But how could His return have been “*always imminent*” before the predicted nuclear wars were even a possibility? How could He have come back before the technology was in place? How could it have happened before the 1970s?

Undaunted by this somewhat obvious contradiction, this remains one of our Dispensational friends’ favorite passages because it seems to play right into the sci-fi sensationalism that characterizes their approach. Dr. Roger Barrier says that [Zechariah 14:12](#)<sup>[6]</sup> “*mirrors the incredible melting of human bodies that results from the intense heat produced by a nuclear bomb.*”<sup>[6]</sup> One popular website opens its treatment of this verse with these words: “*Anyone who has seen Raiders of the Lost Ark recalls a most incredible scene when the Germans open the Ark of the Covenant and their flesh melts. Eyes and tongues are destroyed, making them unable to see or to speak!*”<sup>[7]</sup> Shelby Hunt thinks the movie World War Z is a better fit than Raiders of the Lost Ark and claims this verse is describing end-time “*Zombies*” in the last days.<sup>[8]</sup>

Interpreting the Bible in light of feature film isn’t the best hermeneutical approach. We don’t need movies starring Harrison Ford or Brad Pitt, or even a nuclear explosion to help us figure out this verse. And how would Zechariah’s original audience have even made heads or tails out of it if this were the case? The truth is, there are better ways to

understand the passage than catapulting it thousands of years into the future of the original audience, and onto the big screen or news headlines of our own time.

### **Famine in the City During the War**

Zechariah describes the plague as follows: “...*their flesh will rot while they stand on their feet, and their eyes will rot in their sockets, and their tongue will rot in their mouth.*” While Zechariah’s prophecy isn’t about our own day and age, this horrific scene is something that is unfortunately common to every day and age. Consequently, it’s not difficult to figure out what is going on in this verse. The prophet gives a very apt description of the effects of starvation upon the human body.

We’ve all seen pictures of emaciated individuals in the Nazi death camps during the time of Hitler and the forced Ukrainian Famine under Stalin. Sadly, these images align strikingly with Zechariah’s portrayal. During starvation, there are not “*enough calories of any sort to keep up with the body’s energy needs,*” and the “*body’s reserve resources are depleted.*”<sup>[9]</sup> This results in a “*wasting away of the body’s tissues*”<sup>[10]</sup> which, among other things, causes the eyes to sink back into the starving person’s eye sockets.<sup>[11]</sup> Uncoincidentally, this is in fact the sad fate that ensued upon so many who chose to remain inside the doomed city.

As Gary DeMar writes, “*There was a famine during the siege of Jerusalem. A woman was found cooking and eating her child. A tactic of warfare is to wait out the enemy by surrounding the adversary and starving them out. ‘Jerusalem was isolated from the rest of the nation, and factions within the city fought over strategies of defense. As the siege wore on, people began dying from starvation and plague. The high priest’s wife, who once basked in luxury, scavenged for crumbs in the streets.’ Their emaciated bodies would look like rotting corpses. Plagues often follow starvation and the stench and disease of literal rotting corpses.*”<sup>[12]</sup>

Likewise, Darrell G. Young informs us: “*The Jewish zealots, reacting in opposition to Caligula’s campaign began a revolt against Rome, a revolt which led to Roman legion soldiers from Syria destroying the food stocks of the Zealots and the local Jewish population. The inhabitants of the city of Jerusalem died in great numbers via starvation.*”<sup>[13]</sup> Additionally, it is a commonly known fact that the Jewish Zealots themselves burned stockpiles of dry food within their own city in order to “*induce the defenders to fight against the siege, instead of negotiating peace.*”<sup>[14]</sup> This resulted in “*many city dwellers and soldiers*” dying “*of starvation during the siege.*”<sup>[15]</sup>

In short, Zechariah's description of the plague ([Zech. 14:12](#)) matches the results of starvation and malnourishment, and this was unfortunately what awaited many who remained within the city's walls during that time.

This, however, raises the question of *whom* the plague was to befall. An English reading of the text seems to indicate that the intended victims were those who went to war *against* Jerusalem rather than those who went to war *for* Jerusalem. How can we square this with the text if in fact Zechariah is describing the starvation of those who remained in the city, desperately fighting on its behalf?

### Upon Whom Did the Plague Fall?

Even among those who understand this passage in terms of past fulfillment, the tendency is to equate the plague with Jerusalem's *attackers* rather than her *defenders*. In this case, it would have been the Romans, instead of the Jews, who suffered the judgement of [Zechariah 14:12](#). From history, however, we know that the Romans did not experience starvation in the aftermath of the war.

This being so, some see verse 12 as describing the effects of the volcanic eruption of Mount Vesuvius upon the Romans, in 79 AD, rather than the starvation of the Jews inside the city, during the siege of 66-70 AD. For example, in his excellent sermon on the book of Zechariah, Phil Kayser says, "*The surge was so hot (some volcano experts estimating about 1000 degrees Fahrenheit) that it would have consumed the soft tissues of anyone found within a certain radius before their bodies even hit the ground. This is a literal fulfillment.*"<sup>[6]</sup> While this is entirely plausible and an intriguing take on the passage, is it necessary? Is this the only way to understand Zechariah's words? Is another approach possible?

Once again, the entire meaning of a verse hinges greatly upon the translators' choice of words. One single word can completely change the whole dynamic of what's being said. In this case, it's the Hebrew preposition ??? ('al). In English, the passage reads, "*this is the plague that will strike those who have gone to war **against** Jerusalem,*" but there is nothing in the raw grammar of the verse that necessitates that this word must mean "*against.*" Regarding this particular Hebrew preposition, the context determines the nuance of the word, and many times it means the exact opposite of "*against.*" For example:

[Exodus 18:19](#) says that "*Jethro rejoiced **over** all the goodness which the Lord had done to Israel.*"<sup>[17]</sup>

[Deuteronomy 4:21](#) says, "*Now the Lord was angry with me, **on account of** you.*"<sup>[18]</sup>

[Deuteronomy 9:18](#) says, "*I neither ate bread nor drank water, **because of** all your sin.*"<sup>[19]</sup>

Likewise, [Ruth 1:19](#), “The city was stirred **because of them**.”<sup>[20]</sup>

[Nehemiah 1:6](#) says, “I am praying before Thee now, day and night, **on behalf of the sons of Israel**.”<sup>[21]</sup>

If we were to plug any of these possible meanings into [Zechariah 14:12](#), the verse would look like this: “Now this will be the plague with which the LORD will strike all the peoples who have gone to war over Jerusalem,” “on account of Jerusalem,” “because of Jerusalem,” or “on behalf of Jerusalem.” In this case, it is not those who are *attacking* the city upon whom the plague falls, but those who are *defending* it. In other words, the plague of verse 12 hits Zealots and the people whom they persuaded to stay behind and fight – rather than flee to the mountains as Jesus instructed. These are the ones who would experience the plague of starvation, which would in turn contribute to the internal fighting among those inside the city.

### **Panic and Conflict Within the City**

In the verses that follow, Zechariah says, “And it will come about on that day that a great panic from the Lord will fall on them; and they will seize one another’s hand, and the hand of one will be raised against the hand of another. Judah also will fight at Jerusalem...” ([Zech. 14:13-14a](#)). This seems to be a fitting depiction of the infighting within the city as the Zealot factions and their respective followers were at odds with one another.<sup>[22]</sup> Additionally, these verses tend to rule out nuclear war or even a volcanic eruption. Simply put, there wouldn’t be anyone left alive to fight amongst themselves after such catastrophes. Starvation, on the other hand, would precipitate just such a conflict as the inhabitants of the city fought over whatever remaining food sources could be found.

This is in fact what happened during the siege. Starvation gripped those inside the city while their enemies paraded their wealth roundabout Israel’s decimated capital.

### **Titus’ Payday Parade**

Amid Jerusalem’s internal conflict, Zechariah then says, “...the wealth of all the surrounding nations will be gathered, gold, silver, and garments in great abundance” ([Zech. 14:14b](#)). As history would have it, Josephus recounts how the Romans openly flaunted their wealth while “poverty” had “seized” those inside the city “and a great many had died already for want of necessities.”<sup>[23]</sup> Zechariah’s prophecy and Josephus’ history are very much like mirror images of each other, with Zechariah peering forward to the events of the Roman-Jewish War while Josephus looked back upon them.

The flaunting of the Roman wealth occurred after Jerusalem’s second wall was demolished.<sup>[24]</sup> At that point in time, Titus resolved to “relax the siege for a little while” in

order to “*distribute subsistence money to the solders*” and “*give every one of the soldiers their pay.*”<sup>[25]</sup> This lasted for “*four days,*”<sup>[26]</sup> with the Roman soldiers in full battle array. Even the Romans’ horses were adorned “*in their fine trappings.*”<sup>[27]</sup> Steve Mason describes this extravaganza as one of the ways in which the “*Romans used every opportunity to exploit the appearance of their superbly equipped army, massed in rank and file.*”<sup>[28]</sup> As Mason explains:

*“Opportunities were few during a siege, but Josephus describes Titus using such a tactic just after taking Jerusalem’s second wall. Instead of continuing the assault immediately against the city’s innermost, oldest, and strongest wall, he staged an elaborate payday parade over four days. Legionaries were paid three times per year, and this may simply have been the scheduled time, but Josephus portrays it as a tactic to intimidate. The legions parade in full uniform, their polished swords drawn. Even the horses are decked out in armor and shiny decorations, the bright sun giving the whole scene an otherworldly radiance. ‘The broad area in front of the city gleamed with gold and silver, and nothing was more exhilarating than this spectacle to themselves, or more terrifying to the [Judean] enemy’ (War 5.348–55). The city’s north wall is crowded with spectators craning their necks, and Josephus characteristically reads their minds: ‘dire consternation overtook even the most daring, as they observed this force all massed together and the fineness of the weapons and the good order of the men.’ He has the Jerusalemites admit that they would have surrendered right then and there, had they not gone too far to expect clemency.”*<sup>[29]</sup>

Josephus’ reference to the Romans’ horses being elaborately arrayed is fitting considering Zechariah’s words in verse 15: “*And just like this plague, there will be a plague on the horse, the mule, the camel, the donkey, and all the cattle that will be in those camps*” ([Zech. 14:15](#)<sup>L</sup>). The starvation of those who camped inside the besieged city would have befallen their animals as well as the people themselves, while even the Romans’ horses were in full health and vigor. The contrast could not be greater. The wealth of the “*surrounding nations*” was “*gathered*” in “*great abundance*” ([Zech. 14:14](#)<sup>L</sup>) while those inside the city wasted away ([Zech. 14:12](#)<sup>L</sup>) along with their animals ([Zech. 14:15](#)<sup>L</sup>).

### **Roman Victory Parades**

Apart from Titus’ Payday Parade, a possible further fulfillment of verse 14 might be found in the Roman victory parades following the destruction of Jerusalem itself. Josephus speaks of “*Titus’s and Vespasian’s Triumph*” in which they “*exhibited magnificent shows in all the cities of Syria*” and beyond.<sup>[30]</sup> During these displays, Titus “*made use of the captive Jews as public instances of the destruction of that nation.*”<sup>[31]</sup> When he left Antioch and made his way to Zeugma, messengers from “*Vologeses king of Parthia*” met him “*and brought him*

*a crown of gold upon the victory he had gained over the Jews.”*<sup>[32]</sup> Journeying in to Egypt with the captive Zealot leaders,<sup>[33]</sup> Vespasian and Titus were “*crowned with laurel*” and “*clothed*” with “*ancient purple garments*” as they sat down upon “*ivory chairs*” accepting shouts of victory.<sup>[34]</sup>

Josephus says that “it is impossible to describe the magnitude of the shows as they deserve and the magnificence of them all.”<sup>[35]</sup> He speaks of “*the variety of riches*” and “*rarities of nature,*” “*admirable and all costly in nature,*” and “*all brought together*” to demonstrate “*the vastness of the dominions of the Romans*” during these elaborate celebrations of their victory over the Jews.<sup>[36]</sup> He elaborates, “*For there was here to be seen a mighty quantity of silver, and gold, and ivory, contrived into all sorts of things*” carried along “*in a pompous show*” and “*running along like a river.*”<sup>[37]</sup> “*Some parts,*” he says, “*were composed of the rarest purple hangings*” and accurately represented the embroidery of “*the Babylonians.*”<sup>[38]</sup> Josephus speaks of “*precious stones,*” “*crowns of gold,*” “*very costly materials,*” and “*purple garments*” that were “*interwoven with gold.*”<sup>[39]</sup> This all accords quite well with Zechariah’s words: “*...the wealth of all the surrounding nations will be gathered, gold, silver, and garments in great abundance*” ([Zech. 14:14b](#)<sup>L</sup>).

### **Predicted, Fulfilled, and Recorded**

All that Zechariah predicted in these verses was fulfilled and then recorded by Josephus after the prophet’s words came to pass in the Roman-Jewish War of the first century. There is no need to watch the latest apocalyptic thriller movie to understand Zechariah’s prophecy, but there is a great need to acquaint ourselves with history in order to understand it. The answers to our questions about Zechariah’s prediction lay in the distant past and not the future – whether that be the near or far future.

Embracing Christ and following His admonition to flee the city would have saved everyone who went down with the city. It would have also made them a part of the new city, the New Jerusalem,<sup>[40]</sup> which began to rise and expand in the first century and continues to do so unto this day ([Zech. 14:10-11](#)<sup>L</sup>). Many chose to flee to the mountains as Jesus instructed, and many chose to stay. Those who made the latter choice faced famine and defeat as their enemies were victorious and prosperous. Zechariah’s words in verses 12-15 speak to these events and Zechariah aptly portrays the contrast between the fate of the old, earthly Jerusalem and the destiny of the new, heavenly Jerusalem depicted in the previous verses.

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<sup>[1]</sup> The idea of the New Jerusalem “coming down” in [Revelation 21:2](#)<sup>L</sup> speaks to its origin, it is heavenly rather than earthly. Neither the New Jerusalem’s rising in [Zechariah 14:10](#)

nor it's coming down in [Revelation 21:2](#) are physical, directional movements. It is a spiritual reality with its source or origin being heaven itself as it rises, grows, and fills the earth.

[2] From the progressive revelation of the New Testament, we understand that there were two Jerusalems ([Gal. 4:25-27](#); [Heb. 12:22-24](#); [Rev. 21](#)). This would not have been apparent in Old Testament times and it explains how Jerusalem could simultaneously be presented as being destroyed and rescued at the same time, in passages such as Zechariah 14. The Messianic profile, along with the full disclosure of His work, was kept veiled and cryptic until Jesus' resurrection ([Lk. 24:45](#)). If God's enemies would have known the plan, the crucifixion and all the ensuing events associated with it would not have happened ([1 Cor. 2:6-7](#)). From history we understand that old, earthly Jerusalem was destroyed. The new, heavenly Jerusalem was rescued and remains to this day. God's New Covenant People are all a part of it. The distinction between the two Jerusalems awaited the further revelation of the New Testament.

[3] <https://www.messianic-literary.com/neutron.html>

[4] e.g., [Matt. 10:23](#); [16:27-28](#); [24:34](#); etc.

[5] <http://jimbomkamp.com/Luke/Luke12p3.htm#:~:text=In%20our%20theology%2C%20we%20as%20God%E2%80%99s%20people%20through,His%20church.%20Jesus%20could%20return%20at%20any%20moment.>

[6] <https://www.crosswalk.com/church/pastors-or-leadership/ask-roger/does-the-bible-predict-nuclear-war.html>

[7] <https://www.preceptaustin.org/zechariah-14-commentary>

[8] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=RYtZnawPWpw>

[9] <https://www.cpr.org/2016/01/20/what-happens-to-the-body-and-mind-when-starvation-sets-in/>

[10] Ibid.

[11] <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Starvation#:~:text=As%20starvation%20progresses%2C%20>

[12] Gary DeMar, "Making Prophetic Sense of Zechariah 14" (Unpublished Work in Progress, October 1, 2020), pp. 55-56.

[13] <http://focusonjerusalem.com/thefallofjerusalem.html>

[14] [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First\\_Jewish%E2%80%93Roman\\_War](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First_Jewish%E2%80%93Roman_War); see: Josephus, *Wars*, 5.1.4.

[15] Ibid.

[16] , Zechariah: Sermon by Phil Kayser on 2020-03-08 p. 17. [BB Research | Zechariah \(kaysercommentary.com\)](https://www.kaysercommentary.com)

[17] <https://biblehub.com/lexicon/exodus/18-9.htm>

[18] <https://biblehub.com/lexicon/deuteronomy/4-21.htm>

[19] <https://biblehub.com/lexicon/deuteronomy/9-18.htm> see also: [Deut. 29:25](#)

 <https://biblehub.com/lexicon/deuteronomy/29-25.htm>

[20] <https://biblehub.com/lexicon/ruth/1-19.htm>

[21] <https://biblehub.com/lexicon/nehemiah/1-6.htm>

[22] On this, see: Josephus, *Wars*, 5.6.1 zealots were fighting each other even while under siege from the Romans

5.1.4. Three treacherous factions, 5.3.1. Zealots tortured innocent temple worshippers, 5.8.1 Zealots threatened death, cut throats of those who wanted peace. Many thanks to Patricia Bailey, of <https://preteristpapers.com/>, for these references in Josephus.

[23] *Wars*, 5.8.2.

[24] Josephus, *Wars*, 5.8.1.

[25] *Wars*, 5.9.1.

[26] *Wars*, 5.9.2

[27] *Wars*, 5.9.1

[28] Steve Mason, *A History of the Roman Jewish War: AD 66-74* (New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 2016), p. 190.

[29] Ibid.

[30] *Wars*, 7.5.1 ff.

[31] *Wars*, 7.5.1.

[32] *Wars*, 7.5.2.

[33] *Wars*, 7.5.3.

[34] Wars, 7.5.4.

[35] Wars, 7.5.5.

[36] Ibid.

[37] Ibid.

[38] Ibid.

[39] Ibid.

[40] As Doug Wilson writes, “Remember that the New Jerusalem is the Christian Church” (*When the Man Comes Around: A Commentary on the Book of Revelation* [Moscow, Idaho: Canon Press, 2019], p. 254).

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## Zechariah 14, Part 9 (Zechariah 14:16-19)

### *Zechariah 14, Part Nine*



### *The Feast, the Rain & the Fulfillment (Zechariah 14:16-19)*

[Robert Cruickshank](#) 10/15/2023

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***“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. <sup>17</sup> 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. <sup>18</sup> 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. <sup>19</sup> 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” (Zechariah 14:16-19<sup>L</sup>).***

In this passage, Zechariah speaks of the nations of the earth sojourning to Jerusalem every year to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles (i.e., booths). The consequences of not making this trek and participating in the celebration are a lack of rainfall for those who sit it out. This is a vivid picture illustrating the need to come to Christ coupled with the outcome of rejecting him. In short, the imagery pictures the realities of the New Covenant age.

Many, however, see this as a renewal of the Old Covenant rites and rituals during a future Millennium. In other words, they teach that the Feast of Tabernacles will be reinstated

with everyone on earth required to travel to Jerusalem to physically celebrate it – just as it was celebrated in Old Testament times. A previous installment in this series demonstrated how this would be logistically impossible.[1] More importantly, it is Biblically impossible. Jesus is the embodiment and fulfillment of all such types and shadows (Col. 2:16-17<sup>L</sup>), and the New Testament warns against returning to the physical observance of such things (Gal. 4:10-11<sup>L</sup>).

The Feast of Tabernacles was a fall-harvest festival which commemorated the Israelites living in booths after their Exodus from Egypt. It was also eschatologically oriented as it looked forward to a time when Gentiles would likewise dwell in the tabernacling presence of God's grace and mercy.[2] Jesus fulfills every aspect of this feast and the invitation to embrace Him is unending. Zechariah 14:16-19<sup>L</sup> is about turning to Him, not returning to ceremonies that pointed to Him.

### **The Fulfillment of the Feast**

In part 6 of this study,[3] it was noted that Jesus stood up on the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles and declared: *"If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. The one who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, from his innermost being will flow rivers of living water"* (John 7:37b-38<sup>L</sup>). D.A. Carson makes the connecting between the timing of this feast, the imagery of water and rainfall, and the significance of Jesus' words on that day:

*"It is clear that this Feast was associated with adequate rainfall (cf. Zc. 14:16-17<sup>L</sup>)—and interestingly enough, this chapter from Zechariah was read on the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles in the liturgy prescribed in B. Megilla 31a), not surprisingly in light of the harvest connections...The water-pouring ceremony is interpreted in these traditions as a foretaste of the eschatological rivers of living water foreseen by Ezekiel (47:1-9) and Zechariah (13:1). In these traditions the water miracle in the wilderness (Ex. 17:1-7<sup>L</sup>; Nu. 20:8-13<sup>L</sup>; cf. Ps. 78:16-20<sup>L</sup>) is in turn a forerunner of the water rite of the Feast of Tabernacles...In general terms, then, Jesus' pronouncement is clear: he is the fulfillment of all the Feast of Tabernacles anticipated. If Isaiah could invite the thirsty to drink from the waters (Is. 55:1<sup>L</sup>), Jesus announces that he is the one who can provide the waters."<sup>[4]</sup>*

### **Jesus is Our Tabernacle**

Apart from the imagery of a fall feast being associated with water and adequate rainfall, Jesus fulfills the essence of the feast itself in that He is our tabernacle. Scripture tells us that *"the Word was made flesh, and dwelt [tabernacled] among us"* (Jn. 1:14<sup>L</sup>). The term used here for "dwelt" is *sk?no?*, and it means: *"to pitch a tent, encamp; to tabernacle, dwell in a tent; to dwell, have one's abode."*

The same word is used by John again in the book of Revelation: *“And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, ‘Behold the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell [tabernacle] with them, and they will be his people and God himself will be with them as their God’”* (Rev. 21:3<sup>L</sup>). This is the reality of the relationship that we have with the Lord in the New Covenant – He pitches His tent and tabernacles among us. The Old Testament feast was merely a type or shadow of that reality. Jesus is the embodiment of all that the Feast of Tabernacles signified and symbolized.

### **Tabernacles and the Exodus**

The purpose of the feast was to commemorate God’s people dwelling in tabernacles in the wilderness after the Exodus from Egypt (Lev. 23:39-43<sup>L</sup>). As such, the Israelites were to gather *“the foliage of beautiful trees, palm branches, and boughs of leafy trees and willows of the brook”* and *“rejoice before the Lord”* (Lev. 23:40<sup>L</sup>). A beautiful picture of Jesus as the fulfillment of this is seen in the Gospels when He rides into Jerusalem on a donkey (Mk. 11:1-6<sup>L</sup>), and the people spread out *“leafy branches which they had cut from the fields”* (Mk. 11:8<sup>L</sup>), and they declare: *“Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord”* (Mk. 11:9<sup>L</sup>).

In Zechariah 14:16<sup>L</sup>, coming to Christ is symbolized by the nations making the journey to Jerusalem from *“year to year”* to *“celebrate”* this feast which pictured the Exodus. Regarding the Exodus, the Psalmist depicts the Israelites’ tabernacling in the wilderness (Ps. 107:4<sup>L</sup>, 10<sup>L</sup>) as the time when God *“brought them out of darkness”* (Ps. 107:10<sup>L</sup>, 14<sup>L</sup>). As James Kugel says, the Psalmist describes *“the entire Exodus as a going forth from darkness.”*<sup>[5]</sup> Just as the ancient Israelites made their exodus from the darkness of the land of Egypt, all New Covenant believers make a personal exodus out of spiritual *“darkness”* and into *“His marvelous light”* (1 Pt. 2:9<sup>L</sup>). When we do this, He tabernacles with us, and we tabernacle in Him.

### **From Year to Year**

Zechariah says this happens *“from year to year”* (Zech. 14:16<sup>L</sup>) in order to telegraph the idea that the Gospel invitation is ongoing and unending. God’s mercies are new every morning (Lam. 3:22-23<sup>L</sup>). The Tree of Life yields its fruit every month and its leaves are for the healing of the nations (Rev. 22:2<sup>L</sup>). In order for a person to experience God’s healing and tabernacling presence, however, a person must embrace Christ. In other words, we must *make that journey* to Him. It’s a spiritual journey to the *“mountain”* that can’t be *“touched”* (Heb. 12:18<sup>L</sup>) – to the true *“Mount Zion,”* to the *“city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem”* (Heb. 12:22<sup>L</sup>).

### **Why the Feast of Tabernacles?**

Finally, the question must be asked: of all the Old Testament feasts, festivals and rituals that signified these New Testament realities, why does Zechariah single out the Feast of Tabernacles specifically? Why is it this feast, in particular, that all the “*families of the earth*” ([Zech. 14:17](#)) are required to celebrate? Why did he focus on this one exclusively in conjunction with “the nations” ([Zech. 14:18](#))?

Perhaps one could argue that Tabernacles was a *pilgrimage* festival and this best fits Zechariah’s theme, but so were Passover and Pentecost.<sup>[6]</sup> So this narrows it down, but the question now becomes: of the three *pilgrimage* festivals, why is Zechariah’s attention drawn solely to this one? With that in mind, there is one last aspect of the Feast of Tabernacles that provides the answer.

This final feature of the feast comes to us from [Numbers 29:12-34](#). This passage “*describes the sacrifices involved in the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles, called in Hebrew, the Feast of Sukkot (“Booths”). Included in those sacrifices were 70 bulls, a number that far exceeds any other Israelite festival.*”<sup>[7]</sup>

Scholars have long taken note of this number and determined that it can’t be arbitrary. For example, Noga Ayali-Darshan, of the Hebrew University in Israel observes: “*This huge number of offerings is striking, especially in comparison with other Pentateuchal festivals, none of which requires more than two bulls per day...*”<sup>[8]</sup> As Yoel Halevi writes, “*The Torah in [Numbers 29:12-34](#) requires the Israelite priests to sacrifice 70 bulls during the great feast... the question standing before most people who read this text is why 70?*”<sup>[9]</sup>

The answer to this question is found early on in the book of Genesis. The number 70 corresponds to the Table of Nations in Genesis 10. This is where the Lord divided the nations and “*set the boundaries of the people,*” according to Moses ([Deut. 32:8](#)). Corresponding to this, Paul said that God set these “*boundaries*” so that people “*should seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him...*” ([Acts 17:26-27](#)). Thus, God divided the original peoples of the world into 70 distinct nations for the purpose of those nations finding their way back to Him.

The 70 bulls sacrificed during the Feast of Tabernacles corresponds to these 70 representative nations, and the Jews viewed the ritual as a means of intercession for those nations. According to Jewish tradition, “*these 70 bulls were sacrificed for the sins of the 70 nations descended from the three sons of Noah.*”<sup>[10]</sup> Rabbi Milgrom put it this way, “*You find that on Sukkot, Israel offers to Him [God] seventy bulls as an atonement for the seventy nations.*”<sup>[11]</sup>

Putting this together, the sacrifice of the 70 bulls during the Feast of Tabernacles was a means of intercession for the surrounding Gentile nations. How fitting is it then that

Zechariah chose this feast to picture the Gentiles coming to Christ? Under the New covenant, we don't need to sacrifice 70 bulls anymore. Jesus is our intercessor now ([Rom. 8:34](#)), and He is the only mediator between God and man ([1 Tim. 2:5](#)). His mediation and intercession for the Gentile nations was pictured during the Feast of Tabernacles, and our coming to Him is pictured as a Journey to Jerusalem to celebrate that feast. If a people don't make that journey to Him, Zechariah says no rain will fall upon them ([Zech. 14:17](#)).

### **No Rain Will Fall Upon Them**

In the previous verses, we saw how imagery from the natural world is used metaphorically to communicate spiritual realities. In verse 4, a splitting mountain represents God's judgment and the choice a person must make regarding the claims of Christ. In verse 9, a rising mountain symbolizes the preeminence and prominence of Christ as He works in and through His people. In verse 17, the imagery switches from mountains to rain.

The "plague" and "punishment" for those who refuse to celebrate the Feast (i.e., embrace Christ) is that "there will be no rain on them" ([Zech. 14:17](#)).

In the Bible, rain is used as a metaphor for God's presence and His blessings in a person's life. In modern times, we use "cats and dogs" as a metaphor for "rain." Sometimes, the Biblical metaphors make far more sense than the modern ones![\[12\]](#) The background for Zechariah's rain imagery comes from passages like [Deuteronomy 32:2](#) and [Hosea 6:3](#).[\[13\]](#)

*"Listen, you heavens, and I will speak;  
And let the earth hear the words of my mouth!  
**May my teaching drip as the rain,**  
My speech trickle as the dew,  
As droplets on the fresh grass,  
And as the showers on the vegetation.  
For I proclaim the name of the Lord;  
Ascribe greatness to our God!"* ([Deut. 32:1-3](#)).

*"Come, let's return to the Lord.  
For He has torn us, but He will heal us;  
He has wounded us, but He will bandage us.  
He will revive us after two days;  
He will raise us up on the third day,  
That we may live before Him.  
So let us know, let us press on to know the Lord.  
His appearance is as sure as the dawn;*

***And He will come to us like the rain,  
As the spring rain waters the earth.”*** ([Hos. 6:1-3<sup>L</sup>](#)).

The *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* captures the Scriptural sentiment of rain as a metaphor: “So vibrant are the feelings of the biblical writers for the refreshment represented by rainfall that we sometimes feel the rain almost as a plant might be imagined to experience it, as we read about ‘ground that drinks up the rain falling on it’ ([Heb 6:7<sup>L</sup>](#) ).”<sup>[14]</sup> In order for God’s “rain” to fall upon us, we must embrace His teachings and press on to know Him, as Moses and Hosea indicate. Bottom line: Jesus Christ is the way, the truth and the life, and no one comes to the Father except through Him ([Jn. 14:6<sup>L</sup>](#)). If someone doesn’t make that journey and embrace Christ ([Zech. 14:16<sup>L</sup>](#)), no “rain” will fall upon them ([Zech. 14:17<sup>L</sup>](#)).

This is not unlike the words of the prophet Amos who spoke of the spiritual drought and famine that comes upon those who disregard God and His Word:

*“Behold, the days are coming,” declares the Lord God.*

*‘When I will send a famine on the land,*

***Not a famine of bread or a thirst for water.***

***But rather for hearing the words of the Lord.***

*And people will stagger from sea to sea.*

*And from the north even to the east.*

*They will go to and fro to seek the word of the Lord.*

*But they will not find it”* ([Amos 8:11-12<sup>L</sup>](#)).

Similarly, Isaiah says:

*“So now let Me tell you what I am going to do to My vineyard:*

*I will remove its hedge and it will be consumed;*

*I will break down its wall and it will become trampled ground.*

*I will lay it waste;*

*It will not be pruned nor hoed,*

*But briars and thorns will come up.*

***I will also command the clouds not to rain on it.***

*For the vineyard of the Lord of armies is the house of Israel,*

*And the people of Judah are His delightful plant.*

*So He waited for justice, but behold, there was bloodshed;*

*For righteousness, but behold, a cry for help”* ([Isa. 5:5-7<sup>L</sup>](#)).

**Why is Egypt Singled Out?**

In verses 18-19, Egypt is specifically signaled out as being punished with no rain. This has left commentators baffled. For example, Paul Redditt asks, *“Why do these verses focus on Egypt? It was hardly the central player in the Levant at any time during the Persian period. Persia’s exercise of control, moreover, generally left religious matters to locals. It is difficult to see any of that context as the stimulus for condemning Egypt.”*<sup>[15]</sup> Understanding the passage in light of AD 70 and the progressive Revelation of the New Testament illuminates this otherwise obscure reference to Egypt.

In the book of Revelation, the old Jerusalem becomes the new Egypt ([Rev. 11:8](#)<sup>L</sup>). This is fitting. In the book of Acts, Stephen tells the first-century Jews that the hearts of their fathers *“turned back to Egypt”* ([Acts 7:51](#)<sup>L</sup>) and they were doing just as their fathers had done ([Acts 7:51](#)<sup>L</sup>). As noted in a previous installment, old Jerusalem’s new status as spiritual Egypt was also physically pictured in the deportation of many of its inhabitants back to Egypt after the city fell.<sup>[16]</sup> As the Old Testament foretold, God’s Old Covenant people eventually returned to Egypt (cf. [Deut. 28:68](#)<sup>L</sup>; [Hos. 8:13](#)<sup>L</sup>) – literally and figuratively. And now, just like a person from Egypt or any other nation on earth, their salvation is found in Christ and Christ alone.

Ethnic Israelites no longer have special covenantal status apart from the New Covenant in Jesus’ blood ([Lk. 22:20](#)<sup>L</sup>) – which in and of itself is an echo back to Zechariah (cf. [Zech. 9:11](#)<sup>L</sup>) –, but like everyone, they can have special status in God’s eyes through the atoning work of His Son. Jews and Gentiles alike must embrace the embodiment of the Feast of Tabernacles, i.e., Jesus Christ, if the rain of God’s presence and blessing is to fall upon them.

### **Is This Literal Rain?**

Understanding these words as referring to literal rain is nonsensical if one takes the time to think it through. This is especially the case with respect to the popular Futuristic approach of our day, which sees Zechariah 14 as yet to be fulfilled. For instance, imagine a neighborhood with 50 houses lining the street. If 45 of the families in those houses make the trek to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles but five don’t, is the rain going to strategically miss the other 5 houses? And if those 5 families wanted to get rained on badly enough, why not just go next door and get wet? More to the point, with respect to modern public water systems, why not just turn on the sprinkler?

Even in ancient times, the threat of no literal rain with respect to Egypt, specifically (vs. 18), would have been rather inept. As Robert S. Rayburn puts it: *“A contemporary of Zechariah might well have thought of the promise of withholding rain, ‘Well, that wouldn’t hurt Egypt very much.’”*<sup>[17]</sup> George Klein explains why: *“Unlike the other nations that depended on*

rainfall for their agricultural yield, Egypt relied on irrigation water provided by the Nile ([Deut. 11: 10-11](#)<sup>L</sup>; [Jer. 46: 7-8](#)<sup>L</sup>).”<sup>[18]</sup> Consequently, “a threat to withhold rain would have been ridiculous” with regard to Egypt, says G. Michell.<sup>[19]</sup> The numerous problems posed by understanding “rain” literally in these verses literally show how its best to understand the reference to “rain” in a non-literal manner.

### **A Bigger Problem than Lack of Rain**

As it turns out, the *rain problem* is only a *minor storm* compared to the greater difficulty the passage poses for the popular approach of our day. As Kim Riddlebarger points out, “*Evil in the Millennial Age*” is “*A Huge Problem for Premillennarians*.”<sup>[20]</sup> Basically, if these verses are describing a time after the future second coming of Christ, [Zechariah 14:18-19](#)<sup>L</sup> must refer to the Millennium. Yet, there are nations still in rebellion against God who refuse to travel to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles?

Edward McComiskey captures the dilemma: “*No such nations will exist in this time...*”<sup>[21]</sup> Goerge Klein puts it this way: “*In the day when...God finally reigns on earth, it is difficult to imagine sin reemerging to mar God’s creation with such flagrant disobedience to the Lord.*”<sup>[22]</sup> This leads Klien to conclude: “*It is unclear whether the circumstances sketched by Zechariah in v. 17 are hypothetical or actual.*”<sup>[23]</sup> Extreme literalism literally faces an extreme dilemma at this point. This being so, many opt for the first choice: Zechariah is simply describing a hypothetical situation that could never actually happen in a future utopian state.

For example, McComiskey argues that the drought experienced by the disobedient is merely a “*hypothetical allusion,*” and even goes so far as to call it a “*hypothetical illusion.*”<sup>[24]</sup> In other words, it’s just Zechariah imagining what would happen if the “*hypothetical nations*” could choose to “*disobey God’s rule*” during the time of “*the absolute rule of God.*”<sup>[25]</sup> This is supposedly despite the fact that Zachariah himself knows fully well that they couldn’t. If this is true, one wonders why Zechariah would have put so much time and effort into writing about something that’s merely an “*illusion*” – hypothetically speaking, of course. It’s safe to hypothesize that most are not going to buy the “*hypothetical*” explanation.

Opting for the second choice, actual fulfillment, another writer proposes a solution wherein resurrected Saints (who cannot sin) will be living alongside of Armageddon survivors (who can sin) during the Millennium.<sup>[26]</sup> “*Those folks will still be able to sin and disobey,*” he says, “*and if they do, no rain.*”<sup>[27]</sup> But this just takes us right back to the neighborhood street with the 50 houses and the targeted rainfall. What if an Armageddon survivor lives right next to a resurrected believer? Again, they can just go next door and get

some rain. Understanding the passage literally provides no more help than understanding it hypothetically. At the end of the day, the solution is to understand the passage Scripturally.

### **Interpreting Scripture with Scripture**

With Scripture alone as our guide, Zechariah's messaging is clear. God withholds the rain of His presence from those who don't embrace His Son as their Lord and Savior. The Feast of Tabernacles was a picture of Jesus and all that He accomplished. He is our intercessor and our high priest, and He tabernacles among those who make the Exodus out of spiritual darkness and into the light of His grace and mercy. The ongoing offer of the salvation provided in and through Him is continual and unending. All people everywhere can make that journey to Him anytime forever. Zechariah's imagery in these verses comes to life in the person and work of Jesus Christ. To interpret this passage in an uber-literal fashion and return to the types and shadows that pictured Christ's work, is to completely miss the magnitude and magnificence of what is being evoked by the prophet. Jesus is the fulfillment of the Feast of Tabernacles, and [Zechariah 14:16-19](#)<sup>[1]</sup> is fulfilled when people find their fulfillment in Him.

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[1] <https://burrosofberea.com/zechariah-14-part-7-zechariah-149-11/>

[2] Special thanks to my friend, Kim Burgess, for his input regarding the eschatological aspect of the feast.

[3] <https://burrosofberea.com/zechariah-14-part-6-zechariah-146-8/>

<sup>[4]</sup>D. A. Carson, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1991), 322-323.

[5] Kugel, James L. *The Bible as it was*. Harvard University Press, 1999, p. 321.

[6] <https://www.jewfaq.org/holiday5.htm>

[7] Dr. Michael S. Heiser, Naked Bible Podcast Transcript, "Episode 206: The 70 Bulls of the Feast of Tabernacles"

(March 13, 2018), p. 1. <https://nakedbiblepodcast.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/NB-206-Transcript.pdf>

[8] Q: Heiser, *Ibid.*, p. 3.

[9] <https://www.hebrewinIsrael.net/blog/why-70-bulls/>

- [10] [Gen. 10](#), Midrash, Numbers Rabbah 21.24; see also: <https://israelmyglory.org/article/the-feast-of-tabernacles-in-ancient-times/>
- [11] Q: Heiser, *Ibid.*, p. 6.
- [12] On the possible origins of this somewhat bizarre modern metaphor, see: <https://www.theguardian.com/notesandqueries/query/0,5753,-22408,00.html#:~:text=The%20phrase%20'rain%20and,fictional%20character%20%22Sam%20Slick%22>
- [13] Many thanks to my friend, Tim Martin, for pointing out the reference in [Deuteronomy 32:2](#).
- [14] Ryken, Leland, James C. Wilhoit, and Tremper Longman III, eds. *Dictionary of biblical imagery*. InterVarsity Press, 2010, p. 2333.
- [15] Redditt, Paul L. *Zechariah 9-14*. Kohlhammer Verlag, 2012, p. 139.
- [16] <https://burrosofberea.com/zechariah-14-part-2-the-siege-of-the-city/>
- [17] <https://www.faithtacoma.org/zech/2014-02-02-pm>
- [18] Klein, George. *Zechariah: 21 (The New American Commentary)* (p. 589). B&H Publishing Group. Kindle Edition.
- [19] 3H. G. Mitchell, J. M. P. Smith, and J. A. Bewer, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi and Jonah, ICC* (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1912), p. 355; Q: Klein, *Ibid.*
- [20] <https://www.kimriddlebarger.com/the-riddleblog/evil-in-the-millennial-age-a-huge-problem-for-premillennarians?rq=evil%20in%20the%20millennial%20age>
- [21] McComiskey, Thomas Edward, ed. *The Minor Prophets: an exegetical and expository commentary*. Baker Academic, 2009, p. 1242.
- [22] Klein, *Ibid.*, p. 589 (Kindle edition).
- [23] *Ibid.*
- [24] McComiskey, *Ibid.*, p. 1242.
- [25] McComiskey, *Ibid.*
- [26] <https://explainingthebook.com/2019/07/21/zechariah-14-commentary-verses-12-21/>
- [27] *Ibid.*

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## Zechariah 14, Part 10: The Cleansing of the Temple (Zechariah 14:20-21)



[Robert Cruickshank](#) 10/19/2023

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***“On that day there will be inscribed on the bells of the horses, ‘Holy to the Lord.’ And the cooking pots in the Lord’s house will be like the bowls before the altar. Every cooking pot in Jerusalem and in Judah will be holy to the Lord of armies; and all who sacrifice will come and take of them and boil in them. And there will no longer be a Canaanite in the house of the Lord of armies on that day”*** ([Zechariah 14:20-21](#)<sup>L</sup>).

These verses loop back to the theme introduced in verse 9, i.e., the exclusivity and extent of Christ’s reign.<sup>[1]</sup> For the New Covenant believer, “*old things are passed away, and all things become new*” ([2 Cor. 5:17](#)<sup>L</sup>). The Lord is “*the only one, and His name is the only one*” ([Zech. 14:9](#)<sup>L</sup>).

This being the case, even the common ordinary things in our life, right down to our means of transportation and the cooking utensils in our kitchen, are to be “*HOLY TO THE LORD*” ([Zech. 14:20-21a](#)<sup>L</sup>). Under the Old Covenant, all consecrated items had to be sanctified for their use in the holy place ([Exod. 28:38](#)<sup>L</sup>). Under the New Covenant, The Lord Himself is our temple ([Rev. 21:3](#)<sup>L</sup>), and we are His temple ([1 Cor. 3:16](#)<sup>L</sup>). For that reason, Zechariah is telegraphing the idea that everything in our lives is to be consecrated and set apart for God’s glory.

In other words, all that we have, all that we think, and all that we do, is sacred. There is no room for anything unsacred or profane in the New Jerusalem. More to the point, that which was unsacred and profane should become consecrated and pure. Everything, even our eating and drinking, is to be done to the glory of God ([1 Cor. 10:31](#)). As New Covenant believers, Jesus Christ becomes the central focus of our lives and all that our lives entail.

In the final words of the chapter, Zechariah says, “*there will no longer be a Canaanite in the house of the Lord.*” With these words, Zechariah looks forward to a specific event in Jesus’ life regarding the Old Covenant, physical temple. This event, in turn, has far-reaching implications with respect to the New Covenant, spiritual temple – of which all true believers are a part. Jesus’ actions in the physical temple were meant to inform us regarding our behavior in the spiritual temple, as we live out the fulfillment of the realities envisioned by Zechariah.

### **Holy to the Lord**

Zechariah says that “*the bells of the horses*” will bear the inscription, “*Holy to the Lord.*” Even the most mundane items, like “*cooking pots,*” will be “*Holy to the Lord.*” The significance of this inscription being applied to animals and common everyday items would have been startling to an ancient Israelite. Under the Old Covenant, that phrase was reserved for the golden engraving fastened to the high priest’s turban ([Exod. 28:36-37](#)). Additionally, the high priest wore a “*golden bell*” whenever he entered and left the holy place ([Exod. 28:34-35](#)). Zechariah’s prophecy anticipates a time when access to sacred space is no longer restricted, and everything becomes sanctified in the life of the believer.

To put it another way, the inscription on the high priest’s turban now applies to us. For those who believe in Jesus, we are all kings and priests ([1 Pt. 2:9](#); [Rev. 5:9-10](#)) and sacred space is no longer limited to the holy of holies, in the physical temple, in earthly Jerusalem. That temple, in fact, doesn’t exist anymore. It hasn’t existed for almost 2000 years now. Regarding the physical temple, Jesus said, “*not one stone will be left upon another*” ([Matt. 24:2](#)). According to Peter, those stones have been replaced by “*living stones*” being “*built up as a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood*” offering “*spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ*” ([1 Pt. 2:4](#)).

We are those “*living stones*” and, unlike the high priest, we don’t enter the temple on occasion. We are always in the temple because we are the temple. This being the case, the spiritual sacrifices that we offer aren’t meant to be occasional either. The new spiritual reality in which we exist encompasses every area of life, at all times. Our entire life is to be a living sacrifice presented to God ([Rom. 12:1](#)).

### **The Eschatological Dwelling of God**

Just as everything in the physical temple had to be sprinkled and cleansed with blood ([Heb. 9:21-22](#)), “so now,” writes Andrew M. Mutua, “the blood of Jesus purifies the believers, enabling them to establish the new connection to God. And while the OT sacrifices and sprinkling took place on the altar at the sanctuary, the sacrifice of Jesus is on the cross” ([1 Pt. 1:18-19](#)) “and the ‘sprinkling’ is on those that make up the new ‘spiritual house’” ([1 Pt. 2:5](#)), “the eschatological dwelling of God.”<sup>[2]</sup>

As “the eschatological dwelling of God,” our “new connection to God” means that the space we occupy is sacred space, and the ground we stand upon is holy ground. Michael Heiser put it this way: “We are the place where God dwells—the same presence that filled the temple in the Old Testament.”<sup>[3]</sup> As such, all that we have is to be set apart for the Lord and His purposes, and even our very thoughts are to be taken “captive to the obedience of Christ” ([2 Cor. 10:5](#)). As God’s new priests in His new temple, “all things become new,” as Paul said ([2 Cor. 5:17](#)). This is the reality of a fulfilled life under the New Covenant, and this is the reality that Zechariah’s prophecy pictured. Even the most common and mundane things in our life are “Holy to the Lord.” The ordinary becomes extraordinary when God’s people realize who they are in Christ and who He is in them.

### **No More Canaanites in the House of the Lord**

Further realities of what should characterize this life of fulfillment in God’s spiritual temple were foreshadowed through Jesus’ actions in the old, physical temple during His earthly ministry. And Jesus’ actions in the temple were foreseen by Zechariah when he said, “And there will no longer be a Canaanite in the house of the Lord of armies on that day” ([Zechariah 14:21](#)). The NASB uses the word “**Canaanite**,” while the ESV renders the verse as: “There will no longer be a **trader** in the house of the Lord.” So, which one is right? The answer is that both translations are correct.

The Canaanites were famous for mercantile exchange and the weighing out of precious metals ([Zeph. 1:11](#)). As such, the word “Canaanite” itself became an idiom for merchants or traders – especially the dishonest ones ([Hos. 2:17](#)).<sup>[4]</sup> With this in mind, it’s hard to miss Zechariah’s influence upon the Gospel accounts of Jesus cleansing the temple ([Matt. 21:12-13](#); [Mk. 11:15-17](#); [Lk. 19:45-47](#); [Jn. 2:14-16](#)). This being the case, more than a few scholars have noted the connection.<sup>[5]</sup> The story is familiar enough to most Christians and the tie-in with [Zechariah 14:21](#) is all but transparent. Jesus enters the temple, overturns the tables of commerce, and drives the money changers out with force. The striking parallel of Jesus’ actions with [Zechariah 14:21](#) carries as much force as the actions themselves.

As N.T. Wright maintains, the similarity between Jesus' actions and Zechariah's words cannot be chalked up to mere literary redaction on the part the Gospel writers. Jesus was self-consciously fulfilling Zechariah's prophecy. "*Zechariah 14*," says Wright, "*which celebrates the coming of YHWH and his kingdom, ends with the temple being cleansed of traders. There should be no doubt that Jesus knew this whole passage, and that he saw it as centrally constructive of his own vocation, at the level of not just ideas but agendas.*"<sup>[6]</sup> In intentional fulfillment of Zechariah's text, Jesus was ridding His Father's house of the Canaanites.

In all three synoptic versions of the story, the Olivet Discourse follows closely on the heels of this episode in Jesus' life ([Matt. 24:1-28](#); [Mk. 13:1-13](#); [Lk. 21:1-36](#)). In the discourse, Jesus makes it clear that the temple He had just cleansed was going to be destroyed ([Matt. 24:2:1-28](#); [Mk. 13:2:1-13](#); [Lk. 21:5-6:1-36](#)). Putting two and two together, Henk Jan de Jonge succinctly summarizes what's going on in the synoptic narrative: "...the story of Jesus' action in the temple now became the account of a prophetic act" that "foreshadowed the destruction of the Jewish temple in 70 CE."<sup>[7]</sup> Despite Jesus' attempt to restore the earthly temple to what God intended it to be, the first-century Jews didn't learn their lesson. The merchants and traders (Canaanites) returned to the temple,<sup>[8]</sup> and Jesus returned on the clouds to destroy it before that generation passed away (cf. [Matt. 24:2:1-28](#), [34:1-36](#)).

### No Room for Zealots

Apart from the word "*Canaanite*" being a synonym for "*merchant*" or "*trader*," its raw definition simply means "*zealous*." Mark, in particular, appears to be tracking on this *Zealot theme* in his version of the story. As Cecil Roth points out, Jesus makes a "*seemingly irrelevant*"<sup>[9]</sup> statement in Mark's rendition which is absent in Matthew and Luke: "*My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations*" ([Mk. 11:17:1-13](#)). Luke includes the clause about "*a house of prayer*," but drops the part about "*all nations*" ([Lk. 19:46:1-13](#)). That phrase is totally unique to Mark in the Gospel accounts of the temple-cleansing incident. As Roth observes, Mark goes "*out of his way to add this point, not mentioned by the other evangelists.*"<sup>[10]</sup> Mark's addition means that he's following the common synoptic thread condemning temple usage for financial gain ([Mk. 11:15:1-13](#)), while adding another layer to the thoroughness of Jesus' purging of that temple.<sup>[11]</sup> Mark's extra layer underscores the root meaning of "*Canaanite*" (i.e., *zealous*), from [Zechariah 14:21:1-13](#), when all the pieces are put in place.

This is evident in that Mark's statement about "*all nations*" follows immediately after another phrase unique to Mark. In the previous verse, Mark alone mentions the prohibition about carrying items into the temple: "*And he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple*" ([Mk. 11:16:1-13](#)). The word translated "*anything*" (*skeuos*)

is a common term which could refer to everything from household goods, to furniture, or even instruments on a ship.<sup>[12]</sup> But none of this makes much sense out of the context. How would commerce with common items such as these prevent people from the other “*nations*” from entering the house of the Lord? More to the point, what is the connection between these two phrases which Mark alone mentions? Why are they there, and what is Mark trying to tell us?

In his article, “**No More Zealots in the House of the Lord**,” Joel Marcus unlocks the seeming mystery. As Marcus demonstrates, *skeuos* “*can mean not only ‘pot’ or ‘utensil’*” but also ‘*weapon*.’”<sup>[13]</sup> The usage of the word in the Septuagint version of [Genesis 27:3](#)<sup>[14]</sup> and [Deuteronomy 1:41](#)<sup>[15]</sup> bears this out. The question is: who would carry weapons into the house of the Lord and why? The answer is: Jewish Zealots who wanted to keep the Gentiles out. This being the case, Jesus was taking aim at early, anti-Gentile revolutionaries who would eventually rise up in the revolt against Rome and restrict Gentile access to the temple through armed force.<sup>[16]</sup> Marcus puts it together: “*The Markan Jesus, then, attacks*” not only “*the mercantile desecration of the temple in the early thirties of the first century, but also prophetically rebukes the Zealotic desecration of it in the late sixties, close to Mark’s own time.*”<sup>[17]</sup>

### **The Zealots and the Abomination of Desolation**

The eventual “*Zealot desecration*” of the temple makes sense out of Jesus’ statement about the Abomination of Desolation “*standing in the holy place*” ([Matt. 24:15](#)<sup>[L]</sup>), “*where it should not be*” ([Mk. 13:14a](#)<sup>[L]</sup>). As Marcus points out, these words reflect the “*series of events*” culminating in “*the occupation of the Temple by Eleazar son of Simon in the winter of 67-68.*”<sup>[18]</sup> This was the signal for Jesus’ followers to flee Judea and run to the mountains ([Mk. 13:14b](#)<sup>[L]</sup>; [Matt. 24:16](#)<sup>[L]</sup>). At this point in time, “*the temple had failed to fulfill its destination: instead of becoming a religious center for all nations, it had become a garrison of Jewish insurrectionists.*”<sup>[19]</sup>

Those whom Jesus had chased out of the temple had not only returned to the temple, but they gained control of it as well. This would have certainly been considered an “*abomination*,” in every sense of the word. For example, Josephus lamented the fact that his own countrymen would have allowed these wicked murders to stand in the holy place with their blood-stained hands.<sup>[20]</sup>

This abomination within the city led to the desolation that came from without. At this point in time, Vespasian had begun his campaign but had not yet “*completely conquered the area around Jerusalem and thus isolated the city.*”<sup>[21]</sup> This harmonizes Luke with Matthew and Mark. For Luke, the signal was Jerusalem being surrounded by armies ([Lk. 21:21-22](#)<sup>[L]</sup>

). In short, Jesus' prophetically precise instructions were: When the Zealots enter the temple and the Romans start closing in, get out! When all was said and done, that temple didn't matter anymore anyway. God was building a new one ([1 Pt. 2:4-5](#)<sup>L</sup>).

### **The Living and Active Implications**

Like all that precedes it, all the key elements of Zechariah's final verses in this chapter find their fulfillment in the first century. As with the previous verses, however, this doesn't mean that [Zechariah 14:21](#)<sup>L</sup> doesn't have any application for us today. It does. God's Word is not dead and stagnant, it's living and active ([Heb. 4:12](#)<sup>L</sup>). It comes to life and speaks today, and Zechariah's words, as well as Jesus' actions in the temple, are still relevant.

With the earthly temple gone, we are now God's temple ([1 Cor. 3:16](#)<sup>L</sup>) and He is our temple ([Rev. 21:22](#)<sup>L</sup>). The reality of the New Covenant is the Lord in us and us in Him. As such, Jesus' actions in the physical temple demonstrate how we are to conduct ourselves today in this new spiritual temple, of which we are all a part. In this regard, the Apostle Paul warned against those who would use the word of God for greed ([1 Tim. 6:5-7](#)<sup>L</sup>). The implications are clear. While there is nothing wrong with commerce and financial gain, the visible expression of God's temple on earth (i.e., His Church) is no place for such things.

Likewise, the Zealot attitude of ethnic exclusion has no place in the true temple either. God is no respecter of persons ([Acts 10:34](#)<sup>L</sup>), and Jesus' death has purchased people from every tongue, tribe and nation ([Rev. 5:19-14](#)<sup>L</sup>). Trade and commerce indeed have their place, outside of God's house, and racism has no place – inside or outside of God's house. While the Abomination of Desolation is a thing of the past, any form of racial superiority is still an abomination in God's eyes, and believers should flee from it just as Jesus' followers fled to the mountains.

Every area of our life, every thought, and every action should be set apart for the glory of God. Through the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit ([1 Pt. 1:2](#)<sup>L</sup>), we should likewise strive to completely remove anything that God would consider to be abominable in our lives. From the "bells" of our "horses" to the "cooking pots" in our kitchen, all that we have, and all that we do, should be "Holy to the Lord" ([Zech. 14:20-21](#)<sup>L</sup>).

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[1] <https://burrosofberea.com/zechariah-14-part-7-zechariah-149-11/>

[2] Andrew M. Mutua, *Temple, Exile and Identity in 1 Peter* (New York, NY: T&T Clark, 2007), p. 74.

[3] Heiser, Michael S. *The Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible* (p. 333). Lexham Press. Kindle Edition.

[4] See: Marcus, Joel. “No More Zealots in the House of the Lord: A Note on the History of Interpretation of [Zechariah 14: 21](#).” *Novum Testamentum* 55.1 (2013): 23.

[5] See: De Jonge, Henk Jan. “The Cleansing of the Temple in [Mark 11: 15](#) and [Zechariah 14: 21](#).” *The book of Zechariah and its influence* (2003), p. 87. <https://scholarlypublications.universiteitleiden.nl/handle/1887/953>

[6] N.T. Wright, *Jesus and the Victory of God*,

[7] De Jong, “Cleansing of the Temple,” p. 96.

[8] As Jerry Bowyer points out, “...the temple was also a bank and not only a bank, but a bank that played a key role in a system created by the legal scholars, administered by the temple elite, and used by wealthy elites to extract wealth from the poor” (Bowyer, Jerry. *The Maker Versus the Takers: What Jesus Really Said About Social Justice and Economics* [p. 54]. Fidelis Books. Kindle Edition); see also: Hamilton, Neill Q. “Temple cleansing and temple bank.” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 83.4 (1964): 365-372.

[9] Roth, Cecil. “The Cleansing of the Temple and Zechariah xiv 21.” *Novum Testamentum* 4.Fasc. 3 (1960), p. 176.

[10] Roth, *Ibid.*, p. 178.

[11] For a scholarly resource tracing the Zealot movement all the way to the time of Herod I, see: Hengel, Martin. *The Zealots: investigations into the Jewish freedom movement in the period from Herod I until 70 AD*. T. & T. Clark, 1989.

[12] BDAG, pp. 824-825.

[13] Marcus, *Ibid.*, p. 27.

[14] <https://studybible.info/interlinear/Genesis%2027:3>

[15] <https://studybible.info/interlinear/Deuteronomy%201:41>

[16] See: Roth, p. 178.

[17] Marcus, *Ibid.*, p. 27.

[18] Marcus, Joel. “The Jewish War and the Sitz im Leben of Mark.” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 111.3 (1992): 441-462, p. 454. Regarding Eleazar, Josephus writes: “Eleazar, the son of Ananias the high priest, a very bold youth, who was at that time governor of the Temple, persuaded those that officiated in the Divine service to receive no gift or sacrifice for any foreigner. And this was the true beginning of our war with the Romans; for they rejected the sacrifice of Caesar on this account; and when many of the chief priests and

principal men besought them not to omit the sacrifice, which it was customary for them to offer for their princes, they would not be prevailed upon. These relied much upon their multitude, for the most flourishing part of the innovators [those favoring rebellion] assisted them; but they had the chief regard to Eleazar, the governor of the temple” (Josephus, War 2:17:2). For more information regarding this, see: Patricia Bailey, “Man of Sin –Theory: Preterist Paper 20,” <https://preteristpapers.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/12/020-Preterist-Papers-Man-of-Sin-Theory.pdf>

[19] De Young, “Cleansing of the Temple,” p. 96.

[20] *Wars*, 4.3.10.

[21] Marcus, “Jewish War,” p. 454; See also: Josephus, *Wars*, 4.9.1.

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## Summary

### **Main Thesis**

Cruickshank argues that most modern interpretations of Zechariah 14 are filtered through dispensational futurism and import ideas into the text that are not actually present, such as:

- The Antichrist
- A future Tribulation
- Gog and Magog
- A future Millennium
- End-of-the-world scenarios

He contends that Zechariah should be interpreted primarily through its own context and through first-century history, particularly the Roman-Jewish War (AD 66–70).

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### **Part 1 – Zechariah 14:1**

#### **"The spoil taken from you will be divided in your midst"**

Cruickshank identifies this with the abuses of **Gessius Florus**, the Roman procurator of Judea whose greed and public plundering helped spark the Jewish revolt.

His argument:

- Florus openly robbed and oppressed the Jews.
- Josephus describes Florus as publicly sharing in the spoils of robbery.
- The phrase "divided in your midst" fits Florus' actions remarkably well.
- Therefore Zechariah 14:1 refers to events immediately preceding the Jewish War.

He sees this as the opening stage of the AD 70 judgment.

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### **Part 2 – Zechariah 14:2**

#### **"I will gather all nations against Jerusalem"**

Cruickshank argues:

### **"All nations" does not mean every nation on earth.**

He surveys biblical usage and concludes that the phrase often means:

all the surrounding nations involved in a conflict

rather than every nation on the globe.

He identifies the fulfillment as:

- Rome
- Syrian auxiliaries
- Client kings
- Provincial troops from across the empire

who participated in the Jewish War.

### **The horrors of verse 2**

He argues that:

- Jerusalem was captured.
- Houses were plundered.
- Women were raped.
- Many Jews were exiled.

These details closely match both Josephus and 4 Ezra's descriptions of AD 70.

### **Connection to Jesus' Olivet Discourse**

One of the strongest themes in the book is that:

**Zechariah 14 and Matthew 24 / Mark 13 / Luke 21 are describing the same events.**

Cruickshank repeatedly argues that:

- Siege of the city
- Houses
- Women and children

appear in the same order in both Zechariah and Jesus' Olivet Discourse.

He concludes:

Jesus was essentially expanding and explaining Zechariah 14.

### **Exile and Deuteronomy 28**

He also links the exile of surviving Jews after AD 70 to:

#### **Deuteronomy 28:68**

arguing that Jewish captives were literally shipped to Egypt and sold into slavery, fulfilling Moses' warning.

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### **Part 3 – Zechariah 14:3**

#### **"The Lord will go forth and fight"**

This is often considered a major obstacle to preterism because the text says God fights in connection with Jerusalem's battle.

Cruickshank's solution is linguistic.

He argues that the Hebrew preposition is better translated:

"fight with those nations"

rather than

"fight against those nations."

He notes that:

- John Nelson Darby himself translated it "fight with those nations."
- The Septuagint supports that rendering.

Therefore:

- God was using Rome as His instrument of judgment.
- Just as He used Assyria and Babylon in the Old Testament.
- The Romans were His agents against covenant-breaking Jerusalem.

He then argues that Rome was later judged by God just as Assyria and Babylon were judged after serving as instruments of divine wrath.

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### **Part 4 and Beyond**

From the beginning of Part 4, Cruickshank turns to:

### **Zechariah 14:4**

"The Mount of Olives shall be split in two"

His method remains consistent:

- Compare Zechariah with the Olivet Discourse.
- Compare prophecy with first-century historical events.
- Interpret dramatic prophetic imagery covenantally rather than literally.
- Look for fulfillment in the transition from Old Covenant Jerusalem to New Covenant Christianity.

Although the excerpt provided cuts off early in Part 4, it is clear the rest of the book continues this verse-by-verse preterist framework.

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### **Overall Themes**

Cruickshank repeatedly emphasizes five major themes:

#### **1. Zechariah 14 was fulfilled in AD 70**

The entire chapter is interpreted through the Roman destruction of Jerusalem.

#### **2. Zechariah 14 and the Olivet Discourse are parallel prophecies**

Jesus is viewed as expanding and explaining Zechariah rather than discussing a separate future event.

#### **3. Dispensational futurism is mistaken**

The author argues that futurist interpretations import concepts into Zechariah that the chapter never mentions.

#### **4. AD 70 is a powerful apologetic**

Cruickshank believes the detailed correspondence between prophecy and history provides evidence for divine inspiration.

#### **5. Modern Israel is not the subject of Zechariah 14**

He repeatedly stresses that the prophecy concerned first-century Jerusalem and therefore does not predict future catastrophe for the modern Jewish state.

### **One-sentence summary**

**Bob Cruickshank's thesis is that Zechariah 14 is not a prophecy about a future Antichrist, Armageddon, or modern Israel, but rather a remarkably detailed prophecy of the Roman-Jewish War and the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, closely paralleling Jesus' Olivet Discourse and serving as evidence for the divine inspiration of Scripture.**