

Zechariah 14:1-9 – “The King is Coming!”

(Pew Bible Page: 799-800)

Intro: Tonight, we begin a brief mini-series of lessons for Advent – the time of year when we use the season celebrating Christ’s first coming to prepare our hearts for His second coming. When we look into a lectionary, we find that the first reading for Advent is the passage we have before us: Zechariah 14:1-9. It’s an appropriate text to use for preparing our hearts for the return of our King, because nothing in this chapter fits historical events that have thus far occurred on planet earth. Here we are looking into the future, seeing the events predicted around the second coming of our Lord Jesus and the setting up of His eternal kingdom. Can the Old Testament tell New Testament believers things we ought to know as we anticipate Christ’s return? You know that it can! So, let’s look into Zechariah’s prophecy to learn that...

Proposition: Since Jesus is coming again, we should live in hope in anticipation of His arrival.

Our study tonight will center on three thoughts: (vv.1-2) A Time of Trouble will Precede Jesus’ Return; (vv.3-5) A Time of Judgment will Accompany Jesus’ Return; (vv.6-9) A New Day will Dawn Following Jesus’ Return.

(vv.1-2) A Time of Trouble will Precede Jesus’ Return – The prophet Zechariah penned his book about the same time that Haggai was prophesying to the returned exiles in Jerusalem. You will remember that this group had gone through an extended time of discouragement after beginning the reconstruction of the temple and had let the project stop for a period of years. Haggai and Zechariah were raised up by God to speak words of encouragement to the people, urging them to complete the project they had begun so hopefully when they first returned from exile. And the people had responded. Now, near the end of his book, Zechariah was given in chapters 12-14 a prophecy of events that would bring the whole story of history to its proper conclusion. This final chapter looks right into the ultimate days of this present creation before Christ’s return and beyond it. In these two verses a time of great trouble is prophesied for Jerusalem and the nation of Judea. “The ultimate goal of all history is the Lord’s personal presence and reign. But before the literal and full manifestation of his kingdom, the earth must experience the throes of birth pangs,” says the Expositor’s Bible Commentary. As part of that terrible time, we are told that all the nations of the world will gather against Jerusalem with terrible effect. **Zechariah 14:1–2 - 1** *Behold, a day is coming for the LORD, when the spoil taken from you will be divided in your midst. 2* *For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city shall be taken and the houses plundered and the women raped. Half of the city shall go out into exile, but the rest of the people shall not be cut off from the city.* Remember, the Jewish people are still God’s people, even though at present they are living in rebellion and unbelief. It is natural for us to ask the question, “What is the meaning of this time of trouble for these people? Why is God going to bring this about?” The answer has been given to us in **Zechariah 12:7–13:1 - 7** *“And the LORD will give salvation to the tents of Judah first, that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem may not surpass that of Judah. 8* *On that day the LORD will protect the inhabitants of Jerusalem, so that the feeblest among them on that day shall be like David, and the house of David shall be like God, like the angel of the LORD, going before them. 9* *And on that day I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. 10* *“And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy, so that, when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for an only child, and weep bitterly over him, as one weeps over a firstborn. 11* *On that day the mourning in Jerusalem will be as great as the mourning for Hadad-rimmon in the plain of Megiddo. 12* *The land shall mourn, each family by itself: the family of the house of David by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of the house of Nathan by itself, and their wives by themselves; 13* *the family of the house of Levi by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of the Shimeites by itself, and their wives by themselves; 14* *and all the families that are left, each by itself, and their wives by themselves. 1* *“On that day there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness.* The answer to the question, “Why will God do this,” is that He will do it for the purification of His erring people. Through this terrible time of trouble, God will purify a believing remnant of His people, who will turn to Christ as the coming King.

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[DOCTRINAL POINT] God purifies His people before giving them ultimate relief.

[ILLUSTRATION] This is a principle we find at work over and over in our Bibles. **Zechariah 13:8-9 - 8** *In the whole land, declares the LORD, two thirds shall be cut off and perish, and one third shall be left alive. 9* *And I will put this third into the fire, and refine them as one refines silver, and test them as gold is tested. They will call upon my name, and I will answer them. I will say, ‘They are my people’; and they will say, ‘The LORD is my God.’”* This gives us an instance of the principle in the Old Testament but listen as well to this New Testament statement of this truth: **1 Peter 4:12-19 - 12** *Beloved, do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes upon you to test you, as though something strange were happening to you. 13* *But rejoice insofar as you share Christ’s sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed. 14* *If you are insulted for the name of Christ, you are blessed, because the Spirit of glory and of God rests upon you. 15* *But let none of you suffer as a murderer or a thief or an evildoer or as a meddler. 16* *Yet if anyone suffers as a Christian, let him not be ashamed, but let him glorify God in that name. 17* *For it is time for judgment to begin at the household of God; and if it begins with us, what will be the outcome for those who do not obey the gospel of God? 18* *And “If the righteous is scarcely saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?” 19* *Therefore let those who suffer according to God’s will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.* The witness is clear: New Testament or Old, God always purifies His people before He brings them ultimate relief.

[APPLICATION] As those who have put our faith in Jesus, we should keep this principle in mind as we approach the return of our King. Peter puts it best, *“Do not be surprised at the fiery trial when it comes to test you.”* This *“fiery trial”* has been the lot of Christians continuously since the very first days of the Church. From the first century to our own day, believers in Jesus have in various times and places faced tremendous tribulations because they belong to Christ. It is reasonable for us to assume, based on this example from Zechariah, that as the return of the King approaches, we too may experience suffering for Jesus’ sake. Whether one believes in a pre-tribulation “rapture” of the Church or not, the principle reasonably holds true: God always purifies His people before giving them ultimate relief. How should we prepare? Peter gives us the answer: **19** *Therefore let those who suffer according to God’s will entrust their souls to a faithful Creator while doing good.* The answer is, “Remain faithful.” God is working all things for our good, come what may.

(vv.3-5) A Time of Judgment will Accompany Jesus’ Return – “At the apex of the apparent Gentile victory, Jesus will return to fight for his people.”¹ **Zechariah 14:3-5 - 3** *Then the LORD will go out and fight against those nations as when he fights on a day of battle. 4* *On that day his feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives that lies before Jerusalem on the east, and the Mount of Olives shall be split in two from east to west by a very wide valley, so that one half of the Mount shall move northward, and the other half southward. 5* *And you shall flee to the valley of my mountains, for the valley of the mountains shall reach to Azal. And you shall flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the LORD my God will come, and all the holy ones with him.* There is no doubt that the Lord who returns to fight for His people is King Jesus for we can compare verse 4 with Acts 1:11 where we find Jesus’ return to the Mount of Olives predicted by the angels at His ascension, *“just as you have seen him go.”* Revelation 19:11-16 also supports this passage in Zechariah: **Revelation 19:11-16 - 11** *Then I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse! The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he judges and makes war. 12* *His eyes are like a flame of fire, and on his head are many diadems, and he has a name written that no one knows but himself. 13* *He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. 14* *And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. 15* *From his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, and he will rule them with a rod of iron. He will tread the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God the Almighty. 16* *On his robe and on his thigh he has a*

¹ James M. Boice.

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name written, King of kings and Lord of lords. When Jesus returns on that day, the Mount of Olives will split in two from east to west creating an escape route for the remnant of survivors. They will flee to some unknown point east of Jerusalem (“Azal”). When Jesus returns, He will be accompanied by “*all the holy ones,*” probably meaning, “both believers and unfallen angels.”² Jesus’ return in such glory will provoke a repentant turning to Him in faith among a believing remnant of Jews, and a complete destruction of all the nations marshalled against the returning King and His people.

[DOCTRINAL POINT] God will keep His promise to rescue the believing remnant of His people when Jesus returns to judge the nations.

[ILLUSTRATION] Don’t you love it when you’re watching a movie and just at the last moment, when all seems lost, unexpected deliverance comes for the oppressed innocents? There is something in us that just loves that scenario! We see it over and over in film after film. We thrill to examples of it in our history books. We read countless novels and short stories that feature the same paradigm: Sudden escape when all seems hopeless. Did God program that into our DNA so that when Jesus suddenly appears we’ll know “the thrill of victory,” while the rebellious know, “the agony of defeat”? Before Hollywood discovered the device, God had written it into His plan for His people’s ultimate deliverance.

[APPLICATION] What a comfort to our hearts to know that God has a storybook ending planned for His persecuted, beleaguered people when it’s all been said and done on planet earth! This too is for our encouragement. Jesus will come. Sin will be judged. Unbelief will be crushed. The people of God will be rescued from this present darkness. Daniel’s “*stone cut out of the mountain,*” will come and do it’s predicted work: **Daniel 2:44–45 - 44** *And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever, 45 just as you saw that a stone was cut from a mountain by no human hand, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold. A great God has made known to the king what shall be after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation sure.”* Hallelujah! The King is coming to finish the story properly in that day.

(vv.6-9) A New Day will Dawn Following Jesus’ Return – After this final battle and the return of the King, a new day of blessing will be known. In our verses this new day is characterized by Light, Water, the King, and in two verses we have not read, the City (vv.10-11).³ **Zechariah 14:6–9 - 6** *On that day there shall be no light, cold, or frost. 7* *And there shall be a unique day, which is known to the LORD, neither day nor night, but at evening time there shall be light. 8* *On that day living waters shall flow out from Jerusalem, half of them to the eastern sea and half of them to the western sea. It shall continue in summer as in winter. 9* *And the LORD will be king over all the earth. On that day the LORD will be one and his name one.*

(vv.6-7) Light – The blessing of light described here has given much trouble to commentators. Is this light literal or figurative? Since the rest of the text is obviously to be taken literally, there is no reason to see these verses as suddenly speaking figuratively. Are there other Scriptures that can help us understand? There are. The text tells us that this is “*a unique day, which is known to the Lord.*” Some commentators have seen in this phrase an echo of Genesis 1:3-5, the first day of creation. On that day God created light, but not the kind of light emanating from the sun, moon and stars, which were not called into being until day four of creation. This leads us from the first book of the Bible to the last, Revelation, which also describes a kind of light such as this in the New Heaven and New Earth: **Revelation 21:23–24 - 23** *And the city has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and its lamp is the Lamb. 24* *By its light will the nations walk,*

² Expositor’s Bible Commentary.

³ James M. Boice gave us these four points.

Zechariah 14:1-9 – “The King is Coming!”

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and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it. If we receive this as literal light, then, it seems best to understand this as referring to a new day of creation, corresponding to the first day of creation. On the other hand, if you prefer to take it figuratively, you might understand it this way: “In the hour of deepest gloom and blackness God causes the brightest light of his deliverance to shine forth for the distressed ones.”⁴ Either way, it’s a beautiful light!

(v.8) Water – Water in abundance is a great blessing in any land, but particularly in the land of Israel. On the day of restoration, water will flow abundantly from Jerusalem out to the whole world. This echoes other Scriptures which speak similarly of this in the Restoration (cf. Ezekiel 47:1-12; Revelation 22:1-2). “God is the source of this river, for he is the source of all spiritual blessings the nations need,” said James M. Boice.

(v.9) The King – This is the consummation of history. King Jesus will rule over all the earth (1 Cor. 15:24;27).

[DOCTRINAL POINT] God will bring history to a glorious conclusion under the reign of King Jesus.

[APPLICATION] Here are two encouraging truths to lean into:

1. The afflictions we are experiencing now are meant by God for the purification of our faith. We don’t have to wait until Jesus comes again to benefit from the lesson of verses 1-2. Certainly the generation living in the shadow of Christ’s coming will need to encourage themselves with this truth, but every Christian can receive help today by remembering that God’s purifying tribulations are meant as a preparation for enjoying His presence for all of eternity.

2. We live in hope of our final rescue at Christ’s second coming. Our hearts long for a proper ending to the story, one in which the true Hero steps onto the stage bringing rescue just when it looks as if all is lost. Encourage yourself tonight with this thought: The final glory Christ has saved you for is just around the corner, no matter what is going on in your life. Help is absolutely on the way. Be encouraged!

Conclusion: Advent is a time of comfort and hope for all who have put their faith in Jesus. The world around us is certainly getting darker. But we have a “sure and certain hope” just over the horizon. Jesus is purifying His people. He will come again to judge the rebellious world. A new day is just about to dawn; a day of light, water and the present King. Keep looking up. The King is Coming!

⁴ Feinberg.