

ST. JOHN'S LUTHERAN CHURCH

Red Bud, Illinois

Adult Bible Class

“What Will the End of the World Be Like?”

I. Old Testament Passages (*continued*)

D. Zechariah 14

Passages like this that look to the future, especially the end of the world, are full of symbolic language, using the shorthand the original readers knew to describe events that were far beyond their gaze. To interpret these passages literally (and not literalistically) we must recognize the symbolism. What is prophesied here is fulfilled in a combination of Jesus' first and second comings.

Verse 1: “day of the Lord”- This is how the minor prophets refer to the end times. The division of the plunder from God's people describes the persecution of the faithful that will take place in the last days before the return of Christ.

Verse 2: “all the nations” = the unbelievers of this world; “Jerusalem” = where God's people live, today, the Holy Christian Church; “fight/battle” = the attacks of unbelievers against the faith and the faithful. What was precious to them (city, house, women) is described as being violated by the nations to prophesy that what is precious to the church (worship, gospel, sacraments) will be violated by unbelievers in the last days. Such persecution will be too much for half of the believers to endure and they will fall away from the faith.

Matthew 24:22 (Jesus said) “If those days had not been cut short, no one would survive, but for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened.”

Verse 3: The Lord will not allow this attack against His people to last unchallenged. He will come to our defense and rescue.

Verse 4: “on that day” This is the first of seven uses (biblical # of completeness) of this phrase in this chapter. This is the last day, the Day of God's Judgment. The Mount of Olives is east of Jerusalem across the Kidron Valley from the temple. It was from the Mount of Olives that Jesus entered into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. The split of this mountain again is symbolic, emphasizing the cosmic change that will occur with the return of Christ.

Verse 5: Azel is an unknown location, thought to be on the opposite side of the Mount of Olives. The earthquake mentioned took place in 760 BC, almost 250 years before the time of Zechariah's writing. The Jordan River Valley sits on a north-south fault line.

How is the end-time described here? “The Lord my God will _____, and all the _____ with Him.”

Verses 6-7: The second use of the phrase “on that day” describes something completely different (“unique”) from what this world has ever experienced. There will be no more light or time as we know it. That will be replaced by a different light.

Revelation 22:5 There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign forever and ever.

Verse 8: This is the third use of the phrase “on that day.” The earthly city Jerusalem that was so dependent upon other sources for physical water now will become the source of living water, so much so that it will flow both east (in the direction of the Dead Sea) and west (in the direction of the Mediterranean Sea). This supply of water will not be limited to certain seasons, but will constantly flow. *John 4:14 (Jesus said) “Whoever drinks the water I give him will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.”*

Verse 9: The fourth use of the phrase “on that day” describes how Judgment Day will show and prove that the LORD (“Yahweh”) is the one and only God, the name that is above all names.

Verses 10-11: While all around it will be turned into a wasteland (“Arabah”) the entire city of Jerusalem (God’s faithful people) will be raised up (exalted) and inhabited. Unlike the earthly Jerusalem, this spiritual city will never be destroyed. Its people will live secure for eternity. That is the good news.

Verses 12-15: Now comes bad news for the unbelievers (“the nations that fought against Jerusalem”). What God has in store for them is described as a plague with results more gruesome than the special effects of a Hollywood horror movie. Now the fifth use of “on that day” will describe the panic of unbelievers facing judgment. They will turn on each other, attacking one another much like the Midians did when surprised by Gideon and the Israelites in Judges 7. Even those closest (“Judah”) to the church (“Jerusalem”) will fight against it. Yet that which the unbelievers relied upon as most precious (“wealth”) will prove useless to them. There will be no escape for their means of transportation (horses, mules, camels, donkeys, etc.) will be similarly affected by the Lord’s plague.

Verse 16: The faithful believers from this unbelieving world will now gather to worship the King, the LORD Almighty. This eternal worship is described with reference to the most prominent festival of the post-exilic years, the Feast of Tabernacles (booths). This was the fall harvest festival.

Verses 17-19: How is God’s curse upon the unfaithful described? _____

Rain is necessary for life to continue. That area is especially dependent upon regular rains.

What nation is singled out as being an enemy of God’s people? _____

Why single out these people when speaking of punishment? _____

Verses 20-21: Now back to the good news. The sixth use of “on that day” emphasizes the holiness that will exist when the Lord returns. There will be no more distinctions between what is profane (earthly, secular) and that which is sacred (heavenly, holy). “Holy to the Lord” was engraved upon the gold plate that was on the turban of the high priest (Exodus 28:36-38). In the earthly temple the sacred bowls were considered more valuable than the cooking pots. In the eternal temple there will be no such distinction. The last use of “on that day” promises that there will not be a Canaanite in the house of the Lord. This original inhabitant of Israel was considered morally or spiritually unclean. The NIV note says “merchant” and the ESV translates it as “trader.” We remember the lucrative business that took place in the temple courts against which Jesus reacted by driving them out in John 2 and Matthew 21.