**The Most Epic Day**

**Zechariah 14 (ESV)**

December 5, 2021

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We are in the book of Zechariah, just finishing up. We’re in the last chapter, Zechariah 14. We’ll have one message from Pastor Ritch next week to clean up the mess I make today. (Laughter!) He will try to summarize and wrap it all up. I say that because in honest seriousness, this is a difficult chapter, and yet, a glorious chapter. The best part really is reading it, and I’ll do my best to give the sense. But this is the best part; to hear straight from God and to do that together.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

One word we like to use a lot is the word “epic.” It means big or grand, impressive or remarkable. We use it in sports to talk about an epic match or an epic moment. We use it in film to talk about epic shows and movies. We use it on vacations to talk about epic trips or views. This summer, my family had the privilege of going to Yosemite in California. You spend time on the valley and you sit there and you look up at El Capitan thousands of feet up. Then you take a couple hours drive to the top of the peak and you go to a viewing point. You see the sun set over the valley and the view is so grand. It’s so epic. It almost has a gravitational force of its own, drawing you into it. You feel overwhelmed because you’re being sucked into the massiveness of this view. So much so that it has this gravitational force on your kids and they’re being sucked towards it as well. Then you have a newfound terror, or at least your wife does. (Laughter!) It’s just immense!

We went to the Grand Canyon, too. The kids appreciated it. You go and you look. We’re sitting there and they’re like, “Alright. Are you ready to go? What are you doing?” We’re going to appreciate it. We’re going to walk over here and look at it from this angle. They’re like, “Why? We already saw it.” It’s so big that it kind of take a little bit of maturity to appreciate it, doesn’t it? You can’t just see it. It’s too big to just see. You experience it over and over. It’s just immense!

It’s described about another view that is even more impressive, by this real-life astronaut who talks about the view from space. He says there is this “sense of wonder and awe at the majesty of the reality of the rest of the universe from seeing it firsthand.” He said, “I’ve been around the world 2,650 times or so, and I’ve never once seen enough of it.” During his first spacewalk, he says, “While I was outside in the dark, we actually were far enough south that we went through the earth’s aurora. It was so fantastically beautiful, this raw artistic human experience. To look at the northern lights is like magic, but to be in them, to surf on them, that’s beyond magic. It’s surreal.” He talks about this beauty in the environment that is so magnificent that when you’re looking at it, he says you talk in hushed tones. “Like when you walk into a giant forest or the most beautiful cathedral on earth, you don’t talk in a big brassy voice. You’re reverential of where you are. There is a reverence and understanding of both the miniscule nature of being a human in the enormity of the universe and the enormity of being able to see it in that way. There is a huge awareness that we have of our ability to try to interpret it and understand it.” This view that transcends all you know about space and time is unfathomable and so epic that it compelsyou to be reverent.

That’s the sort of view God gives us here in Zechariah 14. It’s like standing on the edge of a mountain summit peering into a vision of the future. To give you a sense of the scale, think about Martin Luther. He was a guy that usually wasn’t short on words. He had a lot to say. He wrote a couple commentaries. In the first one he wrote about Zechariah, he gets to the end of chapter 13 and the commentary just ends. There is nothing on chapter 14. What’s going on there? Well, he wrote another commentary. When you get to chapter 14, it starts off this way. “Here, in this chapter, I give up. For I am not sure what the prophet is talking about.” For Luther to express that kind of intimidation, it would do well for us to be cautious as we peer over the same edge for a closer look. That’s what we’re facing. Even if we’re intimidated by the prospect, we still can’t help but be amazed and even intrigued at the epic scale and the magnitude of this vision of the future that we’re being shown.

The original hearers, the people of Zechariah’s day, needed hope. They had returned back from exile but were still under the rule of enemy nations. They’re supposed to be the special promised people of God. They rebuilt this temple. It’s not what it once was. They’re sitting there thinking, “Is this all there is?” They’re waiting. They’re suffering. There is opposition and they’re struggling to persevere. They’re starting to drift. Do you ever feel like that? Faith was just taking hits and they were starting to wander. They’re wondering, “Is this it? Have we made it? Have we reached the Promised Land? Is the movie over?” Any story-teller knows that the most epic tales are always the ones headed toward this ultimate showdown between good and evil. For a story to be truly epic, for a story to have that kind of scale, then before it gets good it has to get bad. It has to get really bad.

We were doing family devotions through the book of Matthew for a little while and we got to chapter 24. Jesus is talking about this future and the end of the world. It got kind of serious. One of my children was asking me a lot of questions. Then she said, “This is scary. Can we read something else?” It was true. It was scary. It was sobering. But we couldn’t make it through fast because she kept asking all these questions. No matter how intimidating the view is, there is something about the enormity of the end of the world and God’s plan that is just irresistibly compelling. We’re scared by it, but we keep looking into it. Story after story is told, book after book is written, movie after movie is made and it’s all about the last day, the final battle, the epic end. In the best parts of all of them, they’re all just borrowing from this, the truth. Each movie or story is just teasing us with the tiniest taste and provoking this appetite for more.

You can even look at the infinity of the night sky and just let it weigh on you, and it will prompt this question. Is there a God epic enough to resolve the tension of this life? Is there a God big enough, awesome enough, epic enough to resolve the tension, the brokenness, the sin, the suffering that we feel in this life? Is there a God such as this, who is really as epic as He claims to be, even as epic as He needs to be?

There is only one hero great enough to do so. There is only one author who can write such a story, one star who could fill a role so great. There is only one who could amaze us with such wonder and comfort us with such resolution. There is only one God epic enough to resolve the tension we face in life, and He is only seen and known through faith, those trusting the words given to us right here. Here, we read God’s claim about the end and discover that when He says something will be epic, He never disappoints. That’s exactly what he reveals about this future day to come. There is an epic final battle. In the darkest moments of life, on your very worst days, passages like this remind us that those who trust God must never forget that a new day is coming. A future day is coming. Never forget that the king will return. Only a God this awesome could resolve a tension this great. This is a vision of the epic plan where He is going to save His people and show how truly awesome He is.

The question is how does He do it? How does He show His awesomeness? Where is this all headed? What should we expect? How does that give us hope? This passage gives us a few things to look forward to. There are some things to anticipate that the people of Zechariah’s day and we can look ahead and say we have hope now because of what is to come. What should we look forward to? What should we expect? Let’s look at a few aspects to this day. The first is how it starts.

**A Desperate Trouble (14:1-2)**

It’s a trouble that causes us to be desperate. Maybe even a different word I’ll throw in there is disturbing. There is a disturbing trouble that He allows. He sets the stage and he builds the need. He is going to build a need for a Savior because of this disturbing trouble, this upsetting trouble that is hard to swallow.

Usually, we avoid disturbing content. But there are times when it’s appropriate to reflect on it. Every year usually there are classes that will sit down around September 11 and they will watch some films. They’ll read some transcripts. They’ll listen to some screams and the explosions that took place and see the damage that was done. The content is unavoidably disturbing. Most of the things you watch will even state that fact at the beginning. They will often write three words: Viewer Discretion Advised. Yet we know as disturbing as it is, it’s important enough to recall. Usually, these kinds of things deal with the past. But there is some content, like the text before us, that deal actually with the future. That can be even more disturbing.

Before we dive into this chapter, I’ll give a short word on interpretation. This chapter, as we saw Luther said, is one that can be difficult and one that is often controversial. Most would agree that it’s filled with allusions and symbolic expressions and this genre that talks about the future. We’ve talked about the difficulty of looking through binoculars into the future and seeing the layers and trying to piece it together. But even so, there is a good amount of controversy and debate over how you understand it. Really, how you read the rest of Scripture also helps to shape what you view here.

I read one article that talked about seven different ways to understand it. Then when I was reading it, he was breaking those ways into even more ways. So I’ll just kind of try to group it into two. One way is to read this passage figuratively. The other is, and this may be a little hard or unfair, but I don’t have a better word right now. It is to read it naturally.

There are times when figurative language is appropriate. But if you read it figuratively and that is sort of the defining feature, then the language is very symbolic and you should expect not to experience or see this kind of event take place in the future. Not in the actual place, not in the actual ways that you’re reading in a concrete, sort of wooden sense. No, this is much more figurative and maybe describes either sort of the way that the church struggles and fights in the world and the way that God works. There are a variety of ways that you can understand, but there is that sense.

Then there are some that would understand this in, I’ll say the natural reading, but that’s just to say that as the readers of Zechariah’s day would look, they’re expecting that God is going to come. He is going to rescue ethnic Israel. There is going to be an actual time and an event where this takes place and where these things happen and there is a rescue.

Of those who understand it in that sense, there are some who would say this has already happened. It already happened in some big war in the past. They kind of try to fit this in, but I don’t think that is helpful or correct.

Others might say that this is an actual great battle where God rescues His people as He promised. He rescues ethnic Israel from real attack. There are still some questions about exactly when the battle takes place and what happens before and after. We don’t have time this morning to get into it, but I’ll let Pastor Ritch maybe weigh into that if he wants to. But I think that there is agreement once you say this is an event. This is what is going to take place and it’s in the future. The rest of Scripture will have to inform us on what happens before and after, but that’s how we’re going to read it.

We’re dealing with something the Old Testament prophets called “the day of the LORD.” It’s a special term that refers to possibly even a period of time. Like you would say “the day of space travel,” it’s sort of this time or defining characteristic of a moment and a period that belongs to God. As one would say this is the age of man, this will be the day of God, the day of the LORD, the day of Yahweh. What is defined by this day is God’s arrival and He is bringing judgment and justice and rescue to glorify His name. It’s talked about sometimes as a day of Jacob’s trouble or his distress. Jacob is representing Israel, that name. So this is a time when Israel will be in great distress. God will keep His promises. As we think about this day, it starts here in this passage with some very disturbing trouble.

There are two realities that stand out about this trouble that make it particularly disturbing. The first is how bad it is and the second is why it happens. It’s disturbing because of how bad it is. Look at their suffering, the suffering that God’s people endure, the indignities that they suffer. You see they suffer humiliation that is disgraceful.

Remember the context. Back in chapters 12 and 13, there is this battle. Jerusalem is under attack. All the nations have rallied against it. There is this desperate cry to God. They recognize the Messiah that we rejected actually is the true king. There is a question about what is happening, but it might be replaying sort of what happened in that moment and unpacking it a little bit more for us. But this is a desperate moment where there is sort of a conquering and then

***1*** *Behold, a day is coming for the LORD, when the spoil taken from you will be divided in your midst.*

Their stuff is being handed out. It’s a disgraceful humiliation. They suffer an opposition that is global.

***2*** *For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle,*

It’s disgraceful, it’s global, and it’s forceful.

*and the city shall be taken*

It’s a conquering that is forceful. They suffer a plundering that is personal.

*and the houses plundered*

They suffer an assaulting that is brutal.

*and the women raped.*

This is disturbing. It’s sort of that picture of enemy soldiers coming in and just wreaking havoc on a land; entering and taking, assaulting. It’s disturbing. Here in verse 2, they suffer an exiling that is substantial.

*Half of the city shall go out into exile, but the rest of the people shall not be cut off from the city.*

You look at how bad it is, their suffering. We could talk more, but it’s enough to say this is disturbing. It is an epic trouble that is very disturbing. But not only how bad it is, look at why it’s happening. Beyond their suffering, you see God’s sovereignty. You can’t help but notice that how much the people are going to suffer, despite how bad it is, God is not afraid to show He is in complete control. Look what He says there. It says in verse 1 that this day exists for Him and it’s brought about because of Him. This is His day. It’s going to bring about His glory.

Then look in verse 2. Who is the one who gathers these nations? God gathers. God is the one who is initiating this occurrence. Now, He is not the agent. They are the ones who are coming and bringing about this great suffering directly, but God is the one who gathers them. There is a sovereignty in the midst of their suffering. Despite how bad it is, you look at who is in control. God is there. It helps us appreciate how disturbing this trouble truly is.

We’re on the mountaintop. We don’t have time to fathom the depths of how these two things interplay. But the point is, as we look at the way that God works and how He begins, He makes sure that we know we need Him. He isn’t afraid to let His people hit rock bottom or suffering if it drives them to Him. The kind of people God rescues are the people who need Him. God’s path to hope doesn't mean it will be without difficulty. In fact, it’s very much the opposite. We don’t treat it lightly. In the book of Amos, he says

**Amos 5:18** Woe to you who desire the day of the LORD! Why would you have the day of the LORD? It is darkness, and not light,

He says to be careful. This is serious! It reminds us of what is described in Scripture as the pangs of childbirth. There is a point we’re looking forward to, yes, but it is painful. It’s going to be difficult and we don’t treat it lightly. In fact, we’re told how it begins in the book of Ezekiel. We see a time of darkness and God says

**Ezekiel 9:6** …And begin at my sanctuary.”

Start with my people! The apostles understood this. Paul and Barnabas said in Acts

**Acts 14:22** …and saying that through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.

This is going to be painful to get there. Peter says

**1 Peter 1:6–7** In this you rejoice, though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been grieved by various trials, so that the tested genuineness of your faith—more precious than gold that perishes though it is tested by fire—may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.

It’s going to bring glory to Him, but it’s going to be hard on the way to it. In fact, he says

**1 Peter 4:17** 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?

The great day, God’s day begins with a disturbing trouble. We understand that it starts here. There is pain and suffering. We see it here in Israel and their plight. We understand it even in our own lives. Before it’s going to get better, it’s going to get worse. If you face all the pains of life and you’re wondering, “Is this all there is? Is this the great thing?” We come and we sing about Jesus and then we go home and we’re still sick. We go home and we still have a relational conflict. We go home and our child has still not come back. We face that and we think, “Is this all there is?” The answer is, not even close!

It begins with a time of trouble. God’s path to hope doesn’t mean it’s without difficulty. In fact, it’s very much the opposite. We’re facing sickness. We’re facing diagnosis. We’re facing brokenness. We’re facing loss. But this is not the end. There will be the pangs of childbirth, but there is a point that is ahead. When things get tough and everyone starts running away and fleeing, when everyone is just bolting, there is one who isn’t running away; not this time. There is one who arrives, who turns, and who digs in his feet to draw the line and fight. From where it begins in the trouble, now we see what God does through

**A Dramatic Rescue (14:3-11)**

You see the rescue He performs. It’s a rescue that is uniquely dramatic. Dramatic means impressive or sudden or striking. It stands out. It makes you feel something. It leaves an impression.

Often I’ll walk into a room and there will be ESPN classics. Have you ever seen those? They’re replaying a game that is sort of a classic from some time before. You can watch these games and they seem boring. One team is just winning, winning, winning, winning and this other team is just losing, losing, losing. You think this is terrible! This is a bad game. But you realize there must be some reason why it’s on the classics. Then it keeps going and you think something amazing must be about to happen. The drama builds even though you know that it’s supposed to be good. You know the team is going to win. You’re kind of drawn into the suspense, like, what’s going to happen? Can they really come back? That’s what happens with a good story.

You’ve watched the same movie a hundred times, but the situation gets so dramatic, so desperate that your hands are starting to sweat. You’re like, “I know that they’re going to win. I know it’s okay, but I’m worried.” The drama is so real that you realize that only an amazing hero, an amazing salvation could bring about hope and the win.

Does God ever lose? I hope you don’t say, yes. No! He wins! Yet, with such a God, He creates a situation so dramatic that we have to wonder, can God really win this time? Maybe this time is the time He can’t do it. We look at it, we’re standing back from Zechariah and we think He’s just going to come and save them. But then we think about our own lives. Do you ever start to feel like maybe this is the time where God can’t do it? “Maybe this suffering, He is not able to rescue. Maybe this sin in my life, He is not able to forgive. Maybe this relationship, He is not able to restore. This is the thing that outdoes God.” He loves to bring about such a dramatic rescue to prove that He is an epic Savior. It’s in His name. He’s a Savior and He will not be outdone. Look at the drama here. Like any great hero sequence, there are a few angles that we’re given to kind of show how dramatic this rescue really is. Look at His arrival and why He arrives, what He arrives to do.

***3*** *Then the LORD will go out and fight against those nations as when he fights on a day of battle.*

God shows up to fight. That phrase “as when he fights on a day of battle” is sort of like a trigger. God is going to do what He does. Do you know what He does? It’s intended to kind of bring you back to the highlight reel, where you look at all the things and you remember all the ways that God has rescued. This chapter kind of unfolds sort like a remix of the greatest hits of Yahweh and all the things that He does. He starts to drop these little hints and symbols and foreshadows to remind you of how a great a Savior He truly is. Just like a superhero, when all of a sudden you’re getting flashbacks to those songs and themes and signature moves and you’re like, “Oh yeah! You’re in trouble, now.” That’s the idea. Whether it was in the exodus, when Yahweh rescued His people and split the Red Sea, that happened. In 2 Chronicles chapter 20 they were told

**2 Chronicles 20:17** You will not need to fight in this battle. Stand firm, hold your position, and see the salvation of the LORD on your behalf, O Judah and Jerusalem.’ Do not be afraid and do not be dismayed. Tomorrow go out against them, and the LORD will be with you.”

**2 Kings 19:35** And that night the angel of the LORD went out and struck down 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians. And when people arose early in the morning, behold, these were all dead bodies.

You can’t even make a superhero movie about that. It would be too unrealistic. But God is saying, “That’s how I fight. Don’t mess around!” You can appreciate it a little bit in it’s own right, but when you go back and you watch all the old episodes and battles, then when this final one happens, you actually see the connections and you go, “They don’t even know what’s coming!”

Now, look at the context behind this rescue that makes it even more dramatic. It heightens the drama. You see what’s at stake in terms of the context of where this is of what’s happened before, of what’s been foretold; so the place, the past, the promises. The context is important. There is a cartoon movie about a historical event where this nation is fighting. There is one villain who comes in and he conquers this village. In that village, there is this moment where there is this little doll. The doll falls down and he picks that doll up and it represents some little girl. Then the people come and they see this devastating destruction. Later on, they come and encounter that villain and all of a sudden, you see the doll again. Because of what you know, the context just floods you with all this meaning.

Here, the context of this place, of the past and what has happened, of the promises that come, it should flood you with understanding of what is happening and heighten the drama. In terms of the place, the geography, here, especially when it comes to battle, geography matters. In looking at history and wars, geography matters. Here, the people in Jerusalem are conquered and the people are exiled. They’re fleeing toward this place, the Mount of Olives. This is the place.

Often this would be a place that would prevent them from escaping. It could keep them safe, but when they were conquered, now all of a sudden, they’re stuck and they can’t get out. It was representing often a place of defeat. Whether it was David or Zedekiah, it was a place where they would go and they would be defeated. In fact, it was a place where there was a man from Nazareth who liked to go there off and on. If you want a fun study, go back and look at what took place on the Mount of Olives and it will give you some context. Why would Jesus be interested in what happened there? Here, they’re at the Mount of Olives and they’re conquered.

***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.*

So there was an earthquake. We don’t have that recorded, but it’s referenced in Amos 1:1 that there was some earthquake and they ran out. Uzziah was a king. He was a decent king, but he had a moment where he thought, “I want to be like the priest.” He crossed the line and did what he wasn’t supposed to do as a king, to try to be in the line of the priesthood and offer some incense. As a result, he was judged. God said, “No, you’re not a priest. You’re a king. There is a difference.” So you have the prophet Isaiah there. You have Uzziah. There is this separation. You recall that in Uzziah, but all of a sudden, here is something going on. There is someone who is showing up that somehow, we don’t have to worry about that division. Somehow there is someone who is eliminating and being able to fulfill both king and priest and prophet. Here is something happening that is much more special. It’s something that actually is going to bring hope.

This earthquake is going to be so dramatic that it’s going to split this mountain and create a valley. So God creates the valley. You think the Red Sea was a big deal with the crossing of the sea? Now we’re going to cross the mountain. He split the mountain and they run through. He calls it “the valley of my mountains.” He creates it right there and they run through this valley. It brings to mind so many passages where we’re looking forward to God rescuing. Psalm 46 is a really awesome one when you look at it. They’re looking forward to these promises. This is the place. You understand the past, but you think about the promises of the psalms. Especially think about this specific one in Acts chapter 1.

Jesus has come. He’s already shown that He is the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for the sheep. He came riding on a mule. He came arriving not like Alexander the Great. He actually laid down His life. He died for the sins of His people and He rose again. The disciples are ready to go. They start to walk and where do they go? What place does He lead them to? He takes them to the Mount of Olives. What do you think they are thinking? “You came back from the dead! We’re going to do it!”

**Acts 1:6–10** So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. And while they were gazing into heaven as he went,

It reminds you of Zechariah chapters 12 and 13, where they’re looking and they see the one they had pierced. Here’s Jesus. He goes up in the sky. They’re looking up and they’re kind of not taking the mission because they’re still hoping. The angels come

**Acts 1:10-12** …behold, two men stood by them in white robes, and said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.” Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day’s journey away.

You have this sense of, “We were right there,” but He’s like, “Not yet.” But this in Zechariah is describing when that does happen. Zechariah says in verse 5

*Then the LORD my God will come, and all the holy ones with him.*

This is describing when He arrives, He returns to make war and bring judgment. Jesus says of this time

**Mark 8:38** For whoever is ashamed of me and of my words in this adulterous and sinful generation, of him will the Son of Man also be ashamed when he comes in the glory of his Father with the holy angels.”

Not only the angels, there is a description that He is going to come with those who are with Him, those who have believed in Him. In Revelation there is a description where the heavens opened and there is this white horse. Does it sound familiar from Zechariah?

**Revelation 19:11–16** 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. 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. He is clothed in a robe dipped in blood, and the name by which he is called is The Word of God. And the armies of heaven, arrayed in fine linen, white and pure, were following him on white horses. 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. On his robe and on his thigh he has a name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.

This is Jesus. In fact, what He comes and brings is a judgment that is also disturbing. You recognize this rescue is going to bring judgment and deliverance. Here in Revelation 19, you see a big stack of bodies.

**Revelation 19:17-19** Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and with a loud voice he called to all the birds that fly directly overhead, “Come, gather for the great supper of God, to eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and their riders, and the flesh of all men, both free and slave, both small and great.” And I saw the beast and the kings of the earth with their armies gathered to make war against him who was sitting on the horse and against his army.

This is a description of what is going on. In fact, as you look at this, it gets even more dramatic. You look at what happens here. There are some marvels that take place that are almost like they’re affecting physics, in a way; light and space and matter and gravity. Once you start affecting those things, how do you even measure time? Think about time and how we measure time with the passing of light. Whatever you think about these things, look at what is going on. There is like a new state of light.

***6*** *On that day there shall be no light, cold or frost.*

There is a translation question there. The idea I think is that the stars are congealing. There is some kind of crusting over of the light. It’s hard to understand or to describe what is going on.

***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.*

This is something strange. There is a new nature to what’s going on with light, here. If you read in Revelation and if you read in Isaiah chapter 60 you can see some descriptions about how something strange is going to happen with the luminaries there and that God Himself is going to bring light. It’s overwhelming! Then there is a new state going on here with the water.

***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.*

Somehow, the waters are going to come out. Ezekiel talks about this living water that is going to come forth from Jerusalem. It reminds us of Genesis chapter 2 in Eden, where there was water rushing out. Here all of a sudden, we’re back to creation. Light is being affected. There are these waters flowing. We might expect that land would be impacted, too. In fact, it is. The land is being leveled. In fact, Jerusalem is being raised up almost like a crown of the earth and there are these jewels. Jesus is the ruler and the people there of the city are representing the jewels. There is something strange going on here, affecting the land. In fact, just like in creation, when we had Adam who was said to have dominion over the earth, now all of a sudden, here we have the true king.

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

It brings back that idea of the Shema, that this is Yahweh, this is the God. In fact, this is the one that has been given the name that is above every name, God says in Philippians chapter 2.

**Philippians 2:9–11** Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

This is Jesus, Yahweh, the one who saves. This is described in many different ways. Trying to fit it all together is quite a task. You look at Daniel, you look at Revelation, you look at Ezekiel, you look at Isaiah. With all these passages, you’re trying to put them together. We don’t have time to work through it all, but I’ll leave it there to be amazed. Just like you look at the Grand Canyon, you just kind of soak in it and appreciate Whoa! Something profound is taking place here. It’s almost like a reverse triumphal entry. You see what had happened in Jerusalem and how He was rejected. But He says there is a day coming and here it is. It’s a beautiful day; a great rescue. This is the day that they had waited for.

The idea is God saves big time. When He saves, as a Savior, it’s big time. Nothing gets in the way of His rescue. He’s going to do it right and He will not disappoint. This same God will make everything new in the end. Just like Jesus says in the end. “Behold, I make all things new.” If you want some hope today, go ahead and read Revelation 21, the first couple verses there. You can see what He promises and it gives context of what is taking place here.

Just like if you have a favorite artist or musician or conductor or director, they take their best designs and they say, “I’m going to actually do a design for you. I’m going to write a song for you. I’m going to do it for you personally.” That’s the kind of Savior that God is. The majesty and gravity of God is pervading the earth and pressed out.

The glory of God is described as weight. It’s something that you feel, like a weight. It’s an impression. Just like if you’re walking along the beach and you see a footprint in the sand. Or if you look and you see a dinosaur footprint, you go, “Whoa! That’s immense!” Here is God, but He’s leaving an impression where everybody goes, “Whoa!” That’s the kind of God He is. In fact, this God who rescues gives us these pictures to remind us He is the same kind of God who rescues even today. Paul talks about these moments of rescue. In 1 Corinthians 10 he says those moments happened to remind us to trust God when we need to be rescued.

**1 Corinthians 10:13** No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man. God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your ability, but with the temptation he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

He is a God who rescues. I don’t know what temptation you’re facing right now, what sin that is plaguing you, the sin from the last week, the sin that lies ahead. Or what suffering you’ve been under for hours, for days, for weeks, for months, for years. God is able to rescue. He can move mountains. He will move mountains and He is calling us to trust Him. How we trust Him now in the little things of our own lives is a preview of what is to come. Everybody watching gets a little trailer and gets to go, “Wait a second! I want to see that.” It’s coming! He is a rescuer. But there is a serious nature to this. You look at verses 12-19 and you see

**A Devastating Judgment (14:12-19)**

There is a judgment for those who reject this rescue or this Savior. This is those who say, “No, I don’t want that. I don’t need a Savior. I’m going to do it on my own. We see a devastating judgment. It is shocking, distressing. It is terrible! It leaves you undone. It is devastating.

When we think about devastating, we’ve had the coronavirus, something that changed our lives. It’s a serious thing. We understand that. But it is nothing compared to some of the plagues that have faced humanity in the past. You look at times where populations, cities have been wiped out, millions of people. You read things where people wrote, “We see death coming into our midst like a black smoke.” Or, “Never did so many husbands and wives die together. Never did so many parents carry their children with them to the grave.” Those were devastating times, and that’s just in a fallen world.

Here, the judgment of God is devastating upon a people in particular for a very specific reason of rebellion. That’s not all times. There is just the general fallenness. But there are some times we know it’s very specific. We’ve seen that in the book of Exodus on Egypt. Here, we see another plague that is given by God specifically for these who are rebelling. You see the nature of this plague.

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

The areas it affects are the flesh, the eyes, the tongues. They rot. So the eyes that have looked on Israel with lust to take over Jerusalem, and haughty eyes that think that they’re better, the flesh that sought to take over, the tongues that have cursed God, all of these rot. They no longer have those senses to attack. How quickly it affects them is while they’re still standing on their feet. This is graphic! You see the reach of this plague. It’s all those who are waging war against Jerusalem, fighting against God’s city.

***15*** *And a plague like this plague shall fall on the horses, the mules, the camels, the donkeys, and whatever beasts may be in those camps.*

This plague is going to give way to a panic.

***13*** *And on that day a great panic from the LORD shall fall on them, so that each will seize the hand of another, and the hand of the one will be raised against the hand of the other.* ***14*** *Even Judah will fight at Jerusalem. And the wealth of all the surrounding nations shall be collected, gold, silver, and garments in great abundance.*

They start to see what is happening and thinking, “I don’t want that sickness on me,” and they are going to start killing each other. They’re going to start striking each other to make sure that they don’t get affected by this plague. The whole army will attack one another. Judah is going to join in the fight. They’re going to see what is happening. God’s people unite and then there will be a plundering where the wealth of all the nations is going to be collected. It’s going to be gold, silver, garments, a lot of stuff.

It has to be so, because God prophesied that it would. He said the latter glory of this is going to be better. There is going to be a great accumulation of riches. God is going to bring it back. So we know that is going to take place. Look at Micah chapter 4 and you can read about some of what God says. It’s a fulfillment of that prophecy. Then it’s going to give way to a pilgrimage that is going to take place.

***16*** *Then everyone who survives of all the nations that have come against Jerusalem shall go up year after year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Booths.*

Where have we heard that idea of the Feast of Booths? Remember when Zechariah had that nightmare? He saw the myrtle trees and was thinking of probably the Feast of Booths. Just like pine trees make us think of the Christmas holiday, sort of the end of the year celebration, when you see myrtle trees, you think of the Feast of Booths. You think of tabernacles. That was the big end of harvest, celebrating what God had done when they lived in little tabernacles, being rescued from Egypt, and God was going to come be among them. He was going to tabernacle or dwell or live and be with them. Here is the feast where they recognize, God is with us. This celebration, everybody is going to recognize. In fact, so much so, that even Egypt will.

When I was younger, I went to England. It was summer and we were traveling around. All of a sudden, I realized it was July 4th. I was like, “We need to go find somewhere to watch fireworks.” Wait! They don’t really celebrate July 4th over here, do they? (Laughter!) It’s just not really appropriate. Think about Egypt. Do you think Egypt is going to celebrate the exodus, when they were rescued and delivered? They’re like, “Yeah, we’re not doing that.” But God says even Egypt will. If Egypt is like, “We’re fine. We have the Nile. We don’t even need rain,” the plague is going to come there, too. Everybody will and there will be punishment if not.

***17*** *And if any of the families of the earth do not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, there will be no rain on them.* ***18*** *And if the family of Egypt does not go up and present themselves, then on them there shall be no rain; there shall be the plague with which the LORD afflicts the nations that do not go up to keep the Feast of Booths.* ***19*** *This shall be the punishment to Egypt and the punishment to all the nations that do not go up to keep the Feast of Booths.*

Drought and a plague will come. There is no escape from His judgment. No escape! Everyone will bend the knee and bow and worship this God who is king, the true Savior. You can read about it in Psalm 2, how He comes and rules, and in Malachi chapter 4, about this day that is coming. You can read about it in Joel chapter 3. Each of these prophets are giving sort of like a different angle, a different scene. It’s almost like when you see movies that are related to each other, like the superhero movies that all interweave together. You look and you’re able to appreciate the whole story of what God is going to do in the end. You can read in 1 Corinthians 15 and Revelation 22 that there will be this beautiful rescue that also has a judgment. It’s serious! It is serious and we fear God as a result. We understand that it’s sobering. We understand though that there is a purpose in His work in all this. Look at what God wants at the end. He is going to secure

**A Definitive Sanctity (14:20-21)**

This is what God wants. When we say sanctity, we just mean special. We mean that it’s important or meaningful, valuable. It’s devoted. The word often is holy. God is doing something and He is doing it in a definitive way. It is going to create a specialness of what is happening on earth with His people. It’s something that is special.

I think about in the home at Thanksgiving. Does anybody have a Thanksgiving dish? You don’t just use any dish. At least in our home, I don’t pull out the Tupperware and try to fit the turkey into it. No, I bring out the special dish, the Thanksgiving dish. There are certain dishes that just are kind of common, everyday Tupperware. If in your family someone happens to get sick, you don’t give them the special dish to take and have by their bedside. You give them this other dish that is a throw-away dish, a common dish. You give them a plastic dish. You don’t write your name on it, even. It doesn’t even matter. Life is full of things that are common, that are forgettable, that are worthless. Here, God says “I am achieving something so definitive that it’s all going to be sanctified. It’s going to be holy. It’s going to be meaningful, important, special.” Do you see what He does there?

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

In public life, in religious life, everything, even the common dishes of public and private life are all holy. He wants a sanctity, a specialness in particular for His people in worship. The preview is now. He is setting apart a people, purifying a people for His own pleasure. He wants this sanctity. He will achieve it definitively in the future. He has done it in Christ, and yet He is working it out now, calling us into it, the church. What does He want? He wants us to be sanctified. When Paul looks ahead, he says

**1 Thessalonians 4:3** For this is the will of God, your sanctification:

He specifically relates there to sexual immorality. He says God wants you to be given to God in every way.

**1 John 3:2-3** Beloved, we are God’s children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.

This is the work God is doing now. He wants us to get a preview of what is to come to each other and to the world around. This is what it is to be sanctified, to be different, special even to God, to be holy. In fact, He secures it. He wants it so much He is going to put His Holy Spirit within us to make sure it happens. That’s what He wants.

**Hebrews 12:14** Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord.

This is what He is doing. You can read in Titus 2 and 2 Peter 3 amazing descriptions of what God is doing to sanctify His people. This is a future day yet to come. It’s a day that God shows here that He remembers His promises. In fact, on that day, we will remember too.

I still remember when a movie trailer came out for a film franchise I enjoyed. It came out and you watch it. There are big booms and it builds. There are all these different clips and flashbacks and flash forwards. It’s all fitting together. But at the end of the day, you’re just excited. It’s like this remix of all the hits coming together and they’re hard to piece together. It’s hard to know exactly what is happening. But there are certain movies or directors or people that it is just a signature. You know this is going to be awesome!

I don’t know if life is getting you down right now and you’re hitting a day unlike any other. But there is a God epic enough to resolve the tension. When He says epic, He will never disappoint. Today may be a hard day, a dark day, but never forget that a new day is coming. Those trailers often come out and they’ll say “Fall 2022.” Every once in a while they just say, “Coming Soon.”

**Matthew 6:9–10** Pray then like this: “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven.

**Revelation 22:20** He who testifies to these things says, “Surely I am coming soon.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!