

September 27, 2026

BEHOLD, A DAY IS COMING—AND HAS COME

Zechariah 12-14

(10 of 10 in a series through Zechariah)

From Genesis 3 on, but especially after God's covenant with David, the Old Testament looks forward to the "day of the Lord." It would be a day when God would come and save his people, judge his enemies, establish his reign, and bring about a new creation. And as the Lord gives Zechariah his last message for the people—and the last section of this book and our sermon series—this coming day of the Lord becomes the focus.

Now, it doesn't take a rocket scientist to figure out that the focus of this text is on that day. Fifteen times in these three chapters the Lord says, "On that day." In the first nine verses alone, we read the phrase "on that day" in verses 3, 4, 6, 8 (2x), and 9. And it continues from there. Chapter 13 begins with the same phrase, which occurs three times in that chapter before occurring five more times in chapter 14. Again, as difficult as our study through the book of Zechariah is, it's at least easy to see the focus of this last oracle of Zechariah which covers chapters 12-14. It is focused on that day of the Lord and what the Lord will do on that day.

But because we are familiar with the New Testament, we actually understand that day a little more clearly than those in the Old Testament did. Do you remember when John the Baptist was preaching, introduced Jesus in his public ministry, was imprisoned, and then sent note to Jesus asking, "Are you the one, or should we look for another?" The reason John was asking that is because this coming day of the Lord was supposed to bring salvation *and judgment*. In Isaiah 61, the prophet had said of this day when God would bring his king to make all things right, "The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me, because the LORD has anointed me to bring good news to the poor; he has sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to those who are bound; to proclaim the year of the LORD's favor, and the day of vengeance of our God."

Now, John could see that Jesus was bringing good news to the poor, binding up the broken-hearted, proclaiming liberty to the captives, opening the prison of those who were bound, and proclaiming the year of the Lord's favor. But what about the day of the vengeance of our God? Why was John sitting in Herod's prison, awaiting execution if Jesus was God's promised king, if God's kingdom had arrived, and if this was the great day of the Lord?

What John didn't understand—and we have the blessing of understanding now—is that that promised day of the Lord, and the arrival of God's kingdom, comes in two stages. First, as Jesus comes into the world in his incarnation, God's kingdom has arrived. God's king has come. The salvation that the day of the Lord promised is here. And yet, it isn't here fully. We await another day when Christ will return, our bodies and the earth itself will be made new, his enemies will be judged, and his kingdom will be consummated. Therefore, when we read these declarations from Zechariah on what will happen "on that day," we need to understand that this day arrived

with the coming of Christ but won't fully arrive until he comes again. And so we have begun to experience these promised realities (or experience them in part), but we won't fully experience all the promised realities of that day until Christ's second coming. That's the first note that will help us understand this glorious message that Zechariah is preaching about concerning what will happen "on that day." But there's another.

One other key to understanding this last prophetic message from Zechariah is that the prophet gives this message through the lens and language of the old covenant and the old covenant people of God. This will be most obvious when we read of Zechariah speaking of a day to come when parents will take a spear and pierce through their son because he's been prophesying falsely in 13:3. Now, I assure you, this isn't Zechariah saying that the church is supposed to take up the sword and start executing people. Rather, what's going on is that Zechariah is communicating a zeal for holiness that God will bring to his people in the new covenant, but he's using the lens and language of the old covenant. This is how Moses told the people under the law to purge the evil from their midst. The false prophet, sabbath breaker, and the like were executed. Now, however, when Paul tells the Corinthians to purge the evil one from their midst, it's through church discipline (1 Cor. 5:13), not execution.

So, if you'll recognize that these promises of what God will do "on that day" are given through the lens and language of the old covenant, it will be helpful. So, instead of saying, "believers" or "the church" or the like, these promises will focus on Jerusalem and Judah, but that's simply Zechariah's way of speaking of what God will do for his people "on that day," using again the lens and language of the old covenant.

Now, with those two things in place, what does Zechariah prophesy will happen "on that day," referring to the time when Christ came and comes again? First, we see that God will defend and deliver his people.

God will defend and deliver his people

As chapter 12 begins, we're told that Zechariah is given this last oracle by the Lord. But we're not just told that the message comes from the Lord but from the Lord "who stretched out the heavens and founded the earth" (12:1). The reason the reader is reminded that God alone is creator is because he alone has the might to do everything that he promises will happen on that day. By the time we get to chapter 14, we'll read of God making a new creation itself, and so Zechariah is reminding us that the one who will make a new creation has done this before. He is able to do all that he promises.

But he doesn't start with imagery of new creation. Rather, he starts with imagery that tells us that he'll defend and deliver his people from all attacks—again, using the picture of Jerusalem and Judah as a picture of his people. The images are vivid. He'll make Jerusalem like a cup that its enemies will drink and stagger. Jerusalem will be like a heavy stone that when its enemies try to lift it will only hurt themselves. Even should the nations gather against the Lord's people, he'll strike their horses with panic and their riders with blindness. Jerusalem will become like a

flaming torch so that its enemies are consumed. And, finally, even the weakest among God's people will become like David when the nations come against them. In fact, the last statement of this first section reads, "And on that day I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem" (12:9).

Now, even understanding that the language of Judah and Jerusalem represents the people of God, we might still have questions. After all, if we're saying that this reality has come about with the arrival of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection as he brought God's kingdom into the world—even though not fully—what does it mean? After all, we Christians do suffer. We can tell stories about our own lives and multitudes of stories of believers who have been martyred for the faith. Therefore, it can feel like there's no sense in which this promise of what God will do is experienced by the people of God.

However, I think that we underestimate the reality of this promise in our lives. Certainly, it's true that believers suffer and many have even been killed for the faith. But what does that ultimately mean? Are those who kill us victors? Certainly not. They'll face a second death and know God's judgment on the last day. And are those believers who are killed suffering great loss? Certainly not. At the point of death believers are alive with the Lord, awaiting our resurrection. In other words, this promise isn't suggesting that God will preserve his people from all physical harm. Rather, he's promising to preserve us from any spiritual harm. There's nothing the enemy can do to disrupt God's preserving grace in our lives. Try as he might, the enemy cannot thwart God's work of glorifying everyone whom he has justified. The enemy—in the ultimate sense—cannot touch the people of God. And one day, our vindication and his judgment will be made perfectly known to all as God's enemies are thrown into a lake of fire and his people welcomed to glory. That's the first promise of what God will do—and does. He defends and delivers his people, even from death itself. Second, God will bring his people to repentance and cleanse them.

God will bring his people to repentance and cleanse them

We will see this in 12:10-13:6, but before we even get there, you might feel like this is out of order. We just got through talking about God's people being preserved through trials and attacks by the enemy, and now we're going back to talk about repentance and cleansing? Doesn't the Christian life start with repentance and then move on to perseverance? Sure, but what we need to understand is that the prophets aren't necessarily focused on giving us that kind of logical progression. Rather, the prophets often take up the same issue and talk about it repeatedly, focusing on a different facet of the topic. Think of it as the Christian's experience being represented as a diamond, and the prophet holding it up and turning it ever so slightly and talking about its characteristics. Then, turning it slightly and doing it again. There'll be overlap in what he sees. There'll be repetition. But we'll also get to hear of different facets along the way. That's what's going on here. One blessed experience of the believer is that God preserves us, and another facet of our experience is that God brings us to repentance and cleanses us.

In 12:10 Zechariah speaks of the Lord pouring out a spirit of grace and pleas for mercy on his people. This is unquestionably a good blessing. But then he speaks of us mourning. He writes,

“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” (12:10). And from there it expands so that each family of the Lord’s people begin mourning. Why are God’s people mourning, and why is mourning a product of God’s grace?

Well, when Jesus is on the cross and the soldiers come around to break the legs of those being crucified, Jesus is found to be already dead. Therefore, they don’t break his legs, but a soldier plunges a spear through his side. And John writes, “These things took place that the Scripture might be fulfilled: ‘Not one of his bones will be broken.’ And again another Scripture says, ‘They will look on him whom they have pierced’” (John 19:36-37). Thus, John sees this as fulfilled in Jesus, as he is crucified and then pierced on the cross. And we’re already expecting that in Zechariah 12 because the Lord speaks of them piercing “me” and “him,” which suggests one who is God and yet distinct from the person of the Father, which can only be the God-man, Jesus Christ.

What does this mean, thought? I think the idea is that the Lord is saying that on that day when he brings his king into the world to save his people, one of the things that will happen is that God will pour out grace on his people, giving them hearts that mourn over their sin. After all, that’s why Jesus dies on the cross and is pierced through—for our sins. And the reason that’s gracious is because mourning over sin leads to our repentance which leads to forgiveness.

In fact, look what follows the mourning of chapter 12. Chapter 13 opens, “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.” But it’s not just that God’s people are forgiven; he begins cleansing us as well. In 13:2-6, the Lord says that he’ll remove idols and false prophets. In fact, fathers and mothers will turn against their own children if they prophesy falsely, piercing them through. And the repentant false prophets will be ashamed, turning away from what they do and have done.

In the old covenant, most of the people of Israel didn’t believe, didn’t have changed hearts, and therefore kept rebelling against their God. We see this repeatedly in the OT. But God’s promise here is that he’ll pour out his grace on his people through the work of his Son, and he’ll give his people hearts that mourn over our sins, repent of them, are cleansed, and then have a desire to walk in holiness. Brothers and sisters, we can relate to these realities if we’re trusting in the crucified and risen Lord, can’t we? And don’t take that for granted. That is the fulfillment of the promise of Zechariah 12:10-13:6. And yet it continues. Third, we’re told that God will redeem and refine a people for himself.

God will redeem and refine a people for himself

At the end of chapter 13 the Lord declares something we would not expect. He calls to his own sword to awake and strike the shepherd. That is God himself is the one doing the striking. But we know from the first oracle in chapters 9-11 that the shepherd is the Lord himself. How can

God strike the shepherd who is himself the Lord? Obviously this, once again, can only be fulfilled in Jesus. This is a prophecy once more of the good shepherd laying down his life for his sheep. Jesus confirms this in Mark 14:27 when he's predicting his disciples fleeing at his arrest and says that this fulfills the Scripture that says, "I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered." Zechariah 13:7 is prophesying about the substitutionary death of Jesus as God pours out on his own Son the wrath deserved for sinners so that Jesus pays the penalty for our sins. But what about the scattering and the rest of chapter 13?

Well, we see that as the shepherd is struck, the Lord brings judgment against his creatures. He notes in 13:8 that two thirds shall be cut off and perish, but then he adds, "About one third will be left alive." This imagery of a third being spared is pictured elsewhere in Scripture as God preserving a remnant. That's what he's saying here. Broad is the way to destruction and many find it, but narrow is the path that leads to life, and on that narrow path we will find a remnant that God is bringing to himself.

What then does God do with the remnant whom he'll save through the atoning work of his Son? The Lord answers that he'll put them into the fire, refine them, test them, and they will call upon his name. He will be their God, and they will be his people.

In other words, those whom the Lord redeems, he refines. He's bent on making us more like his Son, Jesus Christ. He wants to make us a people of prayer—those who call on him. But we don't do that naturally, and so he puts us through fiery trials to refine us like silver and gold, shaping us. Brothers and sisters, just as it's a blessing that helps us to mourn over our sin so that we repent and are cleansed, so it's a blessing that the Lord puts us through refining fires. He's not doing that because he's against us but because he's for us and wants to fashion us into a people who pray and reflect his glory. And, finally, we see that God will bring his people into the fullness of his kingdom.

God will bring his people into the fullness of his kingdom

As chapter 14 begins, it reads like things are going to get terrible. Again, using language that would have been familiar to his old covenant people, the Lord pictures something very similar to the exile they would have experienced years earlier. Nations are surrounding them, women are raped, houses are plundered, people are exiled. It seems to speak to great suffering God's people will endure, but it doesn't stop there. Suddenly, in 14:3 the Lord steps onto the scene—and boy does he ever!

The Lord comes out to fight against those nations attacking his people, and this isn't a fair fight. He plants one foot on the Mount of Olives on the east and another on the west, driving the mountains apart to form a valley through which his people escape. And as his people flee, his enemies are left to bear his wrath.

There is one another place that John tells us Zechariah's prophecy of people looking on the one they've pierced and mourning is fulfilled, and it's in Revelation 1:7, speaking of the day when the

Lord will return, coming in the clouds. On that day the unbeliever will see what he has done and wail, but it will be too late. The Lord is coming to judge, as we see pictured here.

But then the scene shifts to the glorious realities experienced by his people. There's no cold or frost. At evening there is light. And waters are flowing from Jerusalem, like we see in Ezekiel 40-48 where the rivers go and give life. But most importantly, we're told in 14:9 that "the LORD will be king over all the earth"—he and he alone. Those who oppose him or refuse to worship him will suffer his ruthless judgment. And he'll make a new world where everything will be holy.

Chapter 14 ends by saying that the bells on horses will be inscribed with the words "Holy to the LORD" (14:20). Now, the other place in the Scripture where these words were inscribed was on the gold plate that the high priest wore. In other words, these words had only ever been inscribed on that garment that would be allowed before the Lord's very presence in the most holy place in the tabernacle and temple. But now, the most common realities like bells on horses are inscribed with those words. I heard one preacher say in describing the new creation that everything holy becomes common and everything common becomes holy. Bowls, pots, and all normal items will be deemed holy because the most holy place has become the whole world. This is the picture of a new creation where God's people dwell in his presence forever.

The last sentence says that no "trader" will be in God's house on that day, but the word is "Canaanite," suggesting that there will be nothing corrupt, vile, or sinful in that world. Can you imagine that? No more sin, pain, struggle, or death. That's what Zechariah's prophecy is telling us.

I think it can be easy for us to take for granted the blessings we have as believers but consider this glorious prophetic word that ends our study in Zechariah. Your God has given you a heart to mourn your sin and repent over it because he wanted to make you his own. Then he puts you through fiery trials, but not to destroy you but to refine you, for your good. Then, no matter what comes against you, he'll deliver you. Even if you're killed, you'll be delivered into his presence, awaiting the day your body will be raised, God's enemies will be judged, and his people gloriously made new. And on that day the whole world itself will be made new. He'll make a new heavens and a new earth where righteousness alone dwells. There'll be no sign of sin or its effects. And all of that we can be confident in because that glorious day to come has already begun when Jesus came, lived, died, and was raised. So, let's give thanks for our Lord's gracious promises that he always fulfills as we come to the table. Amen.