

## The kingdom in Zechariah 14

by Douglas E. Cox

The apostle Peter said to the Jews, after the holy Spirit was given to the disciples on the day of Pentecost, "Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days." [Acts 3:22]

Let's look at the prophecy of Zechariah 14, to see how it reveals the rule of Christ in the present age of the Church, which must be what Peter meant by "these days."

Zechariah 14:1

Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee.

The Church is described as "spoiled." Evidently, the saints are missing many of the spiritual things that belong to them. How about unity? How about spiritual gifts? Some say they are no longer available in the present age.

Peter said the prophets ministered "unto us," that is, the Church; they foretold "the grace that should come unto you;" [1 Peter 1:10] they spoke by the Spirit of Christ; [1 Peter 1:11] and they wrote about the gospel. [1 Peter 1:12]

Many of the prophets wrote about the day of the Lord. Ezekiel said, "For the day is near, even the day of the Lord is near, a cloudy day; it shall be the time of the heathen." [Ezekiel 30:3]

Joel wrote, "Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision: for the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision." [Joel 3:14]

Obadiah said, "For the day of the Lord is near upon all the heathen: as thou hast done, it shall be done unto thee: thy reward shall return upon thine own head." [Obadiah 1:15]

Zephaniah said, "The great day of the Lord is near, it is near, and hasteth greatly, even the voice of the day of the Lord: the mighty man shall cry there bitterly." [Zephaniah 1:14]

At Pentecost, after Jesus ascended to heaven, Peter quoted from Joel's prophecy: "The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and notable day of the Lord come." [Acts 2:20]

Paul said the day of the Lord would come as a thief in the night. "For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night." [1 Thessalonians 5:2]

Peter wrote, "But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up." [2 Peter 3:10]

Zechariah 14:2

For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city.

After Jesus rose up from his grave, and ascended to heaven, *Jerusalem* and *mount Zion* were also raised up, in a spiritual sense. This was foretold in Isaiah 2:2. Isaiah said the mountain of the Lord's house would be established in the top of the mountains. Jesus, who is called the only begotten Son of God, (John 1:14, 18; 3:16, 18) is represented by the mountain of the Lord's house. He is the promised Savior and King, so his kingdom is included in the holy mountain. His throne was established in heaven.

Jesus said, "Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles be fulfilled." [Luke 21:24] This could not apply to the earthly city, as that city has been *cast out*, and is no more "the holy city." It was a shadow and a type of the true holy city, the heavenly Jerusalem. Paul identified it with Hagar the Egyptian bondswoman who was *cast out* of Abraham's house. [Galatians 4: 24-31] The holy city is the Church, and the true temple. John wrote: "But the court which is without the temple leave out, and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot forty and two months." [Revelation 11:2]

These prophecies all apply to those in Christ, who have come to the mount Zion that cannot be touched, and the heavenly Jerusalem. [Hebrews 12:22] After Jesus ascended to heaven, all the prophecies that refer to Zion and Jerusalem apply to the heavenly, spiritual mount Zion, and the heavenly city, not the earthly one.

Today, Christians are captive in tens of thousands of sects and denominations. This is the spiritual condition of the Church, that Zechariah depicts in chapter 14. His prophecies about Zion and Jerusalem apply to the Church in this present age. "Thus saith the Lord of hosts; I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy;" [Zechariah 1:14] "I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies;" [Zechariah 1:16] "the Lord shall yet comfort Zion;" [Zechariah 1:17] "... Zion, that dwellest with the daughter of Babylon. For thus saith the Lord of hosts; After the glory hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you: for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye;" [Zechariah 2:7-8] "the Lord shall inherit Judah his portion in the holy land; [Zechariah 2:12] "I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day." [Zechariah 3:9]

None of these prophecies apply to the earthly city, which was destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD. God did not fight for it or defend it. The Jerusalem of Zechariah's prophecies is the heavenly one.

Zechariah 14:3

Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle.

This refers to spiritual warfare, as the saints do not wrestle with flesh and blood. [Ephesians 6:12] Christ fights to defend his saints, the heavenly Jerusalem. But in 70 A.D. Jesus did not fight to defend the Jews or the earthly Jerusalem. Since Jesus ascended to heaven, the "Jerusalem" of prophecy is the heavenly city where he reigns as king on David's throne. The "Jerusalem" of Zechariah's prophecy is not the earthly city.

Zechariah 14:4

And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south.

Jesus fulfilled part of Zechariah 14:4 during his ministry, when he stood upon the mount of Olives and gave the Olivet Discourse to his disciples.

In the Olivet Discourse, Jesus presented a synopsis of prophecy, that applies to the present age. In Zechariah 14:4, the Olivet Discourse is represented by the mount of Olives; the mountain being cleaved in the midst, and half moving north and half moving south represents the two major schools of interpretation of prophecy, preterism and futurism or dispensationalism. These theories each displace the prophecy that Jesus gave, by applying it either to Jews in the first century, or to Jews in a future seven year tribulation. This is depicted by the parts of the mountain being displaced from their positions, in opposite directions. Those who promote these flawed interpretations are among the armies which come against Jerusalem, which take people captive, and divide up the spoil.

Zechariah 14:5

And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee.

The great valley formed when the two halves of the mount of Olives separate represents the present age of the Church. To flee to the valley means forsake the flawed interpretations that displace the Olivet Discourse and other prophecies from their intended application in the present age. Going to the valley, the saints will discover the promises of God, which are represented by mountains; thus it is called "the valley of the mountains."

The great valley formed as the two halves of the mount of Olives separate from each other is where he said we should flee. The prophecy means we should apply the Olivet Discourse, and other prophecies, to the present age, rather than to the first century, or to a future seven year tribulation.

For those who think Zechariah refers to a literal, violent tectonic movement, causing dramatic changes in the topography, the earthquake mentioned in Zechariah 14:5 presents a problem: of what use is a prophecy about a violent earth movement, that says to flee *after* it occurs? And why flee *towards* the epicentre? That would be a foolish, because of the danger of aftershocks. What would they flee from? Zechariah 4:5, "the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee" indicates that Christ will send his holy Spirit upon those who abandon the flawed theories of preterism and dispensationalism.

Zechariah said, "ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains," an invisible valley between the two displaced portions of the mount of Olives. The phrase "valley of the mountains" seems to conflate a valley with mountains. Mountains represent promises, and a great promise is given to those who follow Zechariah's advice, and abandon preterism and dispensationalism: "the Lord my God shall

come, and all the saints with thee.” The valley between the two displaced sections of the mount of Olives is a place where Christians who previously held opposite views on prophecy are brought together in unity, and become united with Christ and his saints.

Zechariah 14:6

And it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear, nor dark:

Jesus said to his disciples, “Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.” [Matthew 5:14] But the Church’s spiritual light is a mix of truth and error; the Gospel is partly obscured. Some Christians deny that Jesus reigns in the throne of David; some say he does, and still others are ambivalent about whether he does or not, which sends but a weak light in the world, one that is diminished, and partly obscured, and is “neither dark nor light.”

“In that day” means the day of the Lord, as verse 1 indicates. It is a day of obscurity. The prophet Amos wrote: “Woe unto you that desire the day of the Lord! to what end is it for you? the day of the Lord is darkness, and not light.” [Amos 5:18]

Compare Joel 2:1-2, “Blow ye the trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain: let all the inhabitants of the land tremble: for the day of the Lord cometh, for it is nigh at hand; A day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness, as the morning spread upon the mountains: a great people and a strong; there hath not been ever the like, neither shall be any more after it, even to the years of many generations.” Joel said the events depicted in his prophecy were unique, and that “there is no day like it,” and the events of Zechariah 14 must refer to the same time. They are all things the apostle Peter puts in the *present* age.

Attempts to apply the prophecy of this chapter to a future millennial age are thwarted by what is said about light. Paul said believers are “translated into the kingdom of Christ.” He wrote, “Giving thanks unto the Father, which hath made us meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light: Who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.” [Colossians 1:12-13]

For Paul, Christians are in Christ’s kingdom *now*. And it is a kingdom characterized by *light*, in contrast to darkness. Without the gospel, men remain in gross darkness, and spiritual ignorance. But the gospel is imperfectly understood by many, and so the present age is described as “neither light nor dark.”

Zechariah’s prophecy, I think, refers to *spiritual* rather than *natural* or literal light. The light means understanding the gospel, and believing God’s word. A condition of “neither light nor dark” could depict an abundance of information, along with much speculation, but little certainty or conviction. Spiritual gloominess and darkness is characteristic of the present age, and of the spiritual condition of many Christians.

Zechariah 14:7

But it shall be one day which shall be known to the Lord, not day, nor night: but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light.

“At evening time” refers to the end of the day, which in this prophecy is the day of the Lord, a symbol representing the present age, and so the meaning is that the light of the gospel, and of

prophecy will shine more distinctly and clearly as the end of the age approaches. The message of the prophets will be understood and proclaimed more perfectly at the end time. This is similar to Daniel 12:4, "But thou, O Daniel, shut up the words, and seal the book, even to the time of the end: many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall be increased." [Daniel 12:4] And it agrees with the parable of the tares. Jesus said, when the tares are removed, "Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear." [Matthew 13:43]

Zechariah 14:8

And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea: in summer and in winter shall it be.

Here, living waters flow from Jerusalem, which is the heavenly city, not the earthly one. Jesus spoke of living water that he would give those who come to him, referring to the Spirit. He was teaching in the temple at Jerusalem at the feast of tabernacles. "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Spirit was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)" [John 7:37-39] The rivers of living water flow from the Church during the present era. The New Testament explains and reinterprets the prophecies of the Old Testament.

In Zechariah's prophecy, summer and winter are contrasted, and similarly Jesus contrasts summer and winter in his Olivet discourse. Jesus said, "Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh: So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away. But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only." [Matthew 24:32]

Obviously, Jesus referred to summer in a figurative way; its approach is indicated by the appearance of leaves on a fig tree. Similarly the fulfilment of prophecy, and the signs that Jesus mentioned in Olivet discourse, show God's kingdom is near. He warned, "But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day: For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be." [Matthew 24:20-21] The time of trouble is identified with winter. It follows the harvest. Zechariah said that living waters will flow from Jerusalem in both summer and winter.

Jesus encouraged people to pray that they would not have to flee in winter. Luke wrote, "Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man." [Luke 21:36]

Jesus identified the present age with summer, and contrasted this age with the judgment, which he associated with winter. Today is the time to seek entry into God's kingdom.

Zechariah 14:9

And the Lord shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one Lord, and his name one.

Zechariah wrote, "Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass." [Zechariah 9:9]

Some deny that Jesus is king during the present age. They think the ass he rode upon when he entered Jerusalem, where he was proclaimed king, and fulfilled the above prophecy, was a literal one, but they deny he is literally a king who reigns on David's throne.

Christ is Lord and king of the saints in the present age, and he also rules over the nations of the earth, with a rod of iron. [Revelation 12:5] This may be compared to Matthew 24:30, "And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."

In Psalm 2, Christ is king in mount Zion, and he possesses all the nations of the earth. "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. I will declare the decree: the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession." Mount Zion is the *heavenly* one, to which Christians have come. [Hebrews 12:22]

Zechariah 14:10

All the land shall be turned as a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem: and it shall be lifted up, and inhabited in her place, from Benjamin's gate unto the place of the first gate, unto the corner gate, and from the tower of Hananeel unto the king's winepresses.

Since Jesus ascended to heaven, the city of the saints is the heavenly Jerusalem.

Jerusalem and mount Zion are names for the Church. The "mountain of the Lord's house" was raised up when Jesus ascended to his father's throne in heaven, where he has been given all authority and power and is head of the Church, and king of Israel in the heavenly Jerusalem, upon an eternal throne. The land round about the city becoming a plain indicates that the literal territory of Canaan was no longer significant, as it has become merely a type and shadow of the "better country." [Hebrews 11:16]

This prophecy corresponds to Isaiah 2:1-3, where mount Zion and Jerusalem are established at the top of the mountains, and exalted above the hills. Because Jerusalem was raised up to heaven when Jesus ascended to the throne of his Father, the continuity between the Jerusalem of the Old Testament prophets, and the Church of the New Testament is preserved.

Zechariah 14:11

And men shall dwell in it, and there shall be no more utter destruction; but Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited.

There is no safety in the earthly Jerusalem, but there is salvation for those who are in the Church, the heavenly Jerusalem. They become Abraham's seed by faith in Christ. Jesus said, "salvation is of the Jews." [John 4:22]

Zechariah 14:12

And this shall be the plague wherewith the Lord will smite all the people that have

fought against Jerusalem; Their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their holes, and their tongue shall consume away in their mouth.

The plague is spiritual; the flesh, eyes, and tongue are affected. Their flesh “shall consume away while they stand upon their feet.” Feet represent the direction one is headed in life. “I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep thy word.” [Psalm 119:101] “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.” [Psalm 119:105] The spiritual health of those who oppose the gospel impaired, because they have only a partial understanding of it. The eyes represent spiritual understanding. They are blind to the great spiritual truths, such as the fact that Christ has all authority and power, and reigns over the Israel of God upon the throne of David. They see only the letter, and reject the spiritual meaning of prophecy. Only by coming to Christ, can their eyes be opened so that they can understand. The tongue represents speech; the enemies of the saints say foolish things. They try to rob the saints of their blessings, which they claim are meant only for ethnic Jews.

Zechariah 14:13

And it shall come to pass in that day, that a great tumult from the Lord shall be among them; and they shall lay hold every one on the hand of his neighbour, and his hand shall rise up against the hand of his neighbour.

Compare with Ezekiel 38:21, “And I will call for a sword against him throughout all my mountains, saith the Lord God: every man’s sword shall be against his brother.”

The enemies of the gospel and of the Church contradict themselves. They war against each other. Preterists war with futurists, and various schools of dispensationalism war against each other. Both verses describe a conflict between those who come against the people of God and their land. When interpreting prophecy, it is wise to take into account the *whole* of scripture, and not focus upon a particular prophecy in isolation. Paul warned, “But if ye bite and devour one another, take heed that ye be not consumed one of another.” [Galatians 5:15]

Zechariah 14:14

And Judah also shall fight at Jerusalem; and the wealth of all the heathen round about shall be gathered together, gold, and silver, and apparel, in great abundance.

In the spiritual warfare of the Church, the saints are those who follow Christ. John described them: “And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean.” [Revelation 19:11-14]

Zechariah 14:15

And so shall be the plague of the horse, of the mule, of the camel, and of the ass, and of all the beasts that shall be in these tents, as this plague.

Horses and mules are symbolic of those who have no understanding. [Psalm 32:9, 2 Peter 2:12] Camels probably represent those who are burdened with riches and wealth. Jesus said, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." [Matthew 19:24]

Zechariah 14:16

And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles.

The feast of tabernacles mentioned in the prophecy has a spiritual meaning. Dwelling in tents, as the Israelites did after the exodus from Egypt, when they dwelt in the wilderness, pictures the temporal nature of human life. The gospel promises believers a more permanent tabernacle, as Paul said: "For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." [2 Corinthians 5:1]

When Jesus ascended to heaven, and to the throne of his Father, Jerusalem was raised up, and was "established in the top of the mountains," and was "exalted above the hills" as foretold in Isa. 2:2. That is when it became the heavenly city, the Jerusalem above, while the earthly Jerusalem was identified with Hagar the bondwoman who was cast out. [Galatians 4:26, 30] After Jesus ascended to heaven, prophecies about Jerusalem apply to the heavenly city, where Christ is king. So the nations who come up to Jerusalem to worship Christ as king have to come to the heavenly city, not the earthly one. This is also what Jesus said in John 4:21-23. People will no longer go to the earthly city, but will worship God in spirit and in truth.

Zechariah 14:17

And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain.

Rain is a symbol of God's word. Isaiah wrote: "For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." [Isa. 55:10-11]

The rebellious will not be given the word of God. Instead, they suffer the plague.

Zechariah 14:18

And if the family of Egypt go not up, and come not, that have no rain; there shall be the plague, wherewith the Lord will smite the heathen that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles.

Egypt normally has very little rain. Taken literally, it would be quite meaningless, to say Egypt would have no rain. This is speaking of rain metaphorically; it represents God's word. Moses said, "My doctrine shall drop as the rain, my speech shall distil as the dew, as the small rain upon the tender herb, and as the showers upon the grass." [Deut. 32:2]

Zechariah said men of all nations will come up to Jerusalem to keep the feast of tabernacles. The prophecy does not mean Christians will one day observe Jewish feasts, but points to the spiritual



reality those holy days represent and foreshadow. In the feast of tabernacles the people dwelt in tents or booths, representing God's people as the tabernacles or dwelling places of the Spirit of God.

Zechariah 14:19

This shall be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all nations that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles.

Egypt represents the world, from which the saints have escaped. [2 Peter 1:4]

Zechariah 14:20

In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, Holiness Unto The Lord; and the pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar.

The bells may represent the music and noise generated by Christians; even if they lack understanding, their worship is holy.

Zechariah 14:21

Yea, every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness unto the Lord of hosts: and all they that sacrifice shall come and take of them, and seethe therein: and in that day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the Lord of hosts.

The saints of all races and nations are incorporated in Israel, "grafted in." [Rom. 11:17]