

Zechariah ends with holiness.

We often think of holiness as that which makes God so different from us.

And that’s true!

God is *holy* – and we are not.

When we say that God is *holy* –

we are saying that he is separate – he is above – he is exalted over all things!

But we need to be careful not to overdo that point.

Because God disciplines us for our good,
that we might *share his holiness* (Hebrews 12:10).

How can *we* share in the holiness of God?

If God’s holiness *simply* means that he is separate and exalted
over all created things,

then it would be sheer lunacy to say that we can share *his* holiness!

But God’s holiness is not *only* that he is separate and exalted.

God’s holiness is *also* what drives him to draw *into* sharing his holiness!

John Webster says this well:

“It is fatally easy to think of God’s holiness

simply as a mode of God’s sheer otherness and transcendence –
that is, as the opposite of relational;

as concerned not with God *with* us, but with God *apart from* us.

But to follow that path is radically to misunderstand the biblical testimony.

The holiness of God is not to be identified simply as that which distances God from us;
rather, God is holy precisely as the one

who in majesty and freedom and sovereign power bends down to us in mercy.

God is the Holy One.

But he is the Holy One ‘in your midst’ as Hosea puts it (Hos. 11:9).” (Webster, 45)

God’s holiness is seen in his condescension and grace –

just as much as in his sovereignty and power.

I start here because you can see this principle work itself out in Zechariah 14!

We saw that the Oracle Concerning All Mankind and Israel (chapters 9-11)

ended with condemnation for Israel and the worthless shepherd.

Now we see that the Oracle Concerning Israel (chapters 12-14)

will end with salvation for Israel *and the nations*

because of the Shepherd who was struck.

And as we saw last time – God identifies *himself* with the Shepherd who was struck.

The incarnation of the Son of God demonstrates how God's *holiness* drives him to lay down his life for his people.

There is a way in which Zechariah 14 functions something like the Acts 1 of the NT. Haggai and Zechariah have encouraged the rebuilding of the temple. Their preaching might well have prompted the sort of question that the disciples asked Jesus:

“are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?”

And Zechariah's answer is a brutal: “Sort of.”

1. Jerusalem Devastated and Restored (v1-11)

a. The Day of the LORD Will Be a Day of Death and Resurrection (v1-5)

14 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.

For the prophets, the day of the LORD does not designate a single day – rather, the day of the LORD is *any day* where God acts in history in a decisive manner. The Day of the Lord is a day of judgment.

Now, judgment can go one of two ways!
Either the verdict can be in your favor –
or the verdict can be against you!

The basic principle behind the Day of the LORD is stated by the prophet Isaiah in Isaiah 13:9-16.

I'd like you to turn over to Isaiah 13 –
so that you can see how he lays out the basic principles of the Day of the LORD:

*Behold, the day of the LORD comes,
cruel, with wrath and fierce anger,
to make the land a desolation
and to destroy its sinners from it.*

[So the first point of the Day of the LORD, is that it is a day to destroy sinners!
It is the Day of wrath.]

The prophets pretty regularly make statements like this.

Jeremiah 46:10 – “That day is the day of the Lord GOD of hosts,
a day of vengeance, to avenge himself on his foes.”

Ezekiel 30:3 – “For the day is near, the day of the LORD is near;
it will be a day of clouds, a time of doom for the nations.”

Joel 1:15 – “Alas for the day! For the day of the LORD is near,
and as destruction from the Almighty it comes” (a quote from Isaiah 13:6)

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, as if a man fled from a lion, and a bear met him...”

The day of the LORD is a dreadful day of judgment!
And so sinners should not expect the day of the LORD to be a particularly happy day!

Isaiah 13 goes on to say in verse 10:

*¹⁰ For the stars of the heavens and their constellations
will not give their light;
the sun will be dark at its rising,
and the moon will not shed its light.*

[The second point is to see how the light of the sun, moon, and stars are darkened.
This is a *cosmic* judgment!]

*¹¹ I will punish the world for its evil,
and the wicked for their iniquity;
I will put an end to the pomp of the arrogant,
and lay low the pompous pride of the ruthless.
¹² I will make people more rare than fine gold,
and mankind than the gold of Ophir.*

[The third point is to see how the focus of the Day of the LORD is on *human evil* –
the iniquity of the wicked;
the pomp of the arrogant;
the pride of the ruthless.

And because *all have sinned* – therefore mankind will become more rare than fine gold!]

Verses 13-16 then articulate how God will do this:

*¹³ Therefore I will make the heavens tremble,
and the earth will be shaken out of its place,
at the wrath of the LORD of hosts
in the day of his fierce anger.
¹⁴ And like a hunted gazelle,
or like sheep with none to gather them,*

*each will turn to his own people,
and each will flee to his own land.
15 Whoever is found will be thrust through,
and whoever is caught will fall by the sword.
16 Their infants will be dashed in pieces
before their eyes;
their houses will be plundered
and their wives ravished.*

There is a lot of similarity here to what Zechariah says (200 years later):

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.

Jerusalem will again be devastated.

As we've been spending time this year in the post-exilic writings,
we've seen a lot of emphasis on how Israel is trying to make sure
that they don't repeat the sins of their fathers!
But Zechariah says that the story is *going to happen again*.
Jerusalem is going to die.
Judgment Day is going to come again.

The Day of the LORD will be a day of death and destruction *again*.

But just when things look their worst!

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

Remember – verse 2 said that “I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle...”
The LORD himself will gather the nations against his people.
Only after the devastation and death and destruction – then will God act!

Isn't that true of the God *you know*?!

Did God come to the rescue and prevent the bad stuff from happening to you?
No, your mother cheated on your father and blew up your family!
Your parents failed you and you wound up scarred for life.
The person who mattered the most to you – died just when you needed them most!
You were the person *closest* to the bomb who survived!

Only after you are a complete wreck does God come to the rescue!

Only after Jerusalem is a bleeding heap of ruins
does God show up!
“Where were you 15 minutes ago?! 15 years ago?!”

The city has already been taken.
The houses have already been plundered.
The women have already been raped.

Oh, I know!

This is the point where three-fourths of Christendom replies,
“The god I believe in would never do that!!”

And that is why three-fourths of Christendom is in ruins!
They have abandoned their faith in the God of the Bible.
Just like in Zechariah’s day!!

No, it’s not particularly comforting to hear that God is going to hand you over to your enemies!
But it’s what God *says* he will do!

Paul reflects on this in 2 Cor. 4:8-10 –

“We are afflicted in every way, but not crushed;
perplexed, but not driven to despair;
persecuted but not forsaken;
struck down, but not destroyed;
always carrying in the body the death of Jesus,
so that the life of Jesus may also be manifested in our bodies...”

As Paul concludes in verse 17,

“For this light momentary affliction is preparing for us an eternal weight of glory
beyond all comparison...”

Paul is utterly confident that the way of the cross *will* lead to glory –
because that is the way of our Lord Jesus!

And we see this in verses 4-5:

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.

In Ezekiel 11, the glory of the LORD departed from Jerusalem
and stood “on the mountain that is on the east side of the city” –
in other words, on the Mt of Olives.
(this was the same mountain by which David left Jerusalem –
when he was chased by Absalom).

So it was entirely fitting that our Lord Jesus gave his famous “Olivet Discourse”
about the coming of the Day of the Lord from the Mount of Olives –
and then a few days later,
he went out to the Mount of Olives – to Gethsemane...

where he stood on the Mount of Olives...

Certainly the picture in Zechariah would make us think of a colossus astride the mountain –
but our Lord Jesus is the one who stood there on the Mount of Olives,

and he is the one who formed a valley by which we may flee the coming wrath of God!

Verses 6-9 the describe the signs of the coming King:

b. On That Day – the Signs of the Coming King (v6-9)

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

After all, in the day of our Lord Jesus – darkness fell.

The “unique day” could also be translated “and there shall be ‘day one’,
which is known to the LORD, neither day nor night”

The translators are trying to emphasize the “singularity” of the day –
but the language of “day one” is drawn from Genesis 1 –
where the Hebrew does not say “a first day” – but “day one.”

Zechariah is telling us that the Day of the Lord will be a new “Day One” –
a new creation – neither day nor night – but at evening time there shall be light.

The Light of the world will dawn –
a light that shines in the darkness –
and the darkness has not comprehended it.

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

This is also drawn from Ezekiel’s vision of the holy temple –
the temple on the holy mountain in the midst of the land.

Remember that Jerusalem has no river!

There is no water source inside the city walls.

So a source of living water flowing out from Jerusalem
means that God has brought a new creation!

And when Jesus came to Jerusalem for the great feast of Tabernacles in John 7

he declared that streams of living water would flow from his heart to his people.

Streams of living water flow from the heart of Jesus to those who believe in him.

Or, as John sees in Rev. 22:1, “the river of the water of life...
flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb.”

And when living water flows to the eastern sea and to the western sea,
they bring life to the nations!

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

In other words, God alone will be king over all the earth.

There will be no rivals.

There will be no opposition.

And the result will be *peace* for Jerusalem.

c. The Leveling of the Land and the Exaltation of Jerusalem (v10-11)

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.^[1] Jerusalem shall dwell in security.*

The city will be inhabited.

And there will be no more curse.

2. Jerusalem and the Nations: From Warfare to Worship (v12-21)

So this is the future of Jerusalem.

What about the nations?

What about those who had attacked Jerusalem?

Verses 12-21 tell us that God's purpose is to turn his enemies into worshipers!

Verse 12 starts with a dramatic picture of God's power:

a. The Plague on the Peoples and Their Animals (v12-15)

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.*

Usually you have to die before you start to rot –

but such is the plague of the LORD against those who war against his people –
that they will start to rot before they die.

That is a powerful picture of what actually happens
to people who wage war against the people of Jesus...
They start to rot before they die!
Those who are hostile to Jesus start to disintegrate on the inside.
Their flesh – their eyes – and their tongues will rot.

We live in a day when people want to “invent themselves” and create their own identities.
But we are not called to ‘define’ ourselves!
We have been defined by another.
Yes, we are called to *discovery* – as John Webster puts it,
“it is characteristic of the kind of creature that we are
that we discover our identity by fulfilling a vocation through time;
we become holy.
But becoming is, precisely, discovery, not invention;
it is not our generation of a self-narrative...but the enactment of an office:
‘You shall be holy, for I, the Lord your God, am holy.’” (Webster, 104)

Those who refuse to heed that call begin to disintegrate.

And the psychological aspect of this is made clear in verse 13:

¹³ *And on that day a great panic from the LORD shall fall on them,*

Why are people nervous and anxious?
Sure, there is usually natural causation –
but natural causation is part of God’s providence!
And “on that day” – in the Day of the Lord –
a great panic from the LORD shall fall on them...

To use a more modern phrase – a “panic attack” from the LORD shall fall on them.
When fear and anxiety take over – there is no rational thinking!
It’s Mark’s phrase again – “sin makes you stupid.”

Or to use Webster’s line:
“The unholy is the absurd affair in which the creature seeks to be creature
in a way other than that which is purposed by God;
it is, therefore, a way in which the creature –
precisely by trying to cease to be a creature and to make itself –
seeks to destroy itself.” (Webster 49)

When you refuse to be the creature that God made you to be –
the creature that God *redeemed* you to be in his beloved Son! –
then you set yourself on a collision course with the holiness of God.

And the result is that...
so that each will seize the hand of another, and the hand of the one will be raised against the hand of the other.

Mutual assured destruction.

¹⁴ *Even Judah will fight at Jerusalem.^[g] And the wealth of all the surrounding nations shall be collected, gold, silver, and garments in great abundance.*

The wealth of the nations will be brought in to serve the kingdom of God.
Just like in the days of Moses – when Israel plundered the Egyptians –
so it will be in the Day of the LORD –
that the people of God will plunder the nations!

This is what happens in the conversion of the nations –
from the time of the apostles to the present.
In other words, the Day of the Lord has come in the coming of Jesus –
and the Day of the Lord continues in the ongoing mission of the church.

And the curse of God continues to fall on those who oppose his reign:

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.*

All creation is struck by the curse against rebellious humanity.

But in the same way that Jerusalem was judged at the beginning of the chapter –
the same principle applies to the nations!

The remnant of the nations shall worship at Jerusalem:

b. The Remnant of the Nations Shall Worship at Jerusalem (v16-19)

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.*

Why the feast of Booths?

Why not Passover?

Why not Pentecost?

Because Booths is the eschatological feast!

Passover pointed back to the Exodus from Egypt –

and for us it points back to the cross of Jesus –

our salvation – our deliverance – from slavery to sin and death.

Pentecost pointed to the entrance into the Promised Land –
and for us it points back to the gift of the Holy Spirit –
where we are made partakers of the redemption purchased by Christ.

But Booths is the feast that remembers God’s faithfulness in the wilderness –
the feast that reminds us that God will bring us to that final day
(and in Jesus’ ministry, the Feast of Booths is where Jesus declared
that rivers of living water would flow from his heart to his people).

It is curious that in the Christian calendar we highlight Passover (Easter)
and Pentecost – but not Booths.

Why is that?

The simple answer is that there is no major event in the Incarnation
that is associated with Booths.

The death and resurrection of Christ is connected with Passover/Easter.

The pouring out of the Holy Spirit is connected with Pentecost.

There is no central event of the Incarnation associated with October.

But there is another reason – and a better one.

Look at the text:

The command is to go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts,
and to keep the Feast of Booths.

If the last part of the sentence is to be taken literally,
then so is the first.

If we are all supposed to keep the Feast of Booths –
then we must do it in *Jerusalem*.

To take this literally would be to turn Jerusalem into a sort of Mecca,
where all faithful Christians would have to go once a year for the great feast!

I would argue that we *do keep the Feast of Booths* – just as truly as we *do go to Jerusalem!*
We come to the heavenly city – and we keep the heavenly feast!

We are not limited – like Israel of old – by coming to an earthly sanctuary.

We come to the heavenly Jerusalem and partake of Christ himself.

And that is why the curse of verses 17-19 should be seen as fulfilled in Paul’s warning
in 1 Corinthians 11 regarding the Lord’s Supper:

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; ^[h] 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.

Since I take this chapter to be describing the church age –

I take these curses very seriously:

nations that refuse to believe in the Lord Jesus incur the curses of Egypt.

Zechariah concludes with the promise of *sanctification* :

c. “Holy to the LORD” – the House of the LORD Will Finally Be Holy (v20-21)

²⁰ *And on that day there shall be inscribed on the bells of the horses, “Holy to the LORD.”*

This is a grand way to say it!

On that day – on the Day of the LORD –

there shall be inscribed on the bells of the horses, ‘Holy to the LORD.’

Do you know where that inscription comes from?

It comes from the turban of the high priest.

When the high priest went into the Holy of Holies

he had to wear a turban with a plate on it that read,

‘Holy to the LORD.’

Now, that same line is inscribed on the bells of the horses.

It’s a bumper sticker that you slap on your car.

The point is that *everything* will be holy to the LORD!

All the old distinctions will be removed:

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.

In Moses’s tabernacle and Solomon’s temple

you had to use the “holy vessels.”

Vessels specially consecrated and set apart for holy use –

otherwise fire might come out from the holy of holies and consume you!!

But now?

Any pot will do!

Did we consecrate the ‘holy bag’

in which the bread was brought for communion this morning?

No?

Did we at least consecrate the holy bottle for the wine?

No!

Zechariah told us not to!
Every pot is *holy to the LORD of hosts*.

When I was in seminary, a friend took me up to New York City for the weekend.
We stayed with a friend of his –
 a widow whose son had turned her house into a drug house.
When she came to faith in Christ,
 she initially thought that she would have to get rid of the house.
It was so corrupted by sin – violence – ill-gotten gain –
 how could she serve the Lord with a house where so much evil had taken place?

And then one day she was reading in the prophets –
 “I will restore my house” –
 and she took that as a promise from God regarding her house!

You might be tempted to quibble that God was talking about the temple –
 but in the light of what Zechariah says here –
 we need to see that all that we have is sanctified with us.

When God makes *you* holy –
 he sets apart all that you have to be holy as well.

And there shall no longer be a trader^[i] in the house of the LORD of hosts on that day.

I think that the ESV footnote makes more sense.
“There shall no longer be a Canaanite in the house of the LORD of hosts.”
Here, “Canaanite” represents those who oppose God.
The Canaanites were under God’s curse –
 and although God did save a remnant of Canaanites
 (Rahab and her family, at least),
 they remain as an illustration of those who are implacably hostile
 to Christ and his people.

John Webster, in his little book on *Holiness* reminds us that

“the secret energy of the sanctifying Spirit of God is not another way of talking of our own secret energies, and is not to be conceived as an infused power which stimulates human acts of holiness. To think in such terms would simply be to lose the reference of Christian holiness back to the triune work of grace, and turn sanctification into an acquired sufficiency. The Christian’s sanctity is in Christ, in the Spirit, not [in ourselves]... Sanctification does not signal the birth of self-sufficiency, rather it indicates a ‘perpetual and inherent lack of self-sufficiency.’” (83)