

THE DAY OF THE LORD

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Chapter 14 opens with the announcement of the coming of the day of the Lord: "Behold, the day of the Lord cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee." Verse 1. "Behold," calls special attention to what follows, as of the deepest interest and greatest importance. It is—"a day comes *for* the Lord"—one day preeminently *for him*, in which He will fully vindicate his name as the God of Zion, his power as one mighty to save, and his faithfulness as one who, having long ago promised, comes forth now in the fullness of time to perform.

What this day of the Lord will bring to the world is plainly stated in 2 Peter 3:10: "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." John, in Rev. 6:14-17, also describes the opening of this day, when he says: "And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and every mountain and island were moved out of their places. And the kings of the earth, and the great men, and the rich men, and the chief captains, and the mighty men, and every bondman, and every free man, hid themselves in the dens and in the rocks of the mountains; and said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: for the great day of his wrath is come, and who shall be able to stand?"

In connection with this opening of the day of the Lord, there is to be a fearful scene of slaughter and destruction, under the figure of a great battle. Zechariah (14:2) describes it in these words: "For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city shall be taken." Then follows a statement of scenes such as would inevitably take place, in case a literal city was taken by literal enemies, and devoted to lust and pillage; and these are thus specified, so that no feature may be lacking to form a complete picture of lawlessness and destruction.

The same battle is brought, to view in the New Testament, and we must take into account what it has to say. According to Rev. 16:14, it occurs under the sixth of the seven last plagues, and is called "the battle of that great day of God Almighty," or the battle of

Armageddon." Joel (3:12-14) speaks of it as taking place in the valley of Jehoshaphat, a point near Jerusalem, and in the day of the Lord, the same as do Zechariah and the Revelation. It is again mentioned, in Rev. 19:19, 20, with special reference to the parties who take part therein. On the one side is the King of kings and Lord of lords, riding forth upon a white horse, accompanied by the armies of heaven, also upon white horses; and on the other side are the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, the false prophet, and the hosts deceived by his miracles. These are symbolized in Rev. 17:12, 14, by ten horns which make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb overcomes them: "For he is Lord of lords, and King of kings: and they that are with him are called, and chosen, and faithful." The agents who gather the nations to this conflict, are the spirits of devils, operating under the garb of modern Spiritualism. Rev. 16:13, 14.

The nations are said to be gathered against Jerusalem, because there is the holy sepulcher and the sacred places which are the bone of contention between the great powers of the present day. The Mohammedans claim them by right of possession; the Romish Church, embracing the Latin nations of Western Europe, claims them as being the true Christian church; and the Greek Church, sustained by the great Russian colossus, rests its pretensions on the same claim, which it arrogates to itself alone.

The nations are deceived, thinking that their warfare is to vindicate some just claim of their own; and doubtless in this part of the conflict what Zechariah says about its effect upon the city will be accomplished. But there seems to be no question that the devil has brought the nations there to prevent or defeat some purpose which the Lord has in view, and so the real contest is between the King of kings and the powers represented by these human armies, as set forth in the Revelation. So the Lord at length appears upon the scene, as declared by John, which Zechariah describes in verse 3, as follows: "Then shall the Lord go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle;" that is, as he has often interfered to vindicate his cause against his enemies.

Plainly, then, these three verses bring to view the day of the Lord, the great battle of Armageddon, and the second advent of Christ. But there are abundant scriptures to show that no human beings can survive these scenes, except the righteous, who are then clothed with immortality and caught up to meet the Lord in the air. 1 Thess. 4:15-17. The Lord does not at this time come down to the earth; if he does,

why does he send his angels to gather the elect from the uttermost part of the earth to meet him in the air? He would not go to the trouble to gather them all up to him in the air, and then take them right back to the earth again. That would be an unnecessary ceremony. But instead, he takes them to the holy city, Jerusalem above (Gal. 4:26), the Father's house, in which mansions are prepared for them (John 14:2, 3), and which does not come down from heaven till the time comes for the new heaven and new earth, at the end of the thousand years. Rev. 21:1, 2.

At the second coming of Christ all the living wicked are destroyed. Matt. 13:38-42; Luke 19:27; 2 Thess. 2:8; Rev. 19:21; etc. All man's works in the world are burned up (2 Peter 3:10); the atmosphere itself has perished (Rev. 6:14; 2 Peter 3:12); the earth is rent by such an earthquake as dislodges every island and every mountain (Rev. 6:14; 16:18-20), and is turned again into chaos. Jer. 4:23. None but the saved can survive these convulsions. When, then, does the Lord stand upon the Mount of Olives, as Zech. 14:4 declares that he sometime will?

We come now to verse 4 of this chapter: "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."

Biblically and spiritually the Mount of Olives is significant—especially because it is associated with the life and ministry of Christ in the New Testament. The Mount of Olives rises only 200 feet higher than the Jerusalem Temple area, from which it is separated by the Kidron Valley. Even at this height, it is one of the highest hills in Palestine. It appears twelve times in the New Testament, especially in connection with Christ. He frequently spent the night there. He entered Jerusalem from it as a humble king riding on an ass. He gave the sermon on His coming and the end of the world from it. His final suffering occurred in the Garden of Gethsemane, located on its slopes. His ascension to heaven took place from it, and there the angels promised the disciples that He would return in the same manner.

One landmark we certainly have in the first three verses. The scene opens with the day of the Lord; and some of the scenes of that day, culminating in the coming of Christ. It is important to bear in mind that

Christ, at his second advent, does not come so near to this earth as to rest his feet upon it; hence verse 4, now under consideration, cannot apply to that time. He comes within our atmosphere, which, as the evangelists tell us, is then rolled together as a scroll, and passes away with a great noise. He comes so near that every eye can see him, and those who are not prepared for his coming are driven in their terror to call upon rocks and mountains, which are everywhere falling around them, in the terrible convulsions of that day, to fall upon them, and hide them from his presence; but still he does not then come down so as to stand upon the earth; and this is why the angels are sent to gather the saints and bear them up to meet him in the air.

None of the living wicked survive the scenes of that time, but in the antecedent plagues, the great battle, in the consuming glory of Christ's presence must all perish, Rev. 19:21 declares that the remnant, which must include the last remaining fragments of humanity, were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth; and this expression identifies it with the "spirit of his mouth" spoken of by Paul in 2 Thess. 2:8, by which "that wicked," the man of sin, the papacy, will be consumed. It was also noted what effect these events will have upon the earth itself, reducing it to a scene of ruin and desolation.

Now, the Lord having taken his people up to meet him in the air (1 Thess. 4:17), it is evident he does not then come back with them to the earth; for the earth will then be in such a condition as to be utterly uninhabitable by human beings. And there is no scripture to show that any change will take place in this condition of the earth, till the time comes for the earth to be made new, which, according to Revelation 21, will not be till after the thousand years of Revelation 20. The fourth verse of Zechariah 14 cannot, therefore, be applied to anything that takes place before the end of the thousand years.

This brings us to consider the events that will occur at the end of this period. If the saints, after being caught up to meet, the Lord in the air, do not come right back to this earth, as it is evident they do not, where do they go? They are next brought to view on the sea of glass before the throne of God *in heaven*. Rev. 15:2; 4:6. And when the festal songs of rejoicing at the marriage of the Lamb are raised, in which all they who are called to the marriage supper join, John hears the sound, not on earth, but *in heaven*. Rev. 19:1-9. And this is after the judgment and destruction of the present wicked powers of this world. Verse 2. It is certain, therefore, that the saints ascend with

their Lord to heaven, to the Father's house of many mansions (John 14:2, 3), where they reign with Christ a thousand years (Rev. 20:4), while the earth remains in its desolate condition, uninhabited and uninhabitable, except by the devil and his angels.

At the end of the thousand years, the work of judgment on the wicked that is, the assigning to them of the punishment due to their respective deeds (1 Cor. 6:2; Rev. 20:4, 12)—being completed, the Lord returns to this earth, accompanied by all the redeemed, to complete the work of restitution, and establish them in their everlasting inheritance. This time he comes to the earth, his feet stand upon the Mount of Olives, and Zech. 14:4 is fulfilled.¹ The following verse confirms this view, and states accompanying circumstances: "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."

This latter clause must refer to the return of Christ to the earth at the end of the thousand years, accompanied by all his people, as already stated. The new creation is now about to appear, and no doubt the angels who witnessed the first creation will be present on this occasion also. So it will be a most august and glorious assemblage. The object of dividing the Mount of Olives, and making a *very great* valley, or plain, is no doubt to provide an appropriate site for the new Jerusalem to rest upon when it comes down from God out of heaven, to be the metropolis of the earth when made anew.

But it may be asked, If the earth was so broken up and desolated at the second advent of Christ, at thousand years before, how can the

¹ "At the close of the thousand years, Christ again returns to the earth. He is accompanied by the host of the redeemed and attended by a retinue of angels. As He descends in terrific majesty He bids the wicked dead arise. . . . Christ descends upon the Mount of Olives, whence, after His resurrection, He ascended." Then Ellen White immediately quotes Zechariah 14:5, 4, 9 and continues, "As the New Jerusalem . . . comes down out of heaven, it rests upon the place purified and made ready to receive it, and Christ, with His people and angels, enters the Holy City." *The Great Controversy*, pp. 662, 663. In *Early Writings* we find several pertinent statements relating to Christ's third advent. "With Jesus at our head we all descended from the city down to this earth, on a great and mighty mountain, which could not bear Jesus up, and it parted asunder, and there was a mighty plain. Then we looked up and saw the great city. . . . And it came and settled on the place where we stood." *EW*, pp. 17, 18.

Mount of Olives and the site of Jerusalem still remain, and retain their usual features? This is a very natural question, and naturally it might be expected that all familiar places known to history would lose their identity in the general chaos. But of course God, for a special purpose, could exempt and preserve certain localities, as it appears that he does in this case. It would seem very appropriate that the locality of Jerusalem and the surrounding country should not be lost in the general ruin, but be preserved for the fulfillment of the scene here described.

When the Mount of Olives is parted, its portions moving north and south, panic and terror seize upon those who are there, and the prophet addresses them as “ye.” “Ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains,” etc. Who are these who are thus addressed? Let it be remembered that when Christ visits this earth again, at the end of the thousand years, all the wicked are raised from their graves, and constitute the multitude of Gog and Magog (Rev. 20:7-9) who come up around the camp of the saints, the holy city, after it has settled in the plain prepared for it by the division and removal of the Mount of Olives. These are the ones meant, by the pronoun “ye.” But during the mighty movement necessary to bring this about, they flee as they fled before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah. But must not the word “ye” refer to those to whom Zechariah wrote in his own day?—Not at all; for he uses the same word in reference to those who fled before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah: “Ye shall flee, like as ye fled . . . in the days of Uzziah.” But Uzziah reigned more than three hundred years before Zechariah prophesied, and the men of that time had all passed off the stage of action. So it can just as well apply to the wicked at the end of the thousand years, whom the prophet in the usual lively prophetic style, addresses by the personal pronoun “ye.” The commotions at the end of the thousand years will be similar to those at their beginning, and be carried out to their completion.

A peculiar condition of things to exist at this time is described in verses 6 and 7: “And it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear, nor dark. 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.” This the margin explains by saying, “It shall not be clear in some places, and dark in other places of the world.” That is, there will be light all over the earth at the same time. It will not be night in some places, and day in others; but in places where it would naturally be evening, it will be light. And this strange

day is one that is “known to the Lord;” that is, one which he has ordained for the purpose of espying out the events then to be done.

Then the prophet down to verse 12 describes the state of things as it will be when the kingdom is established in the earth. Living waters shall go out from Jerusalem. This must refer to the river of life; for there is no other “living” water. John describes it in Rev. 22:1, 2, as flowing out from the throne of God. The reference to summer and winter is to show its uninterrupted continuance. No summer’s drouth nor winter’s cold will interrupt its flow. “The Lord shall be king over all the earth.” Verse 9. This shows when it must apply; for this can be only when his kingdom shall be established under the whole heaven. Dan. 2:35, 44; 7:27. The localities mentioned in verse 10 are simply to convey to the mind of his Jewish readers some idea of the extent of territory involved in this promise; for they were familiar with all these places; not that these particular localities or their names will necessarily be perpetuated. Verse 11 predicts that there shall be no more destruction, but that Jerusalem “shall abide” (margin); that is, endure forever.

If it should be objected that a thousand years cannot be passed over between verses 3 and 4, is sufficient to say that it is common for prophetic writers to pass from one scene over to another of a similar nature in the same sentence, although ages may intervene between them; just as on a canvas a mountain top may appear, and another tower up immediately behind it, and the scores of miles of plain, ravine, and valley between them not appear at all. As illustrations, see Matt. 24:20, 21 and Matt. 25:33, 34.

In Zechariah 14:1-12 three great epochs are brought to view; namely, (1) the day of the Lord, with its attendant scenes, which closes the present dispensation (verses 1-3); (2) the scenes that take place at the end of the thousand years, when the wicked are raised, the city, New Jerusalem, comes down from heaven, and the earth is prepared for the everlasting inheritance of the saints (verses 4-7); (3) the glorious condition of things when the kingdom is established, when the Lord shall be ruler over all the earth, and the New Jerusalem, as its metropolis, shall be safely inhabited by the redeemed forever. Verses 8-11.

Now, in verse 12 we come to a transition, and the prophet goes back to describe more particularly the fate of the enemies of Zion. Why this is brought in in this way, Henry Cowles, D. D., in his commentary on this chapter tells us in the following words: “The

prophet left the enemies of Zion at the third verse to follow the fortunes of Zion herself, and to show us, through verses 4-11, how signally the Lord appeared for her help, and how gloriously he turned her darkness into day. . . . Now he returns to inform us of the doom of those old enemies who marshaled their hosts against Zion, as appears in verses 1-3.”

Thus we are here taken back to the great battle of the day of the Lord in the opening of the chapter. This is the time when the seven last plagues (Rev. 16:1-17) are at their height, and will produce the results of verse 12. This is also the time when the “great whirlwind” of Jer. 25:30-33 will be raised up, and the slain of the Lord shall be from one end of the earth even to the other end of the earth.

Verse 14 says, “And Judah also shall fight at Jerusalem.” Dr. Cowles says, “*In* Jerusalem, not *against* her,” as the margin reads. Judah here would, then, stand for the powers of righteousness enlisted in this conflict, as symbolized in Revelation 19 by Him that sat upon the horse, and his armies. Mention is then made of the heathen, which harmonizes with Joel, who says that the heathen are to be summoned to the great battle in the day of the Lord. Joel 3:12-14. The same plagues that fall upon the men destroy their animals, according to Zech. 14:15.

We now come to verse 16, which is often considered, a difficult passage; but we think it will appear that there is only one place to which it can apply. It reads: “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.” We have seen the fate of those who make war upon the King of kings (Rev. 17:14; 19:19-21),—they are all destroyed. We have also seen that the judgments and convulsions of that fearful time extend to all the earth, and destroy *all* the wicked, from one end of the earth to the other. Then who are those that are “left”?—It is those who escape these scenes (Luke 21:36), and are saved in the day of the Lord. Dan. 12:1. They cannot possibly be any others. And this is why the text is so positive: “*Every one* that is left.”

And when, then, do they go up to keep the feast of tabernacles? The typical feast of tabernacles is nevermore to be kept; but the glorious antitype is to be kept in the kingdom of God. Isaiah describes it in these words: “For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before me, saith the Lord, so shall your seed and your name remain. And it shall come to pass, that from one new

moon to another [or from month to month. Rev. 21:2], and from one Sabbath to another, shall all flesh come to worship before me, saith the Lord.” Here, then, we have another detached glimpse of the blessed state of the redeemed thrown in as a ray of light upon the dark picture, just as the prophet Daniel, in the midst of a description of the wicked governments of the earth, represented by ravenous beasts, all at once throws a flash-light on the fact that the saints are at last to take the kingdom and possess it forever and ever. Dan. 7:18.

Then the prophet passes back to the time when the requisite preparation could be made to attain to the condition of verse 16, and when men had the power to *refuse* to accept the conditions; for it is evident that verse 17, referring to a time when some would *refuse* to worship the King, the Lord of Hosts, Cannot apply at the same time with verse 16, which declares that at that time *every one will* go up to worship the Lord of Hosts. It therefore goes back to the time of probation, and brings to view those who, under the figure of refusing to keep the feast of tabernacles, reject the overtures of the gospel. Thus Barrows, in Butler’s “Bible Work,” under this text, says: “In these words the future reception of the true religion by all nations is foretold under, the *symbols* of the *Mosaic economy* with its ritual, its yearly feasts, and its central place of worship. For this principle of interpretation we have the authority of the New Testament. Rom. 12:1; 1 Peter 2:5.”

Upon these there was to be no rain. That is, those who refuse the gospel now, in the day of probation, shall be destitute of all spiritual blessings, fitly symbolized by having no rain, rain being the source in those Eastern countries of all vegetation and fruitfulness. Their hearts will be destitute and barren of all good, and the time will come when, all opportunities of mercy being past, no showers of grace can ever reach them more. Egypt was especially dependent upon the rainfall on the Upper Nile, and would most severely feel its loss. So Egypt is taken especially to represent the threatened judgment. In verse 19, the mention of Egypt and all nations shows that this is a universal principle in the economy of God’s grace.

Verses 20 and 21 show the state of things in the future kingdom of God. “Holiness unto the Lord” shall characterize everything. Every vessel and utensil used in the ordinary routine of life, as well as in the service of the Lord, shall be holiness to the Lord. And “there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the Lord of Hosts.” John,

speaking of the holy city in Rev. 21:27, gives a parallel expression in these words: "And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth, neither whatsoever worketh abomination, or maketh a lie: but they which are written in the Lamb's book of life."

Thus broad and wonderful is the scope of that far-away prophecy of Zechariah, made clear and harmonious in the later revelations of New Testament times.