

Zechariah 14 – Part 2

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“And you shall flee to the valley of my mountains, for the valley of the mountains shall reach 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.” (Zechariah 14:5 ESV).

A MIDST THE CALAMITIES THAT come upon Jerusalem when the city is taken (Zech 14:2), God’s people are to **flee to the valley of His mountains**. Zechariah’s words here are strikingly similar to Jesus’ instructions to His disciples in the Olivet Discourse (Matthew 24, Mark 13, Luke 21). He said they were to “*flee to the mountains*” (Luke 21:21) when they saw Jerusalem “*surrounded by armies*” (Luke 21:20).

According to the Church historian Eusebius, the believers in Jerusalem did in fact escape the horrors of the Roman siege and “fled to a certain town beyond the Jordan, called Pella.”¹ Zechariah’s phrase, **the valley of the mountains**, is an apt description of Pella, as the “site of ancient Pella lies among rugged hills and sharp valleys in the modern country of Jordan” while Pella itself “stood on two mounds.”²

Zechariah says that **the valley of the mountains**, to which they were to flee, **shall reach Azal**. The significance of the term *Azal* is not as much topographical as it is theological. Commenting on this, Mike Bull observes: “The mention of Azal possibly links this event with the ‘Azal’ goat on the Day of Atonement.”³ This makes sense since “many commentators believe that Azazel originates from Azal.”⁴ According to Thomas Douglas, Azazel is simply the “reduplicated form” of Azal.⁵

Consequently, the reference to *Azal* would make a conceptual connection to the Day of Atonement in the minds of Zechariah’s original audience. The theological messaging is that those who heeded Jesus’ words, and fled to the mountains, would find true salvation — as typified in the atonement rituals. This contrasts with those who clung to the city, remained in the city, and went down with the flames of the city.

This flight to the mountains is compared to the flight **from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah**. Fittingly, on the night that the Idumeans and the Zealots gained control of the temple, Josephus

speaks of “...amazing concussions and bellowings of the earth, that was in an earthquake” (Josephus, *Wars*, 4.4.5). The combined signals of the Zealots standing in the temple and the Romans surrounding the city would be the believers’ cue to flee (cf. Matt 24:15-18; Luke 21:20-21) — just as in the days of the earthquake at the time of King Uzziah.

Verse 5 concludes with the statement: “***Then the Lord my God will come, and all the holy ones with him.***” This language is similar to Jude 14 and the Lord coming “*with many thousands of His holy ones.*” With that said, this coming of the Lord concerns Jude’s readers’ own day and time. Jude’s prophecy pertained to a judgment of certain men (Jude 14) who had “*crept in unaware*” (Jude 4) among the assemblies of the first-century believers (Jude 12).

Likewise, Jesus speaks of His cloud-coming in judgment, accompanied by His angels (Matt 24:30-31), before the first-century generation passed away (Matt 24:34). Earlier, He had told His disciples that He would come “*in the glory of His Father with His angels*” before the last of His disciples died (Matt 16:27-28).

In short, Zechariah’s words coincide with the language of Jesus’ judgment-coming in the first century. He came in judgment with His angels — with all His holy ones. There is no need to catapult the words of Zechariah, Jesus, or Jude into the far-distant future — or to the end of history.

“On that day there will be no light; the luminaries will die out. For it will be a unique day which is known to the LORD, neither day nor night, but it will come about that at the time of evening there will be light” (Zech 14:6-7).

The prophet speaks of a **unique day** wherein **there will be no light**, and the created order is in disarray. It’s an ominous time of cosmic portents that will bring **light at the time of the evening**. In these verses, Zechariah is echoing the words of an earlier prophet who spoke of the same cosmic role reversal and what this meant for old covenant Israel:

“This is what the Lord says, He who gives the sun for light by day, and the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, Who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar — The Lord of armies is His name: ‘If this fixed order departs From Me,’ declares the Lord, ‘Then the descendants of Israel also will cease to be a nation before Me forever’” (Jer 31:36-37).

According to Jeremiah, this role reversal of night and day would be an omen to ethnic Israel that God’s unique relationship with them was over. Zechariah is tracking on the same theme as the former prophet and letting his readers know that Jeremiah’s warning would in fact become a reality.

Accordingly, during the 40-year transition period in the first century, God providentially made sure that both portents couldn't possibly be missed by those who rejected their Messiah. The first premonition came when they hung Jesus on the cross:

“And when it was about the sixth hour, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. The sun being obscured, the veil of the temple was torn in two” (Luke 23:44-45).

Day had turned to night when they sealed their own fate by crucifying the Lord of glory. Next, night turned into day as the events of the Roman-Jewish war began. Josephus writes:

“Thus also before the Jews’ rebellion, and before those commotions which preceded the war, when the people were come in great crowds to the feast of unleavened bread, on the eighth day of the month Xanthicus [Nisan], and at the ninth hour of the night, so great a light shone round the altar and the holy house, that it appeared to be bright day time; which lasted for half an hour” (Josephus, *Wars*, 6.5.3).

The strange phenomenon emanating from the temple, on that fateful night, was completely misinterpreted by those who should have known better. Josephus informs us that “this light seemed to be a good sign to the unskillful,” and they completely missed the fact that “the signal foreshadowed the desolation that was coming upon them.”

They should have read Jeremiah. They should have read Zechariah. They should have known what this meant, but they didn't.

Jesus' followers did.

They were living during this unique time between the “night” of the vanishing old covenant era and the “day” of the unending new covenant age that both Jeremiah and Zechariah had prophesied about in ages past. Accordingly, Paul wrote to the first-century believers: “*The night is almost gone, and the day is at hand*” (Rom 13:12). Likewise, Peter tells his readers to “pay attention” to the “prophetic word” as “*to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your heart*” (2 Pet 1:19). The light of that morning star shines forevermore in the hearts of true believers who live in the everlasting “day” of the new covenant. There is “*no more night*” in the city (Rev 22:5).⁶

“And on that day living waters will flow out of Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea and the other half toward the western sea; it will be in summer as well as in winter” (Zech 14:8).

In the everlasting **day** of the new covenant, **living waters will flow out of Jerusalem**. It's impossible not to hear Zechariah's reference to "*living waters*" being echoed in the words of Jesus on the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles:

"Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, 'If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. The one who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, from his belly being will flow rivers of living water'" (John 7:37-38).

The fact that Jesus spoke these words during the Feast of Tabernacles (John 7:37) is significant. Zechariah 12-14 was "a central passage in the Feast's liturgy" with "Zechariah 14 being one of its prophetic *Haphtaroth*."⁷ The *Haphtaroth* was the reading from the Prophets that followed the reading from the Law. In other words, Zechariah's words would have been fresh on the minds of Jesus' listeners when He uttered His own words on "*the last day of the great feast*" (John 7:37).

Jesus said that these living waters would flow from believers' bellies (*koilia*), or from their central being. In the Bible, Jerusalem was regarded as the navel of the earth and the center of the world (Ezek 5:5; 38:12). With "John 7:38 being a quotation primarily of Zechariah 14:8," writes Glenn Balfour, the "imagery opens up,"⁸ and the prophecy was "transferred from Jerusalem to the believer."⁹ Simply put, Zechariah's living waters flowing from Jerusalem find their fulfillment in Jesus' living waters flowing from His people, who comprise the New Jerusalem.

The references to the **eastern sea** and **western sea** telegraph the idea that the "*living waters*" would flow in every direction, unlimited by geographical boundaries. The references to **summer** and **winter** telegraph the idea that the life-giving restoration is unbound by time. Both images combined telegraph the idea that the living waters, flowing to and through Jesus' followers, are available to all people everywhere at all times (cf. Rev 22:17).

"And the Lord will be king over all the earth; on that day the Lord will be the only one, and His name the only one" (Zech 14:9).

Throughout old covenant Israel's history, God's people had a problem, and it wouldn't go away. They had a problem with the second commandment: "*You shall have no other gods besides me*" (Exod 20:3).

Despite all that the Lord had done for them, time and again, the ancient Israelites constantly reverted back to worshipping false gods. It started right away with the golden calf (Exod 32:1-10) and the goat demons in the wilderness (Lev 17:7), and it continued until it sent them into exile (Zeph 4:1-6). By the time of the New Testament, Stephen informs us that nothing had changed. When he was dragged before the high

priest and the synagogue council, Stephen recounted the apostate deeds of their ancestors and told them, “*You are doing just as your fathers did*” (Acts 7:40-43; Acts 7:51). In other words, rejecting Jesus was equivalent to idolatry.

Unlike the old covenant, the writer to the Hebrews tells us that everything would change under the new covenant — specifically with regard to the matter of worshiping other gods: “...*I will put My laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be My people*” (Heb 8:10b). The last line of this verse from Hebrews is nearly identical to the words of Revelation 21:3, describing the New Jerusalem: “*Behold the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people and God himself will be with them as their God.*”

This echoes what Zechariah says. For the new covenant believer, the Lord alone is **King**. He is the **only one**, and **His name is the only one**. And His name is Jesus. No more false gods.

“All the land will change into a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem; but Jerusalem will rise and remain on its site from Benjamin’s Gate as far as the place of the First Gate to the Corner Gate, and from the Tower of Hananel to the king’s wine presses” (Zech 14:10).

Christ’s kingship, as it is manifested through His people (the members of the New Jerusalem), is portrayed in this verse as Jerusalem being elevated while the surrounding land is leveled. This language is similar to the words of John the Baptist, where geographical movements and tectonic shifts are clearly *not* meant to be understood literally (Luke 3:5). The prophets frequently used the imagery of geological transformation as a symbolic portrayal of God’s redemptive work and the prominence of His kingdom. As Ken Gentry writes:

“The mountain of the house of the LORD. The ‘house of the LORD’ refers to the new covenant church (1 Cor 3:16; 6:19; 2 Cor 6:16; Eph 2:19–22; 1 Peter 2:5), which was ‘established’ (Hebrew, *kun* implies of permanent duration) on earth ‘in the last days’... It is a ‘mountain’ in that it is a city set on a hill (Matt 5:14; Heb 12:22). It is to be “the chief of the mountains” (v. 2d) in that it will eventually be the world’s leading influence. Contrary to dispensationalism, this is not to be taken literalistically, as if Jerusalem will physically be elevated higher than Mount Everest (with all the health difficulties that would bring).”¹⁰

The rising of the mountain is simply imagery meant to capture the preeminence and prominence of the work accomplished by Jesus Christ in and through His people. The prophets frequently used these visual geographical illustrations to paint a picture of the wonder of the reality of fulfillment in Christ. Here in chapter 14, Zechariah is employing familiar prophetic imagery to communicate the elevation of God’s

people. The work of Christ takes His people to new levels, and everything else is like a flat plain beneath them.

“People will live in it, and there will no longer be a curse, for Jerusalem will live in security” (Zech 14:11).

In verse 11, Zechariah says of the New Jerusalem: *“People will live in it, and there will no longer be a curse, for Jerusalem will live in security.”* Due to the wording of this verse in the English (NASB), the natural inclination is to recall the “curses” of Genesis 3. However, this is not the same word for “curse” that is used in Genesis,¹¹ and Zechariah is not promising that snakes will start walking upright (Gen 3:14) or that the ground will stop producing thorns and thistles (Gen 3:17).¹²

The word translated “curse” in Zechariah 14:11 is *cherem*, and it refers to “a devoted thing” that is “put under a ban.”¹³ Deuteronomy 7:25-26 is the key verse in understanding the meaning of this word and the concept behind it:

“The carved images of their gods you shall burn with fire. You shall not covet the silver or the gold that is on them or take it for yourselves, lest you be ensnared by it, for it is an abomination to the Lord your God. And you shall not bring an abominable thing (cherem) into your house and become devoted to destruction (cherem) like it. You shall utterly detest and abhor it, for it is devoted to destruction” (cherem) (Deut 7:25-26, ESV).

Zechariah is saying that under the new covenant, in the New Jerusalem, there will be no *cherem*. Graven images, idols, and false gods have no place in the life of a true believer. Whatever we “worshiped” before coming to Christ is to be “devoted to destruction.” He and He alone is first and foremost in our lives, and we do all that we do unto the glory of God (1 Cor 10:31). This ties in perfectly with the theme of the exclusivity of the Lord introduced in verse 9, and this is what it is all about.

The “old things are passed away, and all things become new” (2 Cor 5:17). We turn our backs on the gods of men and the idols that we worshiped before turning to the Lord. For the believer, “the Lord” is “the only one, and His name is the only one” (Zech 14:9).

This is identical to what John says regarding the New Jerusalem in the book of Revelation:

“No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads” (Rev 22:3-4).

The word translated “accursed” is *katanáthema*, and it refers to a thing “which is devoted or given over to a deity, accursed thing,” according to BDAG.¹⁴ According to Thayer, it is “specifically, an offering resulting from a vow, which after being consecrated to a god was hung upon the walls or columns of the temple, or put in some other conspicuous place.”¹⁵

Thus, John and Zechariah are both tracking on the same idea. The meaning is not the reverse or removal of the Genesis curses, but the removal of anything that is “accursed” in the life of a true believer. As members of the new covenant community, we don’t worship false gods anymore, nor do we make a false god out of anything in our lives. For us, every aspect of our lives and all that we do is sacred, holy, and devoted to the Lord. The people of the New Jerusalem “*dwell securely*” by removing everything “*devoted to destruction*,” as to not incur God’s anger and to ensure His blessing in our lives.

Recap and Takeaways

Zechariah 14:5

When judgment fell on first-century Jerusalem, God’s people fled to the valley of His mountains in Pella. They found deliverance and true salvation, while the Lord came in judgment against those who clung to the old ways, accompanied by His holy ones.

Takeaway: *Like those who heeded Jesus’ words, we need to listen to the wisdom of God’s Word, rather than stubbornly clinging to anything that would hinder us from following and obeying Him.*

Zechariah 14:6-7

A unique transition period is described using cosmic imagery — darkness and light reversing roles. The old order was passing away, and a new day was dawning.

Takeaway: *This reminds us that God often works through periods of upheaval and uncertainty to bring about something better in our lives. Even when circumstances seem dark, the light of His love breaks through.*

Zechariah 14:8

Living waters flow from Jerusalem in every direction and in every season. This points to the unlimited life-giving work of Christ flowing through His people to the world.

Takeaway: *This means that the gospel is not limited by geography, culture, or time. As believers, we are called to be the channels through which God’s love and blessings flow to others, and there are no limitations as to where or when His living waters flow.*

Zechariah 14:9

The Lord alone is King, and His name alone is supreme. The divided loyalties that plagued old covenant Israel are replaced by wholehearted devotion to God under the new covenant.

Takeaway: *Christ deserves first place in our lives. Anything competing for that place needs to be demoted.*

Zechariah 14:10

Jerusalem is pictured as being elevated above the surrounding land. The imagery highlights the prominence and glory of God's redeemed people under Christ's reign.

Takeaway: *Our identity and significance are found in Christ and His kingdom rather than worldly status. God takes His people to new levels when our focus is on Him, and everything else flattens out and falls aside when we rise to be all that He has called us to be.*

Zechariah 14:11

The New Jerusalem is secure because there is no longer anything devoted to false worship or destruction within it. God's people are devoted wholly to Him.

Takeaway: *Following Christ means putting away the idols that once ruled our lives. Every part of life becomes holy when it is devoted to God. Every sin that hinders us needs to be devoted to destruction. ✝*

(For a more in-depth treatment of these verses, see:

Gary DeMar and Robert Cruickshank, Jr., *Making Prophetic Sense of Zechariah 14*,

[The American Vision: 2026], <https://store.americanvision.org/products/making-prophetic-sense-of-zechariah-14>.)

1. Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History*, 3:5.
2. J. Julius Scott, Jr., *Did Jerusalem Christians Flee to Pella?* | Godawa.com, <https://bit.ly/3R3KZB2>, 3.
3. Mike Bull, "The Festal Structure of Zechariah 12-14," Bible Matrix, <https://bit.ly/3F3eVXy>
4. Andrew Paul Ward, *The One That Got Away: An Analysis of the Goat Sacrifice in Leviticus 16* | Academia, <https://bit.ly/3T3ILXZ>, 6.
5. Tom Douglas, *Scapegoats: Transferring Blame* (London and New York: Routledge, 1995), 7.
6. Garrick Allen identifies the correlation between Zechariah 14:7 and Revelation 22:5 as being among the "numerous texts from Rev 19–22 that use material from Zech 14.7–11" (Garrick V.

Allen, *The Book of Revelation and Early Jewish textual culture*. Vol. 168. Cambridge University Press, 2017, p. 208).

7. Glenn Balfour, "The Jewishness of John's Use of the Scriptures in John 6:31 and 7:37-38" (*Tyndale Bulletin* 46.2 [1995]), 376, <https://bit.ly/4hZFqM4>; see also: J. Thackeray, *The Septuagint and Jewish Worship: A Study in Origins* (London, Milford: OUP, 1920), pp. 64-67.
8. Balfour, "The Jewishness of John's Use," 374-375.
9. Balfour, "The Jewishness of John's Use," 374.
10. Kenneth L. Gentry, Jr., A QUICK SUMMARY OF ISAIAH 2 | Postmillennial Worldview, <https://bit.ly/4fmBSol>
11. The word in Zechariah is *cherem* while the word in Genesis is *arar*. These are two completely different terms and are unrelated to each other.
12. These are the only two things that are cursed in Genesis 3. No curses are pronounced against Adam and Eve, per se. While the ground is cursed because of Adam, Adam himself is not cursed.
13. חֶרֶם (che.rem) in the STEP Bible App.
14. BDAG Lexicon, κατανάθεμα, 463.
15. G331 ἀνάθεμα - Strong's Greek Lexicon | Study Bible Info <https://bit.ly/4yFKg9S>