

A Vivid Description of the Return of the Lord to This Earth

Zechariah 14:1-11

Zechariah 14:1-11 - *“Behold, the day of the Lord is coming, and your spoil will be divided in your midst. ² For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem; the city shall be taken, the houses rifled, and the women ravished. Half of the city shall go into captivity, but the remnant of the people shall not be cut off from the city. ³ Then the Lord will go forth and fight against those nations, as He fights in the day of battle.*

⁴ And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, from east to west, making a very large valley; half of the mountain shall move toward the north and half of it toward the south. ⁵ Then you shall flee through My mountain valley, for the mountain valley shall reach to Azal. Yes, you shall flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah.

Thus the Lord my God will come, and all the saints with You.

⁶ It shall come to pass in that day that there will be no light; the lights will diminish. ⁷ It shall be one day that is known to the Lord— neither day nor night. But at evening time it shall happen that it will be light.

⁸ And in that day it shall be that living waters shall flow from Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea and half of them toward the western sea; in both summer and winter it shall occur.

⁹ And the Lord shall be King over all the earth. In that day it shall be “The Lord is one,” and His name one.

¹⁰ All the land shall be turned into a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem. Jerusalem shall be raised up and inhabited in her place from Benjamin’s Gate to the place of the First Gate and the Corner Gate, and from the Tower of Hananel to the king’s winepresses. ¹¹ The people shall dwell in it; and no longer shall there be utter destruction, but Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited.”

Background Notes

Here are three reasons why the book of Zechariah is not the easiest book in the Bible to study and understand:

a. *Zechariah is a post-exilic prophet, so you need to know some Old Testament history.*

If you don't know some basic Old Testament history, the prophecy of Zechariah will be hard to understand.

You need to know that Nebuchadnezzar's Babylonian armies conquered Jerusalem, destroyed Solomon's beautiful Temple, and took many Jews into captivity. You need to know that after seventy years in exile, the Jews were permitted to return home to Jerusalem and start rebuilding the Temple. You need to know that the people became discouraged and stopped building - until the Lord raised up two post-exilic prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, to encourage the people to finish rebuilding the house of the Lord. And you need to know that the people finally finished the job 20 years after they began the project - and four years after Zechariah began his ministry.

b. Zechariah contains a lot of apocalyptic literature.

“Apocalyptic literature” is filled with visions of the future. For example, the book of Revelation is apocalyptic literature. At times the visions may be highly symbolic, and if so, they are often difficult to interpret.

c. Zechariah contains many prophecies that have not yet been fulfilled.

It is always harder to interpret prophecies that have not yet been fulfilled, compared to prophecies that have already been fulfilled. That’s obvious!

Let me give you two “handles” that should help you with interpreting Zechariah and other prophetic books of the Old Testament.

*Handle 1: **Do** know the basic outline of future events.*

We live in the era of time known as the “Church Age.” The Church Age will end with the Rapture of the Church - the return of the Lord for His bride, the Church. This could take place at any time. After the Rapture, the seven-year Tribulation period will ensue. The second half of this seven-year period is called the “Great Tribulation.” The “Battle of Armageddon” will occur near the end of the Great Tribulation.

The Great Tribulation will end with the return of the Lord. When He returns, the Lord will deliver His people, He will judge the nations, and He will set up His worldwide kingdom, with Jerusalem as His capital. This time period is known as the “Millennium,” because the worldwide kingdom of Christ will last for a thousand years (Revelation 20). After that the New Heavens and the New Earth and the eternal state will unfold. There are many more details - but remember that basic outline of future events.

*Handle 2: **Don’t** spiritualize Old Testament Israel and make it the New Testament Church.*

Israel is Israel - throughout the Bible! Old Testament prophecies certainly use figurative language, but it’s important **not** to spiritualize or allegorize Israel, or to think that promises God made to Israel are being “fulfilled spiritually” in the Church.

The Church is not “the New Israel.” Israel is Israel, and the Church is the Church!

So in Zechariah 14, when we read about Israel, Jerusalem, and the Mount of Olives – we must **not** allegorize these terms and say that they somehow refer to the New Testament Church (as some people believe). No! Jerusalem and the Mount of Olives here mean the **literal** city of Jerusalem and the **literal** hill called the Mount of Olives!

Doctrinal Points

1. In that day the Lord will return to the Mount of Olives.

Zechariah 14:1-11 deals with events at the end of the Great Tribulation, leading up to the literal return of the Lord to the literal Mount of Olives. At that time, all nations will be gathered against Jerusalem: *“For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem” (v2)*. This “gathering of the nations” will be part of the End Time battle that is often called the “Battle of Armageddon.” Perhaps Jerusalem, the capital of Israel, will be wealthy in that day – possibly because of the natural resources of Israel. In any case, the nations of the world will gather together to attack Jerusalem.

But just when it seems that all hope is lost, the Lord will return! He will “touch down” on the Mount of Olives, and He will deliver His people, the believing remnant of Jews who are still living - those who have not been martyred during the Tribulation. (We discussed this deliverance back in Zechariah 12.)

The Lord ascended into Heaven from the literal Mount of Olives, and He will return to earth upon the literal Mount of Olives! At the time of His ascension, angels told the disciples: *“Man of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus who is taken up from you into heaven will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven” (Acts 1:11)*.

When the Lord Jesus left this earth, He ascended visibly, personally, and bodily – and He will return visibly, personally, and bodily. He will return to the Mount of Olives, accompanied by His “holy ones.” Notice the end of verse 5: *“Thus the Lord my God will come, and all the saints with You.”* Who are these *saints*, or *holy ones*? They are probably both angels and saints. And that includes us - so get excited!

Remember, we believers, members of the Church, will leave this earth at the Rapture. We will be with the Lord during the Tribulation period on earth. Then we’ll come back with the Lord to reign with Him in His millennial earthly kingdom. 1 Thessalonians 3:13 speaks of the coming of the Lord Jesus with all His saints. On our Holy Land tours, when we’re standing on the Mount of Olives looking out over Jerusalem, I always tell the folks, **‘We will be back!’** If you’re a believer, you’ll be there! We’re coming back - and we will reign with Christ! In that day, the Lord will return to the Mount of Olives.

2. In that day there will be topographical changes and cosmic disturbances.

Verses 4-5 - *“ And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two from east to west, making a very large valley; half of the mountain shall move toward the north and half of it toward the south. Then you shall flee through My mountain valley.*

A great earthquake will occur when the Lord Jesus returns. The Mount of Olives will split, and a large valley will be formed between the two halves. This valley will become the means of escape for the believing Jewish remnant who are trapped in Jerusalem. Thus the Lord will rescue them.

All the land for miles around Jerusalem will become a level plain, and Jerusalem will be the highest point and focal point of the whole area (v10). Furthermore, fresh subterranean waters will flow out from Jerusalem towards the Dead Sea in the east, and the Mediterranean Sea in the west (v8). (To read more about these waters, see Ezekiel 47.)

People who teach that “the Church is the new Israel” say that this stream is “the gospel stream going out from the Church.” **No!** These are **literal** fresh waters that will flow out from the **literal** city of Jerusalem, the capital of our Lord’s future worldwide kingdom on this earth. This fresh water stream will make the Judean wilderness a very fertile area.

In addition to the topographical changes, cosmic disturbances will occur at the time of our Lord’s return (v6-7). The Lord Jesus described these cosmic disturbances: *“Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven”*(Matthew 24:29-30).

The point of Zechariah 14:6-7 seems to be that when the Lord returns, there will be such cosmic disturbances that at first the sources of natural light will be blocked (v6). But then as we move into the time of the Lord’s millennial kingdom, the natural light will return. In fact, it will return with such increased intensity that the night will never be completely dark, but there will always be some light. It seems that Isaiah 30:26 also described this phenomenon at the time of the kingdom: *“the moon will shine as the sun, and the sunlight will be seven times brighter.”*

So in that day, there will be topographical changes and cosmic disturbances.

Practical Application

The Lord can bring about great changes in a short time – for you!

Verse 11: *“The people shall dwell in it; and no longer shall there be utter destruction, but Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited.”*

What a change between what we read about Jerusalem in verse 11, compared to verse 2! There will be great changes in Jerusalem in a relatively short time – and these changes will all be **literal** changes! But we can certainly apply this verse as a lesson for us: the Lord can bring about great changes for you in a short time.

Maybe you’re in difficult circumstances at work, or at home, or in some other situation, and it looks like there’s no way out. Everything is against you, and everyone is against you, and you’re in a losing situation from the world’s perspective. Put your trust in the Lord. Commit the situation to Him! Read Zechariah 14 again, and be encouraged!

The Lord can bring about great changes - in a short time – for you!