

Kings and Prophets 17-12-21

This is Thursday, the 21st of December, 2017. We continue our study in Kings and Prophets. I'm reminded of the old Star Trek, you know, it's a five-year mission.

We've been doing this now for, if you subtract the gap in the latter part of 2016, we're pretty much at the five-year mark. But it was a very ambitious undertaking, I think, by anybody's measure to start with the books of Kings and Chronicles and begin at Solomon and move all the way through the days of the United and then the Divided Kingdom, primarily the Divided Kingdom and the exit stage north of the Northern Kingdom, and then Judah going into captivity with the Babylonians, and then the pre-exilic, exilic, and now the post-exilic prophets that we have looked at in their historic context. And I know for me it's really been a learning experience to see the various messages in their context and see why God sent these particular words at these particular times.

And I don't want to lose sight as we do that of the fact that it is also written for our instruction and God's dealings with the nation in the Old Testament are so instructive for us as believers. And so as we come to the close of our penultimate prophet here, Zachariah, we're in chapter 14 tonight, we're going to see that the message that God delivers through Zachariah is pertinent for us. The place where the returning exiles find themselves in reconstructing the habitation for God and yet at the same time having their vision directed further into the future than the accomplishment of the immediate goal.

Haggai and Zachariah come as the effort to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem is faltering, and Haggai calls them back to the work and at the same time calls them back to the work in their own hearts. And you see that there's much more of an emphasis on the spiritual component to obedience rather than just the overt forms of obedience. The law of Moses specified overt behavior.

Do this and thou shalt live. But as you move into the times of the prophets, there is much more of an inward look. This people honors me with their lips, but their heart is far from me.

The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked. Who can know it? And more of a looking forward to the Redeemer who will come, the suffering servant who will come, the conquering king who will come, and do for Israel what its own history demonstrates we cannot do for ourselves. We can't overcome our fallen nature.

We can't overcome our corruption. We can't fix sin and its effects. And it is the spiritual connection to God for us through Christ that is the key, and it is the beginning of our salvation.

Our salvation is not complete. It is ongoing. But the extent to which we enter into and avail ourselves of our deliverance depends on our attitude and on the priorities that we set, the goals that we pursue, and how far ahead we look each day as we set our tasks.

That's what Zechariah is really calling the people to. At this point in the book, they probably have gone ahead and finished the physical temple. But the glory of God did not fill it.

They didn't have a great dedication with the kind of glory cloud that Solomon and all of the assembled people witnessed. And it's sobering to realize that God is no longer in the realm of active miracle in Israel. He doesn't part seas and demolish armies and do the kinds of things that he has historically done.

And why is that? Well, it's a perverse generation that seeks a sign and has to be sustained by signs. If you mature, you don't need those primitive, so to speak, evidences of God's presence and God's power. And the people who saw them still went astray.

The people who passed through the sea with Moses a few days later were grumbling in the wilderness and ready to go back to Egypt. The people who saw the king's arm wither and saw the altar crumble didn't abandon idolatry. The people in Ahab and Jezebel's day saw the miracles with Elijah and signs and those evidences don't change the heart.

They can impress. There can be a momentary reversal of attitude. But we don't find Nebuchadnezzar with all of his impressive prayer and song of praise to God after he recovers from his seven years of growing his fingernails and eating grass like a beast.

But history doesn't record him being a faithful and devoted follower of the God of Israel. He was impressed by that, but he's symbolic of the failure of the Gentile world to recognize the God of Israel as the God of all creation. So that's where we are tonight.

We're going to, as is our custom, start by going to the Lord in prayer. And then we'll pick up here and conclude our study in this great prophetic book of Zechariah. Shall we pray? Father, how grateful we are for your grace and your faithfulness.

We are variable. We are fallible. We are corrupt and fallen, and yet through the work of the Lord Jesus Christ we have new life and new hope and new power.

And as we learn to avail ourselves of these wonderful gifts from your throne and these things that have come to us through the Lord Jesus Christ, we begin to enter into the eternal realms, even while we are still here wrestling against principalities and powers and the rulers of the darkness of this age, as well as our own flesh. And as we seek to put on the full armor and to be guided by your word and strengthened and guided by your Spirit, we learn to become citizens of the future kingdom and presence in which we will dwell. We thank you for this portion of Scripture that helps us look to that future day.

And as we see you speaking to your people Israel, we know that in it and through it you're speaking to us as well. And we pray that each of us can catch the vision and catch the fire that is contained in this portion of your word, that it will motivate us and encourage us and strengthen us for the task at hand and help to prepare us for the eternal ages to come. And we pray these things in Jesus' name.

Amen. Well, as I said, we're in Zechariah chapter 14. This is actually the second great oracle in chapter 12 through 14.

You remember it begins with the burden of the word of the Lord against Israel in chapter 12. But it very quickly turns to a message of hope. And what we see is that there is a centerpiece in chapter 13, which is the cleansing of God's people, the cleansing of the land, the idolatry being cut off, the fountain for cleansing that is opened, and the vision of the shepherd savior, as you have it labeled there in your New King James, in the deliverance of the city from this greatest of all attacks, the battle of Armageddon.

Those who remain have been refined by the fire, and they are the ones qualified to dwell in Jerusalem, which is the millennial Jerusalem. But pictorially and metaphorically and symbolically, if you will, it pictures the struggle that we face and the opportunity we have to be citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem, the new Jerusalem. And so let me offer you a few thoughts on this section as we enter into it.

We've already noted the repetition of the phrase, in that day, in this second oracle. It's found 16 times in these three chapters. The day of the Lord is the day of wrath and judgment on those who have rejected God's grace and the opportunity to join themselves with God at this time through joining to Israel.

In our day, of course, we have the gospel of Jesus Christ and the opportunity to lay hold of it by faith. And we've seen in our Corinthian study, we don't have to be dazzled with a lot of great debate points and arguments from logic or reason. It is recognizing a need, seeing the solution, and placing our trust in God for that solution.

And as I remarked to somebody earlier this week, Christian faith is a lot, as it is a relationship with God, a loving relationship. God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. God commends His love toward us in that while we were sinners, Christ died for us.

Greater love hath no man than to lay his life down for others. And we love because He first loved us. It's primarily entered into by recognizing the love of God for us and loving Him in return.

You go back to the first and greatest commandment of the law. What is it? Love the Lord your God wholeheartedly with everything you've got, right? Well, think about love relationships that we have by analogy. Somebody said, well, this doesn't seem like this religion, your Christian faith here, doesn't seem like it's for analytical thinkers.

It doesn't bear close scrutiny from the analytical mind. And I responded by saying, well, think about it. Your personal relationships that are defined by love, whether it's your family or your spouse or whatever, did you enter into that with a bunch of analytical thinking? Did somebody say, now, take this girl over here.

Let's list all of her good points and let's list her faults and let's analyze our way and decide if this

is somebody that is suitable for you to spend the rest of your life with. We don't enter into loving relationships. When a baby doesn't pop into our family and we say, well, brown eyes.

I was really hoping for blonde hair and blue eyes, and this doesn't fit the analytical model that I had for my ideal family, and let's give this one away and try again. You see what I'm saying? You don't enter into love relationships based on analytical thinking. Nothing wrong with analytical thinking.

I like to think I'm an analytical thinker. And I think you find some of the finest minds and some of the most fruitful analytical thinking ever in the scriptures and in the study of the scriptures and in the collating of the scriptures. We have an eminently reasonable faith.

It makes a lot of sense, but the making sense of it isn't what enters you into it anymore than when you fall helplessly and hopelessly in love and somebody argued you into it or reasoned you into it or gave you a list of pros and cons. The love comes first, and the appreciation for so many reasonable things follows, right? Well, this is what the world has backwards about Christian faith today. It is attacked on the grounds of reason.

It's attacked on the grounds of logic. It's attacked on the grounds of, well, we've never seen this God or any evidence of Him, and we think we've got alternate explanations for everything, and you need a crutch. There's something wrong with you.

You're mystical. You're not educated. The more educated somebody is, the less likely they are to be Christian.

I say, well, flip that around. The more theological education you have, the more Bible you know, the more likely you are to be a Christian. You don't find many atheists in seminary, and you don't find many hardcore Christians in the upper echelons of academia because it's an empty pursuit.

As soon as you get enough education to provide for your family and pursue your interests, you don't just stick around and get your third and fourth doctrine. Atheists are still hollow. They're still looking for something.

So they're going to populate scholarship and entertainment in a lot of vapid areas that don't ultimately satisfy. So I find it completely consistent, and my analytical mind tells me that makes sense, that the more time you spend in academia and all of its propagandized secular materialism, you're not going to find as many Christians. We don't find ourselves at home in that world of alternate explanation and if I can't see it, I don't believe it type of stuff.

So, of course. But to argue backwards and say you have to be stupid to be a Christian, that's a fallacious line of reasoning to a good analytical mind that knows how logic works. I say all of that to say that God manifests His love, and that's what we see in this section, Zechariah 12-14.

You remember it starts out with God's love for Zion, His heart for His people and the capital city

and the place where He and David cooperated to create a capital, remember? Where God would dwell on earth and be enthroned above the cherubim of the ark. It started in devastation, remember? How did the site of the temple get picked? Was it a wonderful beatific day and some angels came down and said, David, come up here and let me show you this meadow and there's a nice man named Aaron here and let's work this all out. How did the site for the temple get picked? Death and destruction, there's death in the sky, David numbered the people, Chronicles and Kings tell you that God put it in His heart or Satan put it in His heart and it's a little of each.

He disobeyed and in His disobedience, God gives him how many options? Three options, how many times have we seen thirds going on here? And He says, well, I'd rather fall into the hands of God than the hands of men and there's this massive destruction and death but the angel of death, as it were, stops over the threshing floor of Aaron and it is in that cessation of destruction that you have the place where God can now dwell. Do you think David is ever going to number the people again? Do you think David is ever going to do the Bathsheba thing again? He has been refined through the fire. He has seen the effects of his corrupt nature.

He's seen what it does. He's seen it in his own family with Amnon and Absalom, right? He has seen it in Adonijah. He will see it before he passes away and he sees it in his own nature with Bathsheba and with the numbering of the people and with that purging and that cleansing and that judgment comes the presence of God on earth.

That's what defines Jerusalem is the site of the temple. That's what makes it the capital for God's people is God's presence. But look at how it came.

Well, look at what God is doing with us. He is refining us. He is purging us and He incorporates our mistakes.

Paul says, well, should we sin that grace may abound? God forbid. But at the same time we recognize that it's not the end of the world when we fail. It's the end of the world if we fail and we don't learn from it.

We don't have the salve and the healing grace of God in that to make us stronger. They always say a bone will never break where it has mended. The mend is stronger than the rest of the bone.

It may break to one side of that or the other but the mended place is the strongest part of the bone when it's healed properly. That's what God does in our souls. The places where we fail and where we come short, we don't want to fail and come short so that God can just make us nothing but a mass of scars and healed up fractures.

But we recognize that God works all things together for good. And that's what He does here. So this day, the day of the Lord, is a bad thing and yet it's an essential and a good thing.

The discipline on David was a bad thing and yet it's a good thing. The Absalom driving out and

driving back is a bad thing. Driving out and then the return after Absalom's death on the part of David, up and down the slopes of the Mount of Olives.

But who is going to retrace those steps a thousand years later? Who is going to cross the Brook Kidron with His disciples and climb that very mount? Who is going to ascend to glory from that mount? And if you don't think that there's a wonderful dovetailing, the very place where Jesus' feet left the ground is where they're going to come right back down. Remember Acts 1.11? The same Jesus will return in a like manner as you have seen Him go? Well, it's very like manner. He is going to come right back to the very same place.

When He left, He divided people. Mothers and daughters and fathers and sons, households will divide. I've not come to bring peace but a sword.

The disciples with their message divided people into two camps. Those who accept Christ and those who don't. And it was a sort of division in the population.

Well, when Christ returns, the hill is going to divide and the people are going to be united. Because the only ones that are going to be left are these who have come through the judgment by faith and have qualified themselves for residence in the millennial Jerusalem. In the same way that we have the opportunity to qualify ourselves for residence in the New Jerusalem.

It's an exact correspondence. So as we see this Day of the Lord, this of course is throughout the prophetic scriptures. It's very prominent in Joel 3.9-16. Proclaim this among the nations.

Prepare for war. Wake up the mighty men. Let the mighty men of war draw near.

Let them come up. Beat your plowshares into swords. Everybody likes to quote the other reflection of that.

In the peaceable kingdom, they will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. A nation will not go to war against a nation. Neither shall they learn war anymore.

Those of you that have been in my office have seen that artillery shell lamp that I've got. It's a 75mm shell from World War I that I got from my grandpa. And around the rotating band, the copper rotating band, that verse is inscribed because they thought the Great War, as they used to call it.

Nobody called it World War I until World War II. It was the Great War. And they said it was the war to end all wars.

Nobody had ever seen so many nations in such massive devastation. And they said, well, we've learned our lesson. We're never going to do that again.

And yet we did even worse. What's the difference between that and what I just described in our spiritual experience? That we have experienced sin and experienced failure and experienced all

of its effects and we will never do this again. What's the difference? How come they couldn't do it after the Great War? No power of God.

The great resurgence of biblical study and interest that had begun in Germany in the late 1800s quickly turned into the Graf Wellhausen, the J.E.P.D. theory, and it hollowed out Christianity. The great revival movements that swept through America in the 1800s with Billy Sunday and so many others. The Niagara Movement and the Bible Conference Movement.

People were falling in the streets under the preaching of guys like Charles Spurgeon. There was a huge wave of revival that swept. Well, after that wave came the trough.

And that trough was in the first part of the 20th century. And despite the example of the war, people didn't have the spiritual power in Europe to prevent the second war. Europe was largely unchristian by that time.

People are just shocked that there could be the Third Reich and the attitude toward the Jews and all the rest of it. Where did that come from? You never get a negative attitude toward the Jews from people who believe their Bible. It has to come from unbelievers.

And if you can kill 6.5 million Jews and other assorted gypsies and whatnot because you think it's good for the country, that axis in Germany and later in Italy was godless. And what's in Italy? What's in Rome? What's in St. Peter's? The alleged seat of the church on earth. The vicar of Christ is supposed to be there.

And which side did Italy come in on in World War II? Allied with... And the church was complicit. They've taken a lot of flack for it too because they could have taken a stand. They could have taken a stand against Mussolini.

They could have done a lot of things and they didn't. They did the go-along-to-get-along thing and didn't take a stand. They didn't take a stand against the brutality and the carnage and the slaughter.

Anyway, the day of the Lord, in Joel 3.10, "...beat your plowshares into swords and your pruning hooks into spears. Let the weak say, I am strong. Assemble and come, all you nations, and gather together all around.

Cause your mighty ones to go down there, O Lord. Let the nations be wakened and come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat." You know what the valley of Jehoshaphat is? That's the big A, Armageddon. The valley of Jehoshaphat is Armageddon.

I will sit in judgment there, God says. We saw it in Zephaniah 1, the word of the Lord coming to Zephaniah, "...I will utterly consume everything from the face of the land," says the Lord. "...I'll consume man and beast, birds of heaven, fish of the sea, stumbling blocks along with the wicked.

I will cut off man from the face of the land." Jesus describes it in Matthew chapter 24. You know, all kinds of bad things, earthquakes and diverse plagues, but the end is not yet. The sun will be dark, the moon will turn to blood until they see the sign of the Son of Man coming.

That whole Matthew 24 picture is this time. The whole tribulation period, the last half, the last three and a half years, in Revelation 6-19, the opening of the seals, the blowing of the trumpets, the pouring of the vials, and the sounding of the thunders that people tend to forget about because they're not detailed, but it's universal. There's not just three sequences going on.

You've got the seals. Remember when we did Revelation, they're coterminous, in my view. As the seals are breaking, the trumpets are blowing, and God's vials of wrath, these cups of judgment, are being drunk down to the dregs, and the thunders are going off.

And I'll never forget the Bible and living sound records that our folks got, Matthew and I used to listen to by the hour. When Moses is up on Sinai, you remember there was clouds and thick darkness and thunder and lightning, and the people were afraid and running away down below. Yeah, Moses, you go.

We'll watch you from a safe distance. And so Moses is up there, and it's all just threatening and foreboding. You would think, well, this is God giving His word to the people.

This is God's covenant, and it's going to be glorious, and there'll be angels and birds and rainbows, and beatific living water flowing down Sinai and all that. Read Hebrews. You've not come to the mountain that was smoking and quaking and thundering and lightning, and Moses coming down, scaring everybody to death with his glowing face.

He had to put a burlap bag over his head because everybody couldn't even look at him. That inception of God's covenant with Israel, God says, look, you think this is great. Why do you think there's lightning and clouds and thick darkness and earthquakes and stay away from the mountain or you'll die, man or beast? The holiness of the Lord is no laughing matter.

He's not the gentle Jesus and the daisies tucked behind His ear. He's the Yahweh Sabaoth. He's the Lord of hosts.

The Lord is a man of war. Remember, we read that last time. Well, that's the day of the Lord.

And in that day, Zechariah described this, and we saw it in chapter 12, and it's paralleled in chapter 14. If you compare 12, 1 through 9, just take a quick glance at it. The burden of the word of the Lord.

In that day, says the Lord, verse 4, I will strike every horse with confusion. You remember the blindness and all the rest of that. I'll make the governors of Judah.

There's a fire. There's a torch in the straw. And the Lord will defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem.

It'll be in that day. I'll seek to destroy all the nations, verse 9, that come against Jerusalem. Remember that? Well, it's paralleled in 14, 1 through 7. Flip the page.

The day of the Lord comes. Spoil will be divided in your midst. We saw that.

The women are ravished, and the houses are rifled. This is the great and terrible day of the Lord. And the people who are not defined by their faith, and defined by their heart relationship with God.

This is what Haggai was trying to call the people back to. This is what Zechariah, through these visions, is calling the people back to. You've got to really be invested in your relationship with God.

That's got to be the most important thing. What defines you? Who are you? Why are you here? Remember Admiral Stockdale? Best thing the man ever said, as far as I'm concerned, is when he came to the Naval Academy at the Forrestal Lecture and talked to us about his experiences as a POW. And then later on, when he was going to be Ross Perot's vice president, and he went to the vice presidential debate, and I think the other guy went first, and then they turned to Admiral Stockdale, and he looked out into the audience and peered into the lights and the cameras, and he said, and he's just this old, scruffy, former POW, retired admiral, and he looked out there under his furry brows, and he said, Who am I? Why am I here? And I thought, I hope he hasn't forgotten.

But he knew exactly who he was, and he knew exactly why he was there. And that man's character was forged in the fires of military service and in the extremists in his prisoner of war experience. And he and others like him, you can disagree with John McCain's politics, but you can't disagree with his service.

And his durability under pressure. And he's gone through a lot. He's fought many battles, and he's called in the way he sees them.

I don't agree with him a lot of times, and we graduated from the same school, but you can serve the same Lord and violently disagree on some things. But that forging of character under pressure is an analog. It's an illustration of what God does with us as we engage in our spiritual warfare, getting ready for future service, looking ahead.

So Zechariah here in chapter 12 and 14, they're not chiasmic. We so often see the chiasms. That would be outer and inner brackets.

12 and 14, you can lay them side by side, and they almost literally track right beside each other. So 12, 1 through 9 tracks with 14, 1 through 7. And God basically says here, He is going to deliver Jerusalem. But the reason the deliverance is so profound is the threat is so profound.

This is eminently the ultimate and final destruction of Jerusalem. Jerusalem has been a city for 3,000 years. An active, functional, capital city in one form or another for 3,000 years.

And this threatens to be its ultimate destruction, to be leveled and sowed with salt and uninhabited. And so this threat, with all of the nations gathered around it, is what God meets. And that's why the deliverance is so great is the threat is so great.

And by analogy in the spiritual realm, why is our salvation so great? Because sin is no light thing. Corruption and fallenness and separation from God because of it is no small thing. It's the biggest thing that's ever happened in God's creation, angelic or human, is to have the stain and the corruption and the malignancy and the metastasizing cancer of sin.

And God's deliverance of us from sin is the biggest thing ever. There's nothing bigger. Name something bigger than God fixing sin.

It took the death of His Son to do. That's how big it is. That's why Peter talks about you weren't redeemed with mere silver and gold and precious stones.

You're redeemed with the precious blood of Christ. Your redemption is the biggest thing that's happened and it was bought with the biggest price that's ever been paid. We can't even touch the hem of the garment of what Christ did on the cross.

You can study it for a lifetime. You can analyze it and categorize it in redemption, reconciliation, appreciation, all you want. You're never going to... Not until we get to glory will we fully understand.

We take it on faith. We love because He first loved us. And we take a lot of things on faith that we're not equipped to understand because it's not ultimately founded on reason and analytical thinking and a little concrete arrangement of facts.

We recognize that God has loved us and has done something that... We're like children. We can't understand all the things that our parents do for us, but we sense that they are doing a lot. And the older you get, the more you realize the sacrifices your parents have made and are making and how much of their effort is devoted to giving you a home and opportunities and training and preparation.

And from the earliest age, you love and you trust your parents. And when you disobey them, hopefully it's a learning experience and it is something that you grow out of and you come to appreciate this disobedience thing that they really are smarter than me. And when they say don't do a thing, they've got a good reason when you've got good parents.

And I think most of us have been blessed with that. And that's the picture in the Word of God. So, Jerusalem is going to be attacked and it is the biggest attack ever.

And so it is the biggest deliverance ever on planet Earth. This is bigger than D-Day. This is bigger than overcoming the Battle of the Bulge.

It's bigger than any landing. It's bigger than any defense that's ever been put up. It involves the

armies of the whole world.

This battle is described in Joel, as I mentioned, Joel chapter 3 and Matthew chapter 24, Revelation chapter 9. When the six angel sounds, release the angels. And the number of the army of horsemen is 200 million. And the horses in the vision have breastplates, fiery red, blue, sulfur yellow.

The heads of the horses are like the heads of lions and so on. You can read that in Revelation chapter 9. This is just massive. Same thing in chapter 16 of Revelation.

When the sixth bowl is poured out, you have the very same, we saw the correspondence of these things. And of course in chapter 19, at verse 17, you have the angel standing in the sun saying to the birds of heaven, gather to the supper of the great God. You can eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, the flesh of all people, free and slaves, small and great.

And the beast, the kings of the earth and their armies are gathered together to make war against him who sits on the horse and against his army. And the beast is captured with him the false prophet. And you have the resolution and this great deliverance that Zechariah is harking to.

But again, think now, who's Zechariah delivering this to initially? These people have just worked and slaved and finally pulled off the reconstruction of the temple. The second temple is probably now standing. And so they say, well, okay, so where's the glory? Let's have the Shekinah and the millennium ought to start now.

We're back, we've been chastened. And God says, no. What you have been through is just a foretaste of what you're going to go through for the next 2,500 years or so.

And then is going to come the end. You've got more to learn. And you still haven't figured out the heart thing.

The Holy Spirit has not yet been poured out on your flesh. Well, guess what? He has been poured out on our flesh. And we get the chance to learn what these people are not going to get a chance to catch up on until the millennial kingdom when God gives them the spirit that He's already given to us.

Those branches were broken out, Paul says, when you're in Romans. And we were grafted in. We're getting that experience and that nutrition and that training.

But we've got to be aware. We have to know the gift that God has given us to struggle, to lift these weights, to do this warfare, and to use the armor that He's provided. All of that stuff in Ephesians 6, the full armor of God, the breastplate, the helmet, the sword, girding your waist, feet shod, they didn't have any of that.

They had physical armor. And it didn't help them in a spiritual warfare. We have spiritual armor.

But it does us no good if it isn't on, if it isn't arranged properly. And if we are not together in our phalanx and our line of defense with our shield up protecting the sword arm of the one to our left and our sword out here and side by side, all of us with our armor on, we become as invincible as the Roman legions. And that's why Paul so often uses that military language.

But we saw the fact that God is going to visibly appear. Jesus is going to return in 14.3-7. And this is in advance. You have a little bit more in 14 than you do in 12 where He comes down and His feet split the Mount of Olives and half the mountain moves toward the north and half toward the south.

That mountain where so many important things happened. The path that David trod up and down. The path that the Lord Jesus trod up and down.

And that's where He ascended from. That's where He's going to return to. And it's going to provide a way of escape.

They fled away from the earthquake in the days of Uzzah or Uziah. They're going to flee toward the earthquake because they know that this is God's provision. And they're not going to be followed.

This is kind of like learning the lesson of Pharaoh's chariots and horsemen. They followed Israel through the water and all got drowned. So when they see God's people fleeing toward the earthquake, they're going to say, well, that's just crazy.

Those people are just going to be swallowed up by the earth. You know who's going to be willing to flee toward the earthquake? People who know Zechariah 14. That one-sixth that remains out of the purging is going to know to flee toward the earthquake.

These are going to be the people of Israel running up Mount Sinai saying, let me see the glory of the Lord too. As it were. God warned them away.

They weren't ready. These people are going to be ready. And they're going to flee toward the Lord.

That's where Jesus is. And they're going to flee this way. He's going to come in this way.

He's going to be, once again, like the pillar of cloud and the pillar of fire. It is going to be utter devastation. Eyes melting in sockets and so on.

At the end of Armageddon. But the people who know their Bible are going to head into the earthquake. Head into the great crevasse that forms.

I mean, who would do that? Nobody with rational human wisdom. Nobody with the analytical mind is going to rush into a freshly created chasm. This is like running under one of those San

San Francisco bridges that began to collapse when they had the earthquake.

Oh yeah, let me run that way. It doesn't make any sense. Unless you know God.

And you recognize this is the great day of deliverance. There's never been anything like it. And I get to be one of the people to run in here and see the deliverance of the Lord.

You just, your heart has to be in it. You have to know what your Father in Heaven is doing. And then, it's a wonderful adventure.

It's a great, enjoyable deliverance. You see the glory of God in action if you're not so frightened out of your mind that you run the wrong way and get slaughtered. So that's 14.3-7. And this great earthquake is the one that we saw as the great uniting pin through the seals and the trumpets and the bowls and probably the thunders if we knew what those were.

But remember, all of them end in the great earthquake. This is that great earthquake. This is what that does.

Revelation 16, 18, and 19. And the heavens, it's going to be such a disturbing day that as it says in Isaiah 60, verses 19 and 20, The sun will no longer be your light by day, nor for brightness shall the moon give light to you. But the Lord will be to you an everlasting light, and your God will be your glory.

Your sun shall no longer go down, nor shall your moon withdraw itself, for the Lord will be your everlasting light, and the days of your mourning shall be ended. The days of your mourning shall be ended. There's nothing like having to go through a period of mourning that when it is over and you have restoration and reunion and deliverance, you know what you didn't have.

These returning captives didn't get to live in Jerusalem. Now they do. They didn't get to be on their ancestral land.

Now they do. And that is on steroids when the Lord returns and God is once again in their midst and in their presence. And by extension, of course, just like the dead in Christ are going to rise at the rapture, the Old Testament saints are going to rise.

Remember in Daniel, many will hear that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake. Some to righteousness and life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. Well, what kind of a rising is it going to be? You want it to be this end of the everlasting night.

You have everlasting light and your mourning is ended. Don't have to fight through my failures anymore. Don't have to fight through the failures of others anymore.

Don't have to be imbroglioned and enmeshed in sin. It's over. It's finished.

We've fought the good fight. Now is the time of celebration and of peace and of safety. When even the small minor pots are all stamped holiness to the Lord all the way through the land.

So the Lord is a man of word. People tend to forget this. That the gentle Jesus, people try to peddle the gospel to others on love and peace and light and they don't typically visit the passage where the Lord Jesus is on the white horse and there's blood running as high as the bridles and the Lord is a man of war.

And you want to be on the right side of God's justice. You want to be on the delivered side, on the blood of Christ cleansed side. How does the analytical mind handle the fact that you can take a filthy robe and wash it in blood and have it come out clean and white? That's kind of counterintuitive.

But you remember in Revelation? These who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb? Who would say, well, I need a white robe so I can go into this kingdom. Oh look, here's blood. Let me wash it there.

You ever tried to get blood out? They've got some enzyme things that'll do a better job of it now. But when I was a little kid, if you got blood on a thing, that's pretty much it. You're going to be looking at those stains.

They just turn kind of a pale brown and it looks like rust ever after. You don't wash something and make it white in blood. It doesn't make common sense.

But it ought to make sense to us because we know God's plan and program. We know what that means. We know the power of that blood is not just any old blood.

It's not the blood of goats and bulls. It's the precious blood of Christ. And it's got supernatural delivering and cleansing power.

And so you take your robe and dip it in the blood and it comes out sparkling white. So white you can barely look at it. It reflects the glory of God.

So the Lord is going to come. He's going to defeat the enemy. You see this in 12.4-9 and 14.12-15 here in Zechariah.

And it's God's victory. God's people are almost passively delivered. They don't have to take up arms and fight.

They're going through the valley. The Lord takes care of these seemingly undefeatable foes. And the Lord shows Himself to be the King of glory.

Remember who is the King of glory? You've got a wonderful piece of music. Who is the King of glory? The Lord, strong and mighty. The Lord, mighty in battle.

Psalms 24, verse 8. And you remember that just a few psalms earlier, you've got the crucifixion song. I look down and see all my bones. My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? And the extended thoughts that no doubt ran through the Lord Jesus' mind were foreseen by David and put in those psalms just a page before Psalm 24.

But this is not the suffering servant. This is the conquering King. And He is the Lord, strong and mighty.

The Lord, mighty in battle. The battle is the Lord's. Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord of hosts.

Avail yourself of His Spirit. The hosts will take care of the victory. So, there's going to be this physical deliverance.

And following that, there's going to be cleansing. And we saw this in Zechariah 12, 10 and following. And in 13, a fountain will be open for cleansing.

And as I mentioned, this is where William Cooper got the inspiration for the hymn. There is a fountain filled with blood. It comes from this passage, Zechariah 13, 1. And again, the human mind would never see that coming.

And their hearts are going to be cleansed. And the land itself is going to be purged. And the defilement is going to be erased.

Jesus talked about this. He was going to send the angels and purge out of His kingdom all the things that offend. Of course, depending on whether you see that at the beginning or at the end, there is this purging that takes place.

The idols and the false prophets, which have been the bane in Judah and the northern kingdom for centuries, are utterly eradicated. And unclean spirit that causes people to turn from God. And this harks back a little bit to the woman in the basket, back in Zechariah 5. And there's a lid put on that.

And it's taken away. And it's not going to rear its ugly head again until Gog Magog at the end of the millennial kingdom. And the true shepherd is going to appear.

And the refined and purged nation is going to reflect God's glory. And the Lord is going to reign over all the earth. And so, now in Zechariah 14, 8 through 11, you see in that day, one of those many times we're in that day is mentioned, living waters will flow from Jerusalem, half of them toward the Eastern Sea.

Eastern Sea is a bit of an interpretive translation here. This is actually the Dead Sea. And it's emblematic.

The Dead Sea, since the days of Sodom and Gomorrah, we think, has been unusable, undrinkable. It kills everything in sight. It's one of those things like the Great Salt Lake where you can float in it because it's so full of contaminants and minerals.

But half of the water that flows out of Jerusalem is going to go toward the Jordan and down into the Dead Sea. And it's going to flow in and out. And that is going to become a wonderful, fruitful lake like Gennesaret to the north, like the Sea of Galilee.

The Dead Sea is going to become like Galilee because of this living water flowing into it from Jerusalem. It's going to flow through the Mount of Olives, hit the Jordan, go down, and it's going to utterly cleanse and freshen the Dead Sea. Now, ask anybody on the planet if that makes any kind of sense that a river is going to flow out of Mount Zion and make the Dead Sea into a freshwater sea.

No way. Well, it's going to happen. And we will see it.

But that's the power of God. If we could just remember how great the power of God is. Is there anything too hard for the Lord? And we just have such a hard time in our time-bound, fallen nature realizing that our Father can do anything He wants.

And He's going to. He's going to do everything He wants in His time. But He uses our present circumstances to refine us and to heat us up so the dross will surface and can be scooped away.

Half toward the Western Sea, half of it's going to flow out toward the Mediterranean. And it's going to completely change the land of the Philistines and a lot of that stuff to the west that was unlike the fertile hills of Judea where as you got closer to the sea it became more desert, more harsh, and more like what you had down around in Egypt. Well, it's all going to change.

There's going to be this wonderful river flowing westward into the Mediterranean Sea. The Lord will be king over all the earth. And this, of course, is metaphorical for the healing life that is potentially available to everybody in the earth.

It doesn't flow to the north and south. It flows to the east and west. And we know that you can reach ultimate north and you can reach ultimate south.

You can't reach ultimate west or ultimate east. You can go east as long as you want and you're still heading east. That's why our sins are separated as far as the east is from the west, not as far as the north is from the south.

And they understood the fact that there is an endless cycle in your east-west direction that isn't matched in the north-south. And whether that translated to understanding a spherical earth, who cares? They weren't globetrotters in those days. They didn't have airlines.

All the land shall be turned into a plain from Giba to Rimmon in the south of Jerusalem. It will be raised up and inhabited and interplanted from Benjamin's Gate to the place of the first gate and the corner gate from the tower of Hananel to the king's wine presses. And you can only imagine that these might have been some of the most devastated places in Jerusalem at the time that Zechariah was prophesying, that they were looking around and saying, well, you know, we've gotten a start on the temple, but look at the rest of the city.

There are so many areas of it that are nothing like it used to be. And Zechariah says, you ain't seen nothing until you see the restored Jerusalem, once the Lord delivers it. People will dwell in it, no longer will there be utter destruction.

Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited. And this is going to be the work of Nehemiah to try to rebuild the wall because they don't feel safe and they aren't safe. They've got to have a trowel in one hand, a sword in the other.

There used to be a theological newsletter that came out called The Sword and the Trowel on that analogy. This shall be the plague with which the Lord will strike all the people who fought against Jerusalem. And once again, you have this utter destruction in just a moment.

Great panic will arise. They're going to defeat each other. And the spoils that are left over when they are annihilated, wiped out, are just super abundant.

And even the stuff they brought with them, and it's interesting to me, it says the horse and the mule, the camel and the donkey, and the cattle that are in those camps. This is all of your logistics support. In the modern army, what are the equivalents? Horses carried riders, carried your cavalry.

And we've got armored cavalry now that are analogous. The mule, these carried individuals that were bearing loads. You would put loads on mules and lead them.

And so this is your six-by's, your deuce and a half's, and your five-ton trucks with provisions. The camel and the donkey, donkeys were often a sign of royalty. The Lord Jesus coming in on a donkey was a sign.

But they're different categories. They're used for different kinds of transportation. Some of them pull carts.

Some of them are used for food, the cattle that are in the camps. This can be provision. It can be oxen that pull carts and so on.

But all the different kinds of transportation, everything on which they relied, how did they get there and surround Jerusalem? It was on all of these animals. They didn't march. They couldn't be anticipated.

They came quickly on transportation. Well, all of the transportation is going to be disabled. And why is it disabled? Why doesn't it go to the people in Jerusalem? They don't need it.

They're not going anywhere. They're in God's city. They've got this super abundant provision.

They've got this great river. They've got everything they need. They've got the presence of the Lord.

They don't need any transportation. So the plague that kills the army wipes out the transportation as well. Is it a great big EMP that disables all the electronics in them and they're basically just good for parts, mechanical things like you want to make a cart so you use the wheels? Who knows? It shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came up against Jerusalem, notice there are going to be some who are left from the nations.

The armies are going to assemble. The nations that sent them have survived. And so those nations, instead of sending more armies and saying, well, it didn't work the first time, let's try it again, instead of sending any additional troops, year by year they are going to send tribute.

They will come up and keep the Feast of Tabernacles. They are going to honor God, at least overtly, and honor the Lord Jesus. Whoever the families of the earth do not come up to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, on them there will be no rain.

Notice they are not wiped out, but their economy takes a huge downturn. No rain is metaphorical for economic downturn. And this could take all kinds of manifest forms in whatever the economic situation is worldwide in the millennial kingdom.

But no rain in agricultural economy means you've got a huge recession, depression, starvation, famine. When there was no rain in the land, that's why Jacob had to send his sons down to Egypt. The reason Joseph had to put things in the storehouse is there was a drought leading to famine.

By the way, this river going to the east and the west, I almost forgot to say, Jerusalem is pretty much unique. It's the one major ancient city of the ancient world you can think of that wasn't built near a river. Name your ancient prominent cities like Rome, or name the ones of the ancient empires.

Look at Iraq today, and it's all about the river that flows through there. That's ancient Nineveh and so on. All of those ancient capitals were built near rivers.

Jerusalem is a weird exception. Their river was supposed to be the presence of God. When the presence of God is there, they're going to have their river in the Millennial Kingdom.

It's the first time Jerusalem has ever had a river. Remember they've had to try to use the spring Gihon and so on. So it will be that if families of Egypt will not come up, they will have no rain, they will receive the plague with which the Lord strikes the nations who do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.

This will be the punishment of Egypt and the punishment of all the nations that do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. Why Egypt of all of the nations? We have Rosh and Gog and all these other things that we know are in the assembled nations. Why is Egypt particularly mentioned? Well, this is part of a historical chiasm.

Out of Egypt I have called my son, and you're back to the spoils of Egypt. But Egypt represents unbelief, right? And there is going to be a growing proportion of unbelievers throughout the Millennial Kingdom. There's still going to be people giving birth, there's going to be children playing with snakes and leading lions like lambs and all the rest of it, remember? There's going to be children and they're going to grow up and the same opportunity to choose for or against God will pertain in the Millennial Kingdom.

And so how are these people kept in check? They cannot go into open rebellion. They will be suppressed. It's kind of like when Paul says in Thessalonians, you know what restrains until it is taken out of the way and then the man of sin will be revealed.

But right now he can't be revealed and sin can't run rampant like it's going to in the time of Jacob's trouble because that which restrains is here. Well, that which restrains is going to restrain throughout the Millennial Kingdom. But at the end, God is going to remove the restraint and He's going to take the lid off the lead basket, so to speak.

He's going to take Satan out of the bottomless pit and all of these people that have been chafing under the rule of the Lord for a thousand years, He's kept them in check because if they disobey, they get no rain. Their economy takes a downturn. They say, well, my analytical mind says I better go along to get along here, but their heart's not in it.

Well, God's going to deal with them at the end and that's the final purging of the last of the dross from the human race. You have the great white throne judgment, you have the lake of fire, and then you have the new heavens, the new earth, the new Jerusalem. And all of what we have learned comes into play in that future kingdom of the Father where the Lamb is the light.

There's no night, there's no darkness. So that's what this is talking about, is there will be physical suppression of evil and of sin and of disobedience throughout the millennial kingdom. It's just put forth.

Anybody that doesn't honor the Lord by coming up, quote, for the Feast of Tabernacles, anybody who does not recognize that God is dwelling with man is going to be dealt with. He will rule the nations with a rod of iron. He will shatter them like clay vessels and keep them in check.

In that day, holiness to the Lord will be engraved on everything. Every pot in Jerusalem and Judah will be holiness to the Lord. That is going to be the camp of the saints.

That's going to be where the faithful dwell. And those out among the nations who come to faith are going to come there, just like they did in the age of Israel. Those who believe in the Lord Jesus and who come to that faith in the millennial kingdom, they are going to draw near.

And that is going to be the camp of the saints that gets surrounded when Satan is released. There's not a bunch of scattered salt among the nations. They are all in Jerusalem and Judea.

That's where every pot is holiness to the Lord. From the highest to the least. The least in the kingdom, greatest in the kingdom that Jesus talked about.

They are all in the kingdom. That's what is going to have one last surrounding. And I see it now, but not near.

That's the Gog-Magog rebellion that is going to be very similar to this in the sense that all of the nations are going to surround Jerusalem one last time. And God is going to deal with them one

last time. And there's no coming back from that.

That is the final destruction. And the dead, small and great stand before the judgment. And the books are opened.

And that is the end of this phase of God's plan in human history. That's also the end of our book of Zechariah. And what do we take away from this? As we look at God's promise to His people, these who hear the message of Haggai and hear the message of Zechariah are faced with a choice.

Am I going to be wrapped up in the circumstances of the physical Jerusalem in my present day life? Or am I going to listen to the word of the Lord, focus my attention on the coming Jerusalem, and decide that my future and my relationship with the God of my fathers depends on the priorities that I set now, the goals that I pursue now, the values that I establish in my life now. Thinking ahead. I was very fascinated.

I'll tell you this really quickly. I've decided that if I'm going to watch TV, I want it to be fruitful TV. So I'm watching PBS.

I'm watching documentaries and seeing things about God's creation. And they had this thing about birds. I told you about the memory hackers.

I told you about that twice because I really liked it. Well, this is another one I really liked. And they were looking at the intelligence of birds.

They said bird brain is always a pejorative. But they said birds are... And so they took members of the crow family, the ravens and the grackles and these crows, and they took another kind that only grows in New Zealand, I think. And these birds are... It's just astonishing to watch because either individually they will learn.

There's one kind of bird that uses tools. There's only one bird that will take a twig and dig a bug out of it. He'll stab it or he'll prod it out of the holes in the branches.

And they say, you know, this is something we thought only mammals could learn how to do is use a tool like your simians and that. So there's these birds and they do that. Well, they said, how do they pick this up? And so you just have to see it.

It's amazing. They developed these puzzles. They put a peanut inside a plexiglass box on a little pedestal, and they gave them four different ways to get the peanut.

There's a piece of twine tied around the peanut, and you can pull it out of a hole in the front. And these birds are used to using things to get their food in a pulling manner. They'll poke it with a twig and pull it out.

So right away, these birds, that's the first thing they try. There's four ways to get the peanut. They always do that one first.

So they said, all right, we're going to take that one away. Well, the next one that they can use is there's a hole in the box and there's a little yellow rod there. And they can pick up the rod with their beak and they can poke it through the hole and knock the peanut off its pedestal and it falls out.

And so they do that one next. Well, then the third one is that they can, there's a little ball and there's a chute that's straight and then slanted. And they can pick up this ball and stick it in the chute and get it to roll down and knock the peanut off.

And so there's less, it's one thing to say I can knock it off with a stick that I've got in my beak, which is like a beak extension, and I can poke it out. It's something else to say, if I pick up this ball and stick it in the tube, it will roll down, hit the peanut, the peanut will fall. It's more abstract problem solving and reasoning.

And so the bird does that. And so then they take that one away. There's tape over the first three.

And the only one that's left is there is a door that they can open, a plexiglass door. And so they'll find the handle of the door and open it. And the New Zealand birds, they've never had any threats.

They had no natural predators until man came along. And so once he opens the door, he'll just stick his head in there and grab the peanut and walk away. Well, the crow family, they have really had to live by their wits and they've had predators all over the place.

And they are phobic about sticking their head inside anything. And there were some other differences in the sequence with which they arrived at these, these two kinds of bird. But in this very last instance, the crow figures out how to open the door, but he doesn't want to stick his head in.

So he opens the door, then he goes and grabs the yellow stick and pokes the peanut off and knocks it out because he is not going to stick his head in there. He's too vulnerable. And he's wary.

But they learn by experience. And what was really fascinating is these birds in groups, now think about this because I'm talking about Christian fellowship and I'm talking about forsaking not the assembling here. God puts us in these situations where we learn spiritual problem solving.

And in one case, maybe we can pull the rope and here's the peanut. Well, that doesn't always work. And we have to watch for God's deliverance and learn and grow, just like these little creatures of God.

But what's really interesting is they work together in groups. And the New Zealand birds have got this down to a fine art. So they had a bin with the worms or whatever it is down inside of

the foodstuffs.

But there's a lid on it and it's on a teeter-totter. And the lid is too heavy for any one bird to lift. But there's a platform on the other end.

And if a bird will stand on that platform, it will open the lid and the other birds can eat. But of course he can't eat because he's too far away. He's opening the lid.

Well, these birds have learned that they can get the lid open and benefit their group by sacrificially standing on the thing and not eating. And so what they do is they rotate. And so one bird will stand there, two or three of them eat.

Then one of the ones that ate, he'll go stand and let the guy that was standing on the thing go eat. And they benefit each other. They learn how by being sacrificial to self and beneficial toward others, it comes around and they all benefit.

And God puts these lessons in nature for us. And we can learn from that. There's a lot more in that special.

I encourage you to see that. I don't remember what the name of it is, but it's something about the birds. And they also talked about bird flight.

But they talked about the way they problem solve and the capacity to solve problems. And God gives us uniquely the capacity to solve problems with spiritual tools, spiritual resources and spiritual cooperation, our interaction together. There's some problems we can't solve on our own.

We need each other. And that's why God puts the solitary in families. He connects us together.

So I thought it was just a beautiful... That's the kind of TV that's... I give a thumbs up. I give two thumbs up. It's just going to be gone, so I'll use both of my thumbs and tell you that looking at God's creation and the beautiful way He has expressed His character in and through creation is always a humbling and a truly awe-inspiring experience.

And now we live in an age where you don't have to go to New Zealand to see these birds. Somebody will bring them right into your living room for you. And it's really something.

Well, this concludes Zechariah. We're going to start Malachi after the holidays, or at least after the Christmas season. We'll have a Christmas special this coming Sunday, Christmas Eve.

So we're going to be looking forward to that. But let's close here in a word of prayer. Father, thank You for the truth of Your Word.

Thank You for the wonderful expression of Your commitment to us and the deliverance that can be ours if we are willing to trust and willing to place our future in Your hand by faith and to know that the Lord Jesus Christ is our forerunner. This is the way He lived human life and to

follow His example of not our own will, but Your will being done in our lives and to avail ourselves of Your grace and Your provision in all of these different areas, both individually in our own souls and as we spend time in the company of our fellow believers who are such an encouragement. And the whole is greater than the sum of the parts in the body of Christ.

We thank You for our friendships and our Christian fellowship. We thank You for the opportunity we have to spend time together at this season. And we pray that the Lord Jesus will be glorified as we do spend that time, that we'll remember who we are and why we are here, and that these scriptures we've looked at tonight will help us do so.

We pray all these things in Jesus' name. Amen.