

On That Day

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[0 : 0 0] While you remain standing, I'll pray. Our gracious God, we pray that you teach us from your word today and drive us to the service of your son. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.

Now you should have seen there's a link between the Old Testament Bible reading, the New Testament Bible reading, and the song we've just sung. So hopefully it'll all fall into place as we go along.

Now the story is that of a traveller walking down a lane. He comes across three stone cutters working in a quarry. Each is busy cutting out a block of stone.

The traveller's intrigued, so he wants to know what they're working on. So he questions each one of the stone cutters. The first man, he asks about what he's doing, answers abruptly and in a short manner.

He says, I am cutting a stone. So he goes on and he asks the second man. This one elaborates a little bit. He says, I'm cutting this stone, this block of stone, to make sure that it's square.

[1 : 0 4] Its dimensions are uniform so that it will fit exactly in its place in the wall. Our traveller feels that he's at least advanced in his quest. However, his goal is still a bit unclear.

So he turns to the third stone cutter. This man appears to be the happiest of all three. And when he's asked, all becomes clear. For this man says, I am building a cathedral.

Now, friends, when reading the Bible, I think things are a little bit like this. It's often difficult to see the wood from the trees, isn't it? It's often hard to see exactly what is going on.

And sometimes it's difficult to get enough distance to actually distill things out. Well, at first glance, our passage today, all three chapters of it is full of detail.

However, if you look hard at the detail, gradually things will clear to have this wonderful summary of God's purposes for his world. It will show us what God is about in his world.

[2 : 0 2] It will show us how he goes about his work. And it will reveal his character, his plan and his ways of working in his world. In my view, these chapters, chapters 12 to 14 of Zechariah, are a great summary of God's purposes in his world.

Now, be prepared. You'll have to do some work with me to get there. We've got these three chapters to traverse. But I want you to be prepared to see a big picture of who God is and what God is doing.

However, before we get to the passage itself, I want to remind you of two foundational theological statements about God, two great truths about God.

The first great truth unfolds in the very first page of the first book of the Bible. And that truth is the one that's patently obvious from that chapter. That is, God is a creator.

He is the one who made the universe and made the world. A great summary of that truth is found in the very first verse of our passage for today, Zechariah chapter 12. Zechariah, you see, introduces us to another prophecy, an oracle, he calls it.

[3 : 04] And just as the previous oracle, back in chapter 9, introduced God the creator, so does this one. So I want you to look at it with me. It would be very important to have your Bibles open and follow with me in them.

So Zechariah chapter 12, verse 1. The Lord who stretches out the heavens, who lays the foundation of the earth, who forms the human spirit within a person.

You see, before he starts, he's saying, this is God the creator. That's the first great truth unwrapped and revealed from the very first page of scripture.

The second great truth is revealed not in the book of Genesis as much, but in the book of Exodus. For in the book of Exodus, God redeems his people. He rescues them from Egypt and from a cruel tyranny.

He brings them to his presence at Mount Sinai. They rest in his company there. You see, because God is a creator, he can also redeem.

[4 : 01] He's able to redeem. That is why I think the Bible, chapter 9 and chapter 12 of Zechariah, begin with this particular note. God's the creator. Because if God's the creator, God can be the redeemer as well.

And his redemption is actually going to be unwrapped before us as we look at this passage. So there are those two theological foundation statements. Let's now remember where we were last week.

You might remember last week. You might remember the focus was on the shepherds of Israel. And we were told that they spectacularly failed. We are also told that as a result, the covenant was broken.

The nations were therefore preying on God's people. God had, as it were, handed his people over to others who were devastating their land. And the impression is that things between God and his people were finished.

So if God is the creator and redeemer, and if that's the theological background to our chapter, God's judgment through the nations is the immediate context we find ourselves in.

[5 : 04] So there are the foundations laid. So let's do a lightning tour through these chapters. Keep your Bibles open. Flip with me through them. And I'll give you the big picture. First thing I want you to notice is the words on that day.

Can you see it there? It's in verse 3. It's in verse 4. It's in verse 6, verse 8, verse 9. And it keeps going all the way through the whole three chapters. Now, in the original language, there are two forms of that phrase, but the impact is clear.

God is speaking to his people after they return from exile, and he's speaking about a day to come, that day. He's pointing them forward to their future, a future that will happen on that day at his hand.

So these three chapters fall into two sections. Chapters 12 and 13 are one section, and chapter 14 is the next. Chapters 12 and 13 have one focus.

Chapter 14 has another focus. Let's quickly skim the details. Look at chapter 12, verses 1 to 9. Remember chapter 11?

[6 : 07] We got the impression that things might be finished between God and his people because of their sin, the sin of the shepherds, the sin of their leaders. However, here God is the creator and redeemer, and he speaks, and he promises.

And his first promise is that God will defend his people. Look at verse 3. He says he's going to make Jerusalem an immovable rock. And everyone who tries to move this rock will injure themselves.

Verse 4. He will strike every marauding horse with panic and its riders with madness. He will have open eyes on his people. He will close the eyes of the horses of her attackers.

Look at verse 6. Jerusalem will remain intact. Verse 7. The Lord will save the dwellings of Judah. Verse 8. He will shield those who live in Jerusalem so that the feeblest among them will be like David.

This is a wonderful picture, isn't it? The feeblest like David. And David, well, like God himself. This is God's first promise. He's going to defend his people. Let's turn to the second promise.

[7 : 13] It's laid out in chapter 12, verse 10 through to 13, verse 1. Or 12, 9 to 13, verse 1. God's promise is that he's going to pour out. Now, those of you who read the prophets will know that usually pouring out is a term of judgment.

Pouring out judgment. But not here. Take a look at verse 10. God is going to pour out on David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. In other words, God's going to pour out on every one of his people, from kings to ordinary people, a spirit of grace and supplication.

Now, elsewhere in the prophets, we hear of such things. You see, in Ezekiel 36, God speaks of putting a new heart in his people and putting a new spirit in them.

He talks of putting his spirit in them and moving them to keep his decrees and his laws. In Ezekiel 37, you remember the story of the dry bones?

God speaks of his word being spoken over dry bones of God's people and of the spirit or breath entering them and bringing them to life. So it is here, you see, by an act of grace, God will resuscitate his people.

[8 : 23] And in their revived state, they will look to God. Now, look at verse 10. Look at what it says. It says that they will look to God, the one whom they have pierced.

And they will mourn and they will grieve. And their grief will be seen throughout the people. Now, friends, let me tell you, it's no wonder. Verse 10 raises all sorts of questions, doesn't it? After all, who is the me in verse 10?

What is piercing? Who is doing the piercing? Well, briefly, here are my answers to the questions. First, the me does appear to be God. After all, it's God speaking, isn't it?

So one would expect that the me is God himself. Second, the piercing amounts to a killing. We know that because the same word is used a few later verses in Zechariah.

Chapter 13, verse 3, it's translated in the NIV as stabbing. And it means, you know, grabbing a sword or a knife, stabbing it into someone. Generally, in the ancient world where that happened, people died.

[9 : 25] Third, the piercing appears to be done by God's people. It's done by David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And what's the result of the piercing? Well, verses 11 to 14 make it clear.

It is grief throughout all Israel. But we mustn't stop there. There's a further result, a further follow-on. It's spelled out in chapter 13, verse 1. Look at it. Zechariah says, On that day, a fountain will be opened to the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to cleanse them from sin and impurity.

Somehow, you see, the piercing results in a fountain of cleansing. The cleansing flow which cleanses Israel from sin and impurity.

Now, when you put that picture together, it's grand, isn't it? God will defeat the enemies of his people. This is 1 to 9. His people, in return, will pierce him, look upon him, weep for what they've done and call upon him.

And for his part, God will provide a fountain of cleansing and forgiveness. Friends, this is our God. A God who creates the world and humans in it, who is for his people, and who is so for his people that he is willing to be pierced for their well-being.

[10 : 42] A God who is willing to provide a fountain for forgiveness for his wayward, sinful people. Friends, we who know God's purposes in Jesus, because we're Christian, know where these verses and these dispositions in God find their climax.

You see, we know that Jesus, a human being, a Davidic descendant, was pierced and killed. We see this verse alluded to and quoted in John 19, 34 to 37.

And we also know that when God saw his son killed like this, his heart was grieved, pierced, as it were. But we also know that as a resulting of the death of Jesus, a cleansing stream, a fountain of forgiveness, was let loose on the world.

God, Jesus is God's yes and amen to the promises of God found here in this passage. However, the New Testament indicates that there's an even future perspective to these verses beyond us now.

Revelation chapter 1, verse 7, which we read, that's the second reading, talks of a day when Jesus will come with the clouds and every eye will see him. Even his own people, the Jews, who pierced him, will see.

[12 : 00] And finally, they will mourn with all the peoples of the earth because of him. Now, one great ancient Christian theologian, Hippolytus, speaks of it in this way.

He says that Jesus Christ will show them the prince of the nails in his hands and feet and his side pierced with a spear and his head crowned with thorns and his honourable cross.

And once for all, the people of the Hebrews will see all these things and they shall mourn and weep. As the prophet exclaims, they shall look upon him whom they have pierced.

Friends, without Christ, let me tell you, Zechariah 12, verse 9, verse 10 to 13, 1 is a conundrum. Just read the commentaries, you'll see. People don't know what to do with it if they're not Christian.

With Christ, though, it is a disclosure, an explanation, an overwhelming and delightful revelation, isn't it? The hymn writer, here's the third link, William Cowper, was clearly inspired by these verses to write the hymn we've just sung.

[13 : 08] There is a fountain. Remember the first verse? There is a fountain filled with blood, drawn from Emmanuel's veins, and sinners plunged beneath that flood, lose all their guilty stains.

Friends, having rejoiced in all that God has provided in Jesus, let's now return to the passage in Zechariah. Zechariah 13, 1, I think, belongs to chapter 12, but it also introduces chapter 13.

Verse 1, you see, speaks about cleansing from sin and impurity. Verse 2 focuses on some specific sins. Idolatry, false prophecy, impurity, and drastic action, we're told, will be taken against all who lead his people astray.

Now let's turn to the final verses of our first section. Look at 7 to 9. It returns to the idea of shepherds, which was so prominent in our passage last week. You might remember from last week, shepherds were a way of speaking about leaders, specifically a way of speaking about Davidic.

Kings. David himself, you see, is called God's son in 2 Samuel 7. The closeness to a Davidic shepherd to God is declared in verse 7.

[14 : 21] Can you see it there? God speaks of a sword being woken against his shepherd, and then he says, the man who is close to him. My suspicion is that this shepherd is none other than the one pierced in chapter 12, verse 10.

You see, he's a person that can be identified as God, but as a Davidic king. In the end, I think it can only be fulfilled in Christ. And that's exactly what Jesus himself does.

Matthew 26, Mark 14, have Jesus quoting verse 7 and identifying himself as being this shepherd. He uses it to predict what will happen as he goes to his death.

He says that as he goes to his death, there'll be the scattering of his disciples. And he says, he's therefore using the term striking the shepherd to refer to his death. And he talks about striking the shepherd and the sheep being scattered.

You see, the end result of God's shepherd being killed is referred to in verse 9. God's people will be refined. They'll call on God's name.

[15 : 24] God will answer them, and they will say, and he will say, they are my people, and they will say, this is our God. And Jesus picks that up, as I said, in Luke 12, 32, speaking to his disciples.

He picks the shepherd and sheep imagery, and he says to them, don't be afraid, little flock, for your father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. So the shepherd is struck, the sheep scatter, but God gathers his sheep together in the person of Jesus Christ and gives them the kingdom.

It's a marvelous picture, isn't it? All because of the death of Jesus, prophesied by Zechariah. So you get this sort of combination of all of these quotations from Zechariah in two chapters, and it just captures what his death accomplishes.

Friends, let's move to Zechariah 14. It's a bit quicker. 12 and 13 focused on God's relationship with his people. He acts to defend them. He acts to forgive them. He restores them to himself.

Well, chapter 14 focuses on God's relationship with the world at large. Let's just take a quick run through. Chapter starts off with a declaration that the day of the Lord is coming, followed by six references to on that day.

[16 : 34] That makes a total of seven references to the day of the Lord coming in this chapter. Let's look at the first two sections. Verses one to three talk of horrific things that accompany the day of the Lord.

Cities are captured. Houses are ransacked. People are, women are raped. Exile occurs. And it's a picture of God waging war.

Now look at verses four and five. The element of God waging war is picked up again. And God is portrayed as a warrior standing on the Mount of Olives, which will split under his feet.

And the valley formed will enable the remnant of his people to escape. It will also serve as a way for a victorious procession. By the way, friends, just a little comment here. I think many of us think God of warrior.

A warrior is an Old Testament way of thinking. God is a God of love, is a New Testament way of speaking. People who think that way haven't read either the Old or the New Testament very well.

[17 : 36] Because look at Jesus, the picture of Jesus as a warrior on a horse in chapter 19 of Revelation. And look at God as a God of love in the book of Deuteronomy.

Both are clear in both Testaments. So be very careful. God is a warrior. He will war against the enemies of his people. Anyway, the next three sections run from verse six to verse 12.

And to give you some perspective, I want to read to you one verse from Deuteronomy. It is perhaps one of the most famous verses in Deuteronomy. Chapter six, verse four. And it goes like this. Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one.

And I think Zechariah is playing with this here. You see, he is saying that on a future day, all will acknowledge this truth. Look at verse nine. God's future in his world is that.

The Lord will be king over the whole earth. And on that day, there will be one Lord. And his name, the only name. Now look at verses 10 and 11.

[18 : 43] God speaks about Jerusalem, his city, the symbol of his presence among his people. And he says Jerusalem will actually be raised above all competitors and be secure.

In verse 12, all competitors will be done away with. Let's now go to 13 to 19. They contain a message for those who want to resist God's supremacy and God's purposes.

In verse 13, panic will reign. People will turn on each other. Verse 15 indicates even the animals will be caught up in the panic and pandemonium. The end result is that even those who came up against Jerusalem will now make annual pilgrimages to it.

They will bow before the King, the Lord Almighty. Those who don't go will experience judgment. Verses 20 and 21 describe the goal of God's actions.

And what is that goal? It is that finally Jerusalem will be freed from its sin and its impurity. The piercing of God. And the Messiah, as it were, back in chapter 12, has enabled this.

[19 : 50] Freed from its sin and impurity. And God will be king. And king in the midst of his people. Friends, that's where God is going in his world. God is going to a place where he dwells among his people.

And there are no more threats to them or their security. We are not yet there. But we will be. Friends, here at Holy Trinity, we regularly pray the Lord's Prayer.

And I think the Lord's Prayer has the same general thrust as Zechariah in many ways. When we pray for God's name to be hallowed, for example, what are we praying for? We're praying that God will be recognized for who he is.

Now, let me say that will be great news for us who know and love God and his son Jesus. And give him prominent place in our lives. But it will not be such great news for those who have no place for God.

When we pray, thy kingdom come, thy will be done. We are praying for our heart's desire. But we're also praying for an end to those who have alternate kingdoms and opposite wills.

[20 : 57] Let's not forget, though, verse 16 of Zechariah 14. You see, verse 16 speaks of a great harvest from among the nations. Yes, there will be judgment. There will be a sorting out of the peoples.

The result will be, though, a great harvest. And God will dwell among an international community. He'll be their God and they will be his people. Friends, we are increasingly here at Holy Trinity an international and a cross-cultural community.

If you go to all of our congregations, you can see so many diverse cultures. And that's a picture of heaven itself. For that is what God is doing. He's calling people from all around the world to him.

And Zechariah understands that. Friends, that's where I want to conclude today, though. Do you remember how I began? I began speaking about wood and trees. And I said, this passage is a great summary of what God is about in his world.

I said it reveals his character, his plan, his ways of working in his world. Well, I wonder if you picked it up. Zechariah told us God is a creator and redeemer.

[22 : 01] He has a great purpose for his world. And the goal of God's creative and redemptive purposes is that he dwells among a saved and sanctified people who are rescued from evil and protected from those against God and against his people.

Zechariah has told us the means by which God is going to get to this place. He's told us that God's great goal will only come through the sacrifice of his son, which will, as it were, pierce God himself.

It will only come about through his waging war on his enemies and the enemies of his people. It's not so difficult. It looks overwhelming.

The book of Zechariah looks overwhelming. Its language is often weird, but the message is clear. So what should we do as we wait for the ultimate culmination of God's purposes for that day?

Well, our part is, I think, to do what Zechariah did. Speak God's word about God's purposes in his son. Line up our lives around God and his purposes in his son.

[23 : 09] And I want to conclude by asking, will you do this? You see, it's not about being passive pew sitters. It's about living active lives of service to our Lord Jesus Christ, making him known, living as people who dwell in his presence, speaking about Jesus to those who face the opposition of God unless they repent.

So will you do this? Let's pray. Father, we thank you for your great purposes in your world. To dwell amongst a saved and holy people whom you have rescued and protected.

Thank you for your son and his sacrifice. Thank you that you can redeem your people and have done so through Jesus.

Thank you that you hate evil and will wage war on it. Please help us to do what Zechariah does, to speak your word about your purposes in your son and to line up our lives around you and your purposes.

Father, we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen.