

Zechariah 14:1-8

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/zech/zech-14/zechariah-141-8/>

Zechariah predicts a day when the Gentile nations will invade Jerusalem and carry half of her residents off into exile. Afterward, God will intervene with His angelic army to deliver her and defeat the nations. Jerusalem will become a source of life-giving waters.

In Zechariah 12, the LORD promised to defend Judah and deliver her from all the enemy nations. He would elevate her to prominence and remove all socio-economic inequality within her. Moreover, He would bestow a spirit of grace and supplication on all the Judeans, causing them to repent. They will recognize that they pierced the LORD (Zechariah 12:10) and turn to Him in genuine faith (Zechariah 12:1-10). But, before experiencing deliverance, Jerusalem would first suffer and lose half of her residents through exile.

At the end of Chapter 13, Zechariah predicted that Judah would experience two thirds of the population being cut off and perishing. That could relate to 70 AD when the Romans invaded and subjugated Judah. Or it could be connected to the events in this chapter.

The prophet introduced the first verse with the particle *Behold*, a term often used to describe an event which is about to occur (v. 1). It focuses attention on the statement that follows it. Simply put, the biblical writers used *Behold* to emphasize an imminent action that is surprising or unexpected for the listeners. In our passage, the audience is Jerusalem, as the rest of the verse shows with the feminine singular pronoun “you.”

After catching the attention of his audience, Zechariah stated, *A day is coming for the LORD* (v. 1). This expression of a “day” of the LORD generally refers to any specific time when the LORD openly intervenes in human affairs to judge the wicked and deliver the righteous. This time may be near or far. In Zechariah, the verb *is coming* is a participle in Hebrew, conveying the imminent nature of God’s *Day*. This likely refers to the inevitability of this prediction taking place.

The prophet told *Jerusalem* that *when God has His day, the spoil taken from you will be divided among you* (v. 1). The Gentile nations will plunder the city. They will forcibly carry her possessions away. They will be so victorious that they will not wait to return to their camp before dividing Jerusalem’s wealth, but will do so in her midst while she watches the scene. Indeed, she will experience severe losses because she will be under divine punishment.

The prophet clarified this truth using the first-person pronoun to allow God to speak directly. Hence, God stated, *I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle* (v. 2).

In our context, the phrase *all the nations* depicts a scene where the countries of the earth ally to carry out a coordinated invasion. In this case, they all will assemble to attack *Jerusalem*. As a result, *the city will be captured, the houses plundered, the women ravished, and half of the city exiled* (v. 2). The enemy soldiers will seize the city of *Jerusalem*, pillage *the houses*, and rape the *women*.

This could be the same event as that described in Revelation, where the Beast gathers the nations of the earth in the Valley of Jezreel (Armageddon) then moves them to assault Jerusalem (Revelation 19:19, 16:16). Thereafter Revelation describes that Jesus then defeats them completely (Revelation 19:20-21).

In their military operations, Israel's enemies will carry half of the inhabitants of *Jerusalem* away into captivity, *but the rest of the people will not be cut off from the city* (v 2). That means the other half will remain in their homeland. This would indicate a time where Jerusalem is under subjugation to the nations.

When all hope appears to be gone, *the LORD* will intervene in the conflict. He will *go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fights on a day of battle* (v 3). The verb *go forth* often occurs in military contexts. In such cases, it means to go out to battle (Genesis 14:8; Exodus 17:9; Numbers 1:3). Thus, the statement that *God will fight against those nations* pictures Him as a divine Warrior and recalls the numerous occasions when He has intervened on behalf of His covenant people Israel (Exodus 15:3; Deuteronomy 1:30; Joshua 10:42, 10:14; Isaiah 42:13).

Since *the LORD* will fight for *Jerusalem*, He will turn her defeat into victory. *In that day, His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives* (v 4). The designation, *Mount of Olives*, is a ridge two and a half miles long running north and south just east across the Kidron Valley from Jerusalem (2 Samuel 15:30). That the LORD's *feet will stand on the Mount of Olives* indicates that the LORD will light down from heaven there and proceed to rescue Jerusalem from its oppressors. This is just as predicted in Acts 1:11.

According to the Gospel of Luke, Jesus visited the *Mount of Olives* several times (Luke 21:37, 22:39). It was there that He delivered His speech known as the Olivet Discourse, recorded in Matthew 24:1-25:46.

Jesus ascended to heaven from the *Mount of Olives* (Acts 1:9). After His ascension, two angels spoke to the disciples on the *Mount of Olives*, saying, "This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven" (Acts 1:11). Thus, the angels predicted that Jesus would return to earth in the future, and His feet would alight down on the Mount of Olives. This is also predicted by Zechariah 14:4.

The prophet Zechariah told his audience that one day God, represented in the person of Jesus Christ, will *stand* on the Mount of Olives to prevent the eradication of the remnant Judeans and fight against the coalition of the Gentile nations.

At that time, *the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west by a very large valley* (v 4).

God's presence on the mountain will likely cause an earthquake to divide it in two, creating a *large valley* running *east and west* through the hole. Thus, *half of the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south* (v 4). The LORD's presence and power will impact all the four main points of the compass. This cataclysmic event could take place as Jesus alights down on the Mount of Olives, or it could take place sometime after His return.

The *valley* created by the split of the mountain will become an escape route for the Judeans fleeing Jerusalem while God will fight against the enemy nations. Zechariah noted, *You will flee by the valley of My mountains, for the valley of the mountains will reach to Azel* (v 5). The mountains refer to the valley that splits the *Mount of Olives* and perhaps other mountains or hills of the Judean hills.

This could be related to the event described by Jesus in Matthew 24:15-22, where He admonishes the people of Jerusalem to flee when they see the “abomination of desolations which was spoken of by Daniel the prophet” (Matthew 24:15-21). If Jesus is admonishing the people of Jerusalem to escape through the valley, that would mean the valley would be created prior to Jesus’s rescue of Jerusalem. It appears there will be a delay in time between the abomination of desolations as spoken of by Daniel and Jesus’s rescue of Jerusalem. We are not given details.

Azel is likely a settlement on the eastern side of Jerusalem, which marks the eastern limit of the newly created valley. Although its exact location remains unknown, *Azel* might be a reference to the Valley of Jehoshaphat, the setting for the judgment of the nations and a refuge for the Judeans who will not go into captivity (v. 2).

Zechariah then reminded the Judeans of a historical event to emphasize their future escape: *Yes, you will flee just as you fled before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah, king of Judah* (v 5). The first pronoun (*you*) refers to the Judeans in the day of the prophetic fulfillment, while the second stands for their ancestors who survived the *earthquake* during the reign of *King Uzziah* (792-740 BC).

Archaeological evidence shows that there was a major *earthquake* in the stratum 6 excavations at Hazor, dating to approximately 760 BC. The book of Amos dates the prophet’s ministry two years before the catastrophe (Amos 1:1). Zechariah, who ministered some 250 years later, spoke of the magnitude of that *earthquake*, and compared it to a prophesied end-time event. Then, he said, *the LORD, my God, will come, and all the holy ones with Him* (v 5).

The prophet told his audience that *the LORD* was his *God*, meaning he had an intimate relationship with Him. The *holy ones* are likely God’s angelic army (Daniel 4:13, 8:13; Psalm 89:5, 7). They serve at His command. These heavenly attendants will accompany God when He appears on *the Mount of Olives* in all glory and power to protect His covenant people and rule the earth.

This could be the same event as Jesus’s return to earth as discussed in Revelation 19:11-16.

In *that day*, He will cause a disruption of the cosmos: *There will be no light; the luminaries will dwindle* (v. 6). Thus, it pictures a cosmic upheaval.

This sounds like the same event predicted by Jesus in His Olivet Discourse:

“But immediately after the tribulation of those days THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL FALL from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken.”
(Matthew 24:29)

Jesus made this statement recorded in Matthew in response to His disciples asking Him “What will be the sign of your coming?” (Matthew 24:3). This prophecy might have been answered in part when Jesus was crucified, during His last three hours on the cross when darkness covered the land (Matthew 27:45). During that time, Jesus was saving the world from sin and redeeming humanity’s right to reign (Colossians 2:14; Hebrews 2:9-10; Revelation 3:21). This was a necessary precondition to Him coming again to restore His reign upon the earth (Philippians 2:5-9).

But it seems that the complete fulfillment of the prediction of these cosmic events will come at a time in the future, as a precursor to Jesus’s second coming to earth. This theme of cosmic upheaval is sprinkled throughout the prophetic passages of the Bible, including:

- Isaiah 13:10, 24:23
- Ezekiel 32:7
- Joel 2:10, 31, 3:15
- Amos 5:20, 8:9

In the earth that is to come, God Himself will be the source of light. Isaiah echoes this truth when he said to the Judeans, “No longer will you have the sun for light by day, nor for brightness will the moon give you light; But you will have the LORD for an everlasting light, and your God for your glory” (Isaiah 60:19; cf. Revelation 22:5).

Likewise, in this special circumstance as described by Zechariah, God will cause an alteration of the normal cycle of day and night. *For it will be a unique day which is known to the LORD, neither day nor night* (v 7). God alone knows all the details concerning this special *day*. He knows when it will begin and how it will manifest itself.

At any rate, the unique day will be *neither day nor night*. It will be something else previously not experienced. Then the prophet added, *it will come about that at evening time there will be light* (v 7). Although the day will be *neither day nor night*, it seems it will be absent normal lighting. But toward *evening time there will be light*. On this special day at the time when light normally begins to recede, apparently *light* reappears.

And *in that day*, when the LORD establishes His rule over the whole world, *living waters will flow out of Jerusalem* (v 8). Jerusalem will become a headwater for an entirely new river that will support an entirely new ecosystem.

The Hebrew term translated as *living waters* describes running water like that of a spring or river as opposed to collected runoff or rainwater. Jerusalem will become the source of life-giving waters, *with half of them flowing toward the eastern sea and the other half toward the western sea* (v 8). That means that the spring of water will have two branches. One will flow toward the Dead Sea to the east and the other toward the Mediterranean Sea to the west. Unlike seasonal streams flowing only during the rainy season, this stream will irrigate the land *in summer as well as in winter*. It will flow continuously.

This is a dramatic change from the current topography and landscape of Jerusalem. Jerusalem is currently on a series of hills. This passage describes a new valley running east and west that

splits the Mount of Olives, Apparently at the bottom of that valley will run a river that flows both east and west.

We are told in Ezekiel 47:1-12 of a river in the last days that will flow to the Dead Sea. The river is teeming with fish, and has sufficient flow of fresh water to heal the salty Dead Sea and bring life back to its waters. The headwater of this river begins under the step of the new temple that will be constructed, as described in Ezekiel 40-46. It seems likely that this Ezekiel passage is describing the same remarkable environmental change as recorded here in Zechariah.

Biblical Text

¹Behold, a day is coming for the LORD when the spoil taken from you will be divided among you. ²For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city will be captured, the houses plundered, the women ravished, and half of the city exiled, but the rest of the people will not be cut off from the city. ³Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fights on a day of battle. ⁴In that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west by a very large valley, so that half of the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south. ⁵You will flee by the valley of My mountains, for the valley of the mountains will reach to Azel; yes, you will flee just as you fled before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the LORD, my God, will come, *and* all the holy ones with Him! ⁶In that day there will be no light; the luminaries will dwindle. ⁷For it will be a unique day which is known to the LORD, neither day nor night, but it will come about that at evening time there will be light. ⁸And in that day living waters will flow out of Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea and the other half toward the western sea; it will be in summer as well as in winter.