

GOD'S RIGHT TO SPEAK
ZECHARIAH 12:1

I loved my mom and learned so very much from her. She was a gift of great grace from the Lord to me. But she had one habit that I could never adopt, even though I understood it. One day I saw her reading a book that I thought she had just begun, but she was already almost at the end of the book — “Wow, mom! You’ve really read that book quickly!” “Oh, I’m not finishing it; I’ve just started.” “But you are at the end of the book.” “Yes — I read the last chapter first.” “You can’t do that — that’s cheating!! Why do you do that?” “I read the last chapter first to make sure the story ends well; if it doesn’t have a good ending, I don’t want to waste my time reading the whole book.”

I loved mom, and I understood why she did that, but I just couldn’t get myself to do that. Until today. Kind of. Today we read God’s “end of the story.” And it will reinforce the value of not only reading everything He has to say, but it will also reinforce the value of enduring all He sends our way in this rocky, difficult world. Life has hard and harsh moments. But for the believer in Christ, it can *only* end well.

Zechariah 11 is one of the more difficult sections in the book of Zechariah. It is difficult both to interpret and to accept — the message is somber and heavy. But as heavy as chapter 11 is, chapters 12-14 are that encouraging and hopeful. As we begin this final section of the book of Zechariah, we find in 12:1 that —

AS SOVEREIGN CREATOR, GOD HAS AUTHORITATIVE RIGHT TO SPEAK.

HIS DECLARATION IS THAT HE WILL FULFILL HIS PROMISES.

One of the main words spoken by God in Zechariah 12-14 is His promise related to “that day” — the day of the Lord. The concept of the day of the Lord has already been revealed in the book (2:11; 3:9-10; 8:23; 9:16). But the day of the Lord becomes a dominant theme in chs. 12-14 (22x — 12:3-4, 6, 8-9, 11; 13:1-2, 4; 14:1, 3-9, 13, 20-21). The phrase denotes that God is going to act for Israel in the final day (eschatological future); but **what is His right to act** in the final day?

1. God Will Act in “That Day” (v. 3)

- ✓ The Old Testament Use of “the Day of the Lord”
- ✓ Zechariah’s use of “the Day of the Lord”
- ✓ Where “the Day of the Lord” fits in God’s prophetic plan
- ✓ The key elements of God’s prophetic plan in Zechariah

2. What is God’s Authority to Act in “That Day?” (v. 1)

- ✓ He is sovereign Creator of all **THINGS**
- ✓ He is sovereign Creator of all **MANKIND**

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1. God Will Act in “That Day” (v. 3)

• The Old Testament Use of “the Day of the Lord”

- ✓ The Day of the Lord anticipates judgment that is coming soon — in the timeframe of the prophecy
 - The demise of Edom in 845 BC (Obadiah 1-14, esp. vv. 8, 14-15) — a Gentile nation
 - Israel’s captivity by Assyria in 722 B.C. (Amos 5:18, 20)
 - Judah’s captivity by Babylon in 605–586 B.C. (Is. 13:1, 6, 8-9; Ezk. 13:5; Joel 1:15; 2:1)
 - Summary: sometimes “Day of the Lord” refers to an immanent judgment
- ✓ The Day of the Lord anticipates judgment in the future
 - The judgment of the nations in the Tribulation (Joel 2:31; Mal. 4:5; cf. Jesus in Mt. 24:29)
 - God’s future judgment of the nations at Armageddon (Joel 3:12-14, 17; Ezk. 38:17-23)
 - Summary: often “Day of the Lord” refers to future judgment — and often the immediate and future senses appear in the same passage (Zeph. 1:7 & 14-15; Joel 1:14 & 2:30-31)
 - The judgment is because God created the world so He could rule it through mankind that was made in His image. Because of sin, man rebelled against God’s authority and the story of history is the story of God’s work to “redeem and renew mankind...to make possible their...successful dominion over all things as his viceroys.” If His Kingdom would have dominion, the rebellious kingdoms of the world had to be finally put down. There can only be one King, and the defeat of all other kings and the establishment of the One great King is the story of the Day of the Lord.
[Vlach, *Everlasting Dominion*]
 - God’s judgment of the nations is an outworking of the principle that God will not give His glory with another (Is 48:11) and that He alone is sovereign (Zech. 12:2ff).
- ✓ The Day of the Lord anticipates future blessing,
 - There will be blessing for the nations (Joel 2:32)
 - There will be blessing for Israel (Joel 3:20-21; Amos 9:11)
 - There is blessing because God is among you and “a victorious warrior” (Zeph. 3:15, 17)
- ✓ Summary: when the OT uses “the day of the Lord,” it primarily is looking towards judgment, but it also includes an element of anticipation of blessings because sin and evil have been put down.
 - The NT is more specific that the future judgment is the Tribulation (2 Thess. 2:2-3ff; Rev. 6:17), or the final battle (Armageddon, Rev. 16:14; 2 Pt. 3:10) at the end of the Tribulation.
 - Both of these NT judgments also usher in blessings from God in the Millennial Kingdom.
 - Sometimes there is a blending of references to the Day of the Lord making it unclear whether the judgment or the blessing (or both) are in view.

- **Zechariah's use of "the Day of the Lord"**

- ✓ The phrase "Day of the Lord" does not appear in Zechariah, but clearly the repeated use of "that day" is a shortened reference to the day of the Lord — and generally Zechariah is looking towards a future final day (not a day that will be fulfilled in the immediate future).
- ✓ In **2:11** — There will be judgment against Israel in the Tribulation (2:6-7), but that judgment is not final. God's people remain precious to Him (vv. 8, 12) and He will live with them — *and* the nations also will come and live as His people in His kingdom (v. 11), which was always His plan (Gen. 12:3). So DOL in ch. 2 is looking at judgment *and* final blessings in the MK.
- ✓ In **3:8-10** the Messiah will come and there will be a massive conversion and the removal of all sin in a single day (cf. 6:11-15; Is. 66:8)
- ✓ In **8:23** — the prophet anticipates the Millennial Kingdom blessing of redeemed people from the nations who want into the Kingdom.
- ✓ In **9:16** — because Israel rejected the Messiah at His first coming (9:9), they will not be redeemed until the second coming — but they will be saved as a nation in a massive conversion.
- ✓ In chapters 12-14 (22x), the King will vanquish the nations and establish His throne (**14:9**). He alone will be King, and the curse of sin and death will be removed (v. 11). "Jesus wins."
- ✓ Summary — There are elements of God's judgment in the concept of the Day of the Lord in Zechariah, but generally, Zechariah sees the Day of the Lord as the time *after* the judgment in which redeemed Israel and the redeemed of the nations enjoy the full blessings of God (**14:20-21**).

- **Where "the Day of the Lord" fits in God's prophetic plan**

- ✓ Without giving the whole explanation of God's timeline of final events, here are the key elements:
- ✓ **Rapture** (**1 Thess. 1:10; 4:13-18**) — all believers are taken to Heaven; all that follows on earth is without us (and without the restraining influence of the Holy Spirit, **2 Thess. 2:6-7**)
- ✓ **Tribulation** ("Day of the Lord")
 - God's judgment against Israel and the nations (**Rev. 6-18**; cf. **6:8; 9:18**)
 - God's judgment against Israel (**Rev. 13:2, 5ff; Zech. 11:16**)
 - In Heaven, the Bema judgment (**1 Cor. 3:10ff**) and marriage supper of the Lamb (**Rev. 19:7-10**)
- ✓ **The Battle of Armageddon** (**Rev. 16:13-16**; "Day of the Lord") — the Antichrist's vain battle
- ✓ **Millennial Kingdom** (**Rev. 20:4**; "Day of the Lord") — the judgment of the nations and the establishment of God's kingdom is all His work (we don't bring in the Kingdom; we can't bring in the Kingdom; cf. **Zech. 12:2ff** — "I will.")
- ✓ **Satan's final protest** put down (**Rev. 20:7ff**)
- ✓ **Great White Throne judgment** and Satan and all sinners condemned in the **lake of fire** (**Rev. 20:13-15**)
- ✓ **Eternity** (**Rev. 22:1-5**)

- The key elements of God's prophetic plan in Zechariah

- ✓ God's discipline and judgment of Israel (10:8-9; 11:15-16) — non-specific time frame
- ✓ God's judgment of the nations (1:15, 21; 2:8-9; 9:1-8) — non-specific time frame
- ✓ God's restoration of Israel (1:16-17; 8:3-8; 10:6; 12:1-9) and His spiritual cleansing of her (13:1ff)
- ✓ God's salvation of the nations (2:11; 8:23; 14:16)
- ✓ God's defeat of the Antichrist (11:17)
- ✓ The Battle of Armageddon (end of the Tribulation, 14:1ff)
- ✓ Return of Christ (14:3-4)
- ✓ The Millennial Kingdom (14:8-9)

"Prophet after prophet gave comfort to the nation by reaffirming the hope of the Davidic covenant — that one of David's sons would sit on David's throne and rule over David's kingdom., and that under that reign Israel would experience the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant." [Pentecost, *Thy Kingdom Come.*]

2. What is God's Authority to Act in "That Day?" (v. 1)

- The year before I married Raye Jeanne, I lived with two other guys who were also seminary students. We were not exactly similar in the way we kept the apartment clean. I'm not a cleaning fanatic, but these guys were ridiculous. One of them would cook something and the leftovers would still be on the stove 24 hours later; he *never* washed his sheets — in nine months! And he left his razors on the bathroom counter (I think he had 50 on the counter one time).
- We all went home for Christmas and I was the first one back. And I took that opportunity to draft some house rules for cleaning and posted them in a prominent place. When the second guy came back from his vacation he saw the rules: "Who posted these?" "I did." "On whose authority?" "MINE." "Ok. I was just wondering..." (I don't recommend that as a process for conflict resolution, by the way.)
- Did I really have authority? Nope. And Israel and the nations might also be wondering, "on what basis can we be sure that God will accomplish all He promises to do in the Day of the Lord?" Verse 1 tells us.
 - ✓ The word **burden** (9:1) typically refers to judgment, but it can mean "declaration" which is what it means here. God is not against Israel; perhaps no chapters in the OT are so hopeful and favorable for Israel. "They are among the most important to be found in the prophetic Scriptures." [Feinberg]
 - ✓ What we need to notice is that *God* is speaking:
 - **The burden of the word of the LORD** (YHWH) — While Zechariah is writing, these aren't his words and ideas; these declarations are from the mind and mouth of God alone (and come with His singular authority — there is no disputing what is revealed).
 - Zechariah reiterates the idea when he says, **Thus declares the LORD** (YHWH)... The word for declaration is very common (268x) and 258x it is used by the prophets. It is a definitive and prophetic word (which means not just that it is predictive, but it is authoritative).

- The covenant making and keeping God (YHWH) is speaking, and He is not only demanding, but in this context He is promising. He will keep what He says.
- The nation might be unsure and fragile as they rebuild the temple — what will happen? Will Babylon or the Medo-Persians return and take us away? Or someone else? Will we survive?
- These words are a firm declaration that God will do what He says and will preserve His people (notice **I will** in vv. 2, 3, 4 [2x], 6, 9, 10).

“...chapters 12 and 13 as a whole are about the restoration of God’s covenant relationship with Israel, and it will be accomplished from God’s side. He himself will do it, and the way he introduces himself indicates that it will be no mean feat. In fact, it will be a work comparable to the creation of the world!” [Webb, 156.]

- ✓ So on what basis does God speak authoritatively? God gives three responses that can be summarized in two statements.

- **He is sovereign Creator of all THINGS**

- ✓ God **stretches out the heavens**. Like one who stretches out a tent and sets it up, God has put together all the heavenly realm for mankind to live in (and we have a much greater concept of how extensive that creation was). It is a clear reference to Gen. 1:1ff; and don’t miss that the vastness and intricacy of the heavenly realm was simply created by a Word; it was no problem (Ps. 8:3).
- ✓ God also **lays the foundation of the earth**. Another reference to Gen. 1:1 — God not only made the heavens, but He made all things on the earth; from the largest to the smallest and from the furthest to the nearest, nothing exists without God having made it. God has created all things.
- ✓ To say that God is the Creator establishes His right to do what He wills with His creation — He has the ability *and* the right to act in the Day of the Lord because He is the Creator. No one can resist Him because from the very first moment of time, His sovereign authority has been established.
- ✓ These phrases repeat what **Isaiah 51:13** says, but he also draws out the application that there is therefore no reason to fear anyone — even an oppressor and an enemy. God will provide safety for His people. They are secure.
- ✓ The nation of Israel in 520 B.C. had nothing to fear from the nations (nor do we).

- **He is sovereign Creator of all MANKIND**

- ✓ Not only is He over all the inanimate parts of creation, but He animates creation as well.
- ✓ He **forms the spirit of man within Him**. That is, God not only creates the body of a man, but He also creates man in His image and creates the inner man — the soul/spirit (Gen. 1:26-28; 2:7-25).
- ✓ Like a potter, God made the body of mankind, breathed physical life into it (Gen. 2:7) and gave man a soul (**Acts 17:25**). He determines the details of one’s life (**v. 26**; Ps. 139) and He provides both the empowerment for living and the goal of life (**v. 28**).

- ✓ And God not only creates, but He also constantly sustains (without any effort, **Heb. 1:3**; Col. 1:17).
- ✓ This phrase not only affirms God's sovereignty over creation, but also intimates His sovereignty over re-creation (regeneration and salvation). What is hinted at here is made explicit in **2 Cor. 4:6**.
- ✓ That God is the creator of physical and spiritual life was a great encouragement to the Israelites. Because of His control over all these things, they did not need to fear the nations. He would fulfill as His promises and "I wills."
- ✓ This declaration (chs. 12-14) "is sure because of *who said it*, and it is *sure* because He will carry it out." [P. Enns]
- ✓ God has spoken; He has the right and authority to speak; we can be confident in what He says.

CONCLUSION: Why meditating on Christ's return is essential:

- ✓ **The anticipation of the growing hardship** prior to the day of the Lord (1 Tim. 4:1; **2 Tim. 3:1ff**) reminds us what is *not* our responsibility — we don't have to bring in the Kingdom or "fix" the culture. That's the Lord's job, not ours. Only He can do it. And He will (Zech. 12:2ff). We don't need to fear.
- ✓ **The judgment of the day of the Lord** is not for the believer (1 Thess. 1:10; 5:9-10), but it is designed to give us confidence in God who will act (**1 Thess. 5:10**).
- ✓ **The hope of the day of the Lord** provides us wisdom to encourage one another (1 Thess. 4:18; **5:11**). A blessing is coming in the Kingdom and beyond that surpasses our comprehension (Rev. 21-22).
- ✓ **The reality of the day of the Lord** encourages us to be bold with the gospel (**2 Pt. 3:10-11**).

He has spoken. Yes, days are hard — and will get harder. But He has spoken. He has promised His day will come. And the Day of the Lord will come, and we will all be fully and finally safe.

Benediction (Rob): Jude 24-25