

## XXVI. Holy to the LORD

May 31, 2020                      Zechariah 14:12-21

**Theme:** The eternal state will be characterized by complete and utter holiness; the redeemed remnant will abide and worship in perfect harmony, while all those who are unholy will be judged and excluded forever.

**Aim:** To strive for holiness, without which no one will see the LORD.

**Key Verses:** <sup>20</sup>And on that day there shall be inscribed on the bells of the horses, “Holy to the LORD.” And the pots in the house of the LORD shall be as the bowls before the altar. <sup>21</sup>And every pot in Jerusalem and Judah shall be holy to the LORD of hosts, so that all who sacrifice may come and take of them and boil the meat of the sacrifice in them. And there shall no longer be a trader in the house of the LORD of hosts on that day (Zechariah 14:20-21).

### *Review*

Last week, we looked at the eschatological prophecy of the return of the King, our Lord Jesus, in Zechariah 14:1-11. The situation at the beginning of the passage looked grim for God’s people, as they were besieged, defeated, plundered, and pillaged by the marauding nations of the world. But then the end of history changes as the LORD in His second advent returns to earth in glory with the hosts of heaven, to fight as a warrior, to defeat all His enemies, and to bring His saints to safety through a grand deliverance.

While at some level, the imagery of chapter 14 may typify the church age, it seems apparent from the heightened apocalyptic language that the consummation of history at the return of Christ is being prophesied. It is described as “a unique day” in the course of redemptive history, in which the very creation seems to unravel and time comes to an end.

For the church of God, it is also a day of incomparable blessing, which is described in four different word-pictures. The first image of *living waters*, expresses the salvation blessings that belong to those who have been redeemed by the blood of the Lamb. The second portrait depicts *the return of the King* to reign in unopposed justice and righteousness for eternity. Third, we have the *exaltation of the City of God*, as Jerusalem is lifted up and the surrounding lands are laid low. Finally, we have the *peace and prosperity* of a city that will be inhabited in perpetuity and in security.

The New Jerusalem, the eternal City of God, the eschatological kingdom of heaven, is the culmination of redemptive history. The world started in a beautiful, perfect paradise of a Garden, but it will end in a glorious, wonderful, City where the abundance of living waters, the presence of the righteous King, the exaltation of a glorified people, and the peace and prosperity of holiness will extend for all eternity. All this can be summed up as: *Upon the second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ in glory, He will complete the salvation of His people, consummate redemptive history, and establish His blessed, eternal, heavenly kingdom.*

### *Introduction*

Throughout this course, I have applied a three-fold approach to understanding Zechariah's prophetic oracles: the *historical*, the *spiritual*, and the *eschatological* approaches. The first view looked to see the prophetic fulfillment enacted in history, and we have had plenty of examples, including the progress of Alexander in Palestine (9:1-8); the defeat of Antiochus IV Epiphanes by the Maccabees (9:13-15), and the destruction of Jerusalem by Rome, presaged by the breaking of the two staffs (11:10, 14). We've also seen many Messianic fulfillments in the first advent of Christ, including the triumphal entry (9:9-10), the betrayal of Jesus by Judas (11:12-13), the piercing of the Savior on the cross (12:10), the fountain of cleansing that His blood provides (13:1), and the Shepherd being struck by the justice of God, resulting in the scattering of the disciples (13:7).

On a *spiritual* level, we have equated the New Testament church as the continuation of the nation of Israel, and hence, although couched in Old Testament language and types, Zechariah's prophecies are meant to be understood as applying to the people of God of all ages in a spiritual sense. Thus physical salvation of Jerusalem, Judah, or Ephraim is intended to portray the blessings of our spiritual salvation in and through the Lord Jesus Christ. We have seen in these Old Testament pictures and metaphors a description of our salvation, including effectual calling, regeneration and faith (conversion), repentance, justification, sanctification, and glorification.

In some cases, the grandeur of the fulfillment in Zechariah's prophecies exceeds our experience, and we understand that the ultimate resolution of these oracles will only finally be realized in heaven. For example, the language of 9:16-17 speaks about the glory, peace, and prosperity of eternity. Likewise, the salvation depicted in 10:6-12, while an outline of our Christian experience, will only be fully accomplished in glory. And clearly, the events described in the final chapter of Zechariah, including the victorious second coming of the Lord Jesus Christ at the end of the age to inaugurate eternity, can only be understood in this manner. I have termed this the *eschatological* viewpoint, because it is looking to the future consummation for understanding the biblical promises presented to us. However, the eschatological lens I have used is specific. I do not subscribe to the literal hermeneutic of dispensational premillennialists, who separate Israel from the church and look for a physical, earthly reign of Christ in a renewed Mosaic age. Rather, my viewpoint is aligned with the Reformed theology position that sees apocalyptic language as symbolic of the spiritual realities of the age to come and seeks to understand it in a way consistent with the overall message of Scripture.

As we draw to the end of Zechariah's magnificent prophecy, in the latter half of chapter 14 we have a continuation of the description of the consummation. Remember, Zechariah has used the only language available to him, that of the old covenant community of Israel to describe in pictures the truths of eternity after the conclusion of the new covenant. In 14:1-11, he has described the deliverance of God's people from the marauding armies of the nations, and the establishment of the blessed and eternal kingdom of Christ.

Now in verses 12-21, he completes the picture in three parts. In verses 12-15, the fate of those rebelling against the Lord is disclosed. Previously, verses 3-5 focused on the salvation of the remnant that occurred at Christ's return. Now in these verses, the prophet returns to the aftermath of the battle to describe the other side of the day of the LORD, which is also a time of judgment upon God's enemies.

## Zechariah II – Lesson 26

Verses 16-19 portray the remaining remnant from all nations of the world worshiping together as one covenant community, celebrating the old covenant Feast of Tabernacles. Even though Zechariah was limited to Old Testament terminology to describe New Testament realities, the symbolism and meaning behind this Mosaic festival portrays spiritual truths about the eternal state.

Finally, verses 20-21 focus in on the overriding and chief characteristic of glory: holiness. God is exceedingly holy and we are to be holy like Him. Ultimately, this is the end goal of our justification and sanctification: that we might partake of His holiness. Zechariah's prophecy rightly ends with a portrait of pervasive holiness, a condition as yet unrealized in this world, but which will be the norm in the world to come. Thus, the theme of this last section of Zechariah's prophecy may be summarized as: *The eternal state will be characterized by complete and utter holiness; the redeemed remnant will abide and worship in perfect harmony, while all those who are unholy will be judged and excluded forever.*

### A. Final Judgment (Zechariah 14:12-15)

Verses 12-15 take us back to verse 3 of chapter 14, where *the LORD will go out and fight against those nations as when he fights on a day of battle.* At that point in Zechariah's vision, the prophet focused on the deliverance the LORD's coming provided the City of God. However, the day of the LORD is the time when He draws near not only to save His people, but also to judge His enemies. It is to this aspect of the return of the King that the prophet now focuses his attention.

Drawing from a rich history of older biblical imagery, Zechariah describes the Final Judgment of God against the unrighteous with three separate word pictures. Each one portrays a different aspect of the terrible condemnation that all unbelievers will experience for rejecting the Lord of life.

#### 1. Plague on the Rebels (14:12)

*<sup>12</sup>And this shall be the plague with which the LORD will strike all the peoples that wage war against Jerusalem: their flesh will rot while they are still standing on their feet, their eyes will rot in their sockets, and their tongues will rot in their mouths.*

The first judgment is a plague which rots away the flesh of God's opponents, even as they still are alive and standing on their feet. It is as if they have been struck by a highly concentrated and lethal dose of nuclear radiation. Especially marked out for rotting are the eyes and the tongue, suggestive that these instruments of vision and speech have especially offended our holy God. The idea is one of just retribution: since these wicked men had set their eyes upon the City of God, seeking its destruction, and because they had spoken out in vile, derogatory speech against the LORD and His people, the eye and tongue are marked for destruction.

This imagery of a plague of rotting flesh is reproduced with astonishing accuracy in the climax of the movie *Raiders of the Lost Ark* [spoiler alert]. In that scene, Indiana Jones and Marion Ravenwood are tied to a post outside the secret Nazi island base, while the French archeologist Dr. René Belloq presides over a ritual to open up the long lost ark of the covenant. Indiana tells Marion to close her eyes and not to look, no matter what. At first, the vision flowing from the opened ark is beatific, but then it turns into a nightmare as the wrath of God strikes the assembled German forces. The apex of the scene is when the face and tongue of the creepy

## Zechariah II – Lesson 26

Gestapo agent, Major Toht, literally melt off his skull, exposing his eyeballs, while Colonel Dietrich's head shrivels up and Belloq's head explodes.

The concept of plagues striking the unrighteous is, of course, not novel to Zechariah. The ten plagues of Egypt, which destroyed the economic, political, and religious systems of the Egyptians and their arrogant pharaoh, are the prime example of how the LORD judges the nations even as He moves to save the saints. But God also promised to send plagues against His own people as a curse for disobedience and willful abandonment of their old covenant obligations:

The LORD will strike you with wasting disease and with fever, inflammation and fiery heat, and with drought and with blight and with mildew. They shall pursue you until you perish (Deuteronomy 28:22).

Indeed, the Israelites had already experienced such diseases and death during their rebellious years in the desert. After Korah's rebellion failed, those who grumbled about God's just punishment were judged with a plague of death (Num. 16:41-50). Upon another occasion of their ceaseless complaining, God sent fiery serpents into the Israelite camp, whose poisonous bite brought quick death (Num. 21:4-9). And the fate of the ten spies who brought the negative report back to Israel, overriding the positive report of Joshua and Caleb, also suffered in likewise manner:

The men who brought up a bad report of the land—died by plague before the Lord (Num. 14:37).

But all of these Old Testament plagues are merely a prelude to the final plague of judgment that will take place "on that day." What Zechariah describes here is a kind of a "zombie apocalypse," a corruption of the flesh that results in the destruction of the body. Zechariah's vision is akin to that of the closing words of Isaiah's magnificent prophecy, where the international residents of the new heavens and the new earth cast their gaze upon those whom the Lord has struck down in judgment:

And they shall go out and look on the dead bodies of the men who have rebelled against me. For their worm shall not die, their fire shall not be quenched, and they shall be an abhorrence to all flesh (Isaiah 66:24).

Although their bodies may be dead, their souls survive and suffer for eternity in hell. Jesus makes this connection quite clear when He equates the description in the last verse of Isaiah with the eternal punishment waiting for unbelievers.

<sup>47</sup>And if your eye causes you to sin, tear it out. It is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell, <sup>48</sup>'where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched' (Mark 9:47-48).

The nineteenth-century commentator T. V. Moore picks up on this thread and elaborates:

It is a figurative description of the punishment of sin. The first element is *corruption*, which is set forth by the terrible image of a living death, a fearful anomalous state, in which the moldy rottenness of death is combined in horrible union with the vivid, conscious sensibility of life. The soul of the sinner, in its future consciousness of sin, shall feel its loathsome corruption as vividly as now it would feel the slow putrefaction of the body that rotted piecemeal to the grave (Moore, p. 310).

## Zechariah II – Lesson 26

Some people joke that if certain of their favorite vices (e.g., gambling, drinking, fornication) are not allowed in heaven, that they would rather go to hell where they will be able to enjoy themselves. However, that is not the biblical picture at all! Rather, the eternal fate of those who reject God is one of *corruption*, pain, and unending torment (cp. the parable of Lazarus and the rich man in Luke 16:19-31). Indeed, the book of Revelation pictures the eternal destiny of the wicked as being cast into the lake of fire, where “they will be tormented day and night forever and ever” (Rev. 20:10; cp. 20:15).

### 2. Panic from the Lord (14:13)

<sup>13</sup>*And on that day a great panic from the LORD shall fall on them, so that each will seize the hand of another, and the hand of the one will be raised against the hand of the other.*

The first aspect of God’s final judgment on sinners is a *plague that results in corruption*. The second image in Zechariah’s depiction of the fate of the wicked is a *panic that results in confusion*. In fact, their panic and confusion are so great that the gathered nations set upon and destroy one another. The sole purpose which had united them, a common hatred against God’s people, now dissolves into a primal struggle for survival against their erstwhile allies.

This method of destroying the unity of the wicked and causing them to fight amongst themselves is a time-honored practice that God has used upon numerous occasions in the past. In commanding the Israelites to sweep out the Canaanites from the land of Palestine, God made the following promise to the children of Israel:

But the LORD your God will give them over to you and throw them into great confusion, until they are destroyed (Deuteronomy 7:23).

Subsequently, the Scripture records multiple occasions when this promise was fulfilled. The triumph of Gideon’s 300 men over the Midianites was not accomplished by strength of arms, but by the confusion in the enemy’s camp: “the LORD set every man’s sword against his comrade and against all the army” (Jdg. 7:22). The victory of Jonathan and his armor-bearer over the Philistines began with Jonathan’s faith, but it became a rout when “every Philistine’s sword was against his fellow, and there was very great confusion” (1 Sam. 14:20). And King Jehoshaphat needed only to lift up a prayer, not a sword, in order to defeat the confederation of enemies against him:

For the men of Ammon and Moab rose against the inhabitants of Mount Seir, devoting them to destruction, and when they had made an end of the inhabitants of Seir, they all helped to destroy one another (2 Chronicles 20:23).

We’ve already seen this same principle espoused by Zechariah as God promises to protect His church by sending panic and confusion into the hosts gathered against them:

On that day, declares the Lord, I will strike every horse with panic, and its rider with madness. But for the sake of the house of Judah I will keep my eyes open, when I strike every horse of the peoples with blindness (Zechariah 12:4).

Zechariah’s contemporary, Haggai, also had much the same thing to say about the way God deals with His enemies:

<sup>21</sup>“Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I am about to shake the heavens and the earth, <sup>22</sup>and to overthrow the throne of kingdoms. I am about to destroy the strength

## Zechariah II – Lesson 26

of the kingdoms of the nations, and overthrow the chariots and their riders. And the horses and their riders shall go down, every one by the sword of his brother (Haggai 2:21-22).

How are we to understand this picture of internal confusion and discord within the ranks of the hosts of the world? If heaven is the place of perfect peace, contentment, and harmony, then hell is the exact opposite. Again, Moore describes this aspect of eternal judgment well:

The second element of the punishment is given in v. 13, viz: *mutual hate and contention*. The image is that of a panic-stricken army, in which each man clutches and strikes in frantic fury his nearest neighbor. Hell shall be hate, in its fiercest and most hateful terms. Sin is now the cause of all the quarrels on the earth; it shall be the cause of endless quarrels in hell. Oh, the thought of an everlasting scene of rage, hate, conflict is intolerable! and yet this is but sin left to itself (Moore p. 310).

“This is but sin left to itself.” Think on that statement for just a minute. The fruit of sin is hatred, strife, contention, war, misery, and death. It is the just recompense for a life lived for self instead of for God and others. Hell is exactly what the sinner deserves, because it is the ultimate expression of what they have desired above all things in this world: a life free from God and His goodness. And the vacuum created by the absence of God’s holiness leaves a place of such horror that words cannot adequately describe it. Ultimately, God gives every person not only what they deserve, but also what they want. For the Christian, it is an eternity of joy in the presence of our holy Savior; for the unbeliever, it is an eternity free of God’s presence, and all that this state of misery entails.

### 3. Plundering the Nations (14:14-15)

<sup>14</sup>*Even Judah will fight at Jerusalem. And the wealth of all the surrounding nations shall be collected, gold, silver, and garments in great abundance.* <sup>15</sup>*And a plague like this plague shall fall on the horses, the mules, the camels, the donkeys, and whatever beasts may be in those camps.*

Unlike the panic and confusion that God sends to strike the camp of the nations gathered around Jerusalem, the people of God are harmoniously united in a singularity of purpose: *Even Judah will fight at Jerusalem*. The translation of this sentence, like several other parts of Zechariah 14, is difficult. The ESV footnote provides an alternate translation, “against Jerusalem,” which most translations reject in favor of “at Jerusalem.” Contextually, the preferred translation makes more sense, since Judah (the countryside) and Jerusalem (the capital city) are jointly pictured as the entire “City of God,” or in New Testament terms, the church of Jesus Christ.

In a providential twist of irony, the wealth that the nations sought and fought for and lusted after, the material goods that they had valued so highly that they wanted to deprive the City of God of their rightful portion (cp. 14:1-2), those riches would be left behind for the inhabitants of Jerusalem and Judah to gather: *gold silver, and garments in great abundance*. Of course, to the victor go the spoils of war, as King Jehoshaphat discovered once his enemies had completely destroyed themselves at the provocation of God’s providence:

When Jehoshaphat and his people came to take their spoil, they found among them, in great numbers, goods, clothing, and precious things, which they took for themselves until they could carry no more. They were three days in taking the spoil, it was so much (2 Chronicles 20:25).

## Zechariah II – Lesson 26

But there is more to this third and final description of God's judgment than a simple consequence of military victory or loss. There is a spiritual significance to this concept of *plundering the nations*. On the one hand, it is a picture or image of the spiritual enrichment of God's kingdom. The church is the joint heir with Christ of all of creation, so it should be no surprise that all things, which have been created by God for our use and His glory, should be ours in eternity. Repeatedly in the Old Testament, the idea of the wealth of nations coming into the City of God is associated with the glories of heaven:

<sup>5</sup>Then you shall see and be radiant;  
your heart shall thrill and exult,  
because the abundance of the sea shall be turned to you,  
the wealth of the nations shall come to you....

<sup>11</sup>Your gates shall be open continually;  
day and night they shall not be shut,  
that people may bring to you the wealth of the nations,  
with their kings led in procession (Isaiah 60:5, 11).

Arise and thresh,  
O daughter of Zion,  
for I will make your horn iron,  
and I will make your hoofs bronze;  
you shall beat in pieces many peoples;  
and shall devote their gain to the LORD,  
their wealth to the LORD of the whole earth (Micah 4:13).

<sup>6</sup>For thus says the LORD of hosts: Yet once more, in a little while, I will shake the heavens and the earth and the sea and the dry land. <sup>7</sup>And I will shake all nations, so that the treasures of all nations shall come in, and I will fill this house with glory, says the LORD of hosts. <sup>8</sup>The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, declares the LORD of hosts (Haggai 2:6-8).

On the other hand, this transfer of wealth to the church means that the sinful world is being deprived of those very things which they have set on the throne of their hearts in place of and in opposition to God. Being created in the image of God means that we have an innate longing, or yearning, for God, a part of our lives that only He can fill and satisfy:

He has made everything beautiful in its time. Also, he has put eternity into man's heart, yet so that he cannot find out what God has done from the beginning to the end (Ecclesiastes 3:11).

However, having rejected God and His claims of sovereignty over them, sinful humanity has instead replaced the Creator with created things (cp. Rom. 1:22-24). This is a vain and futile attempt to fill an eternity-sized place in our hearts with things of negligible worth, temporary duration, and no eternal value.

And since these objects cannot ultimately satisfy or provide what only God can, unbelievers are trapped in an endless vicious cycle of greed, lust, and desire for the fleeting pleasures of a fading world. Thus, in God's judgment, they are deprived of those very things that they hold most dear and instead see them delivered to the church, which never really wanted them. "In God we trust"

## Zechariah II – Lesson 26

may be engraved on US currency, but this verse is a devastating indictment of the misplaced worship of those who put their stock in the dollar rather than the LORD. Phillips comments:

To the enemies of God it means that all they have trusted, all they have loved, all they have set their hearts upon in this world will be taken from them in judgement. They will be bereft of all the worldly comforts and joys with which they dulled their spiritual awareness in this life. The terrible irony for them is that it is the church, which has not even sought such treasure, that receives the riches they have loved (Phillips, p. 318).

Verse 15 almost seems like an appendix to this triptych of God's judgment upon His enemies. The plague that melted the faces of unbelievers in verse 12 also apparently kills off the animals of the invading army in verse 15. *The horses, the mules, the camels, the donkeys, and whatever beasts may be in those camps* would have been used for transport, labor, and even warfare. They were a valuable part of the ancient economy, and this verse explains why they were not part of the booty collected by God's people in verse 14.

Some commentators have attempted to see in this description an application of the ban (*herem*), of devoting everything possessed by the enemy to destruction, but this seems unlikely in view of the gold, silver, and garments collected by the inhabitants of Judah and Jerusalem for their benefit in v. 14. Others have suggested that the destruction of these animals prevented any escape for the gathered nations—no transport remained to deliver them from the plague and the panic instituted by God. Moore attributes the loss of these animals to the "*the infectious nature of sin*. Sin defiles all that it touches. It has defiled the earth and all it contains, so that it must be burned up; and it will hereafter transform the dwelling-place of its possessors into a hell, and their companions into fiends, and make it necessary that the very instruments they have possessed in life should be taken from them and destroyed" (Moore, p. 311).

Regardless of the exact purpose of verse 15, the overall thrust of verses 12-15 is very clear: no one will escape God's judgment when the LORD returns in glory at the consummation of the age. The church will be judged and found to be justified by the cleansing blood from the fountain of Jesus' sacrifice on the cross. They will enter into the glory of heaven. The ungodly will also be judged, but they will be declared guilty, lacking the merit of Christ's blood, which is the only means of entry into heaven. Instead, they will suffer eternal punishment in hell, bereft of their physical well-being, any fraternal relationships, and the possessions which they treasured above God. This dichotomy of destiny at the Last Judgment is powerfully communicated by our Lord Himself in His description of separating the sheep and the goats:

<sup>31</sup>"When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. <sup>32</sup>Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. <sup>33</sup>And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. <sup>34</sup>Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. <sup>35</sup>For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, <sup>36</sup>I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.' <sup>37</sup>Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? <sup>38</sup>And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? <sup>39</sup>And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?' <sup>40</sup>And the King will answer them, 'Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of

the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.’ <sup>41</sup>“Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. <sup>42</sup>For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink, <sup>43</sup>I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’ <sup>44</sup>Then they also will answer, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?’ <sup>45</sup>Then he will answer them, saying, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’ <sup>46</sup>And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life” (Matthew 25:31-46).

## **B. Feast of Tabernacles (14:16-19)**

### **1. Enacting the Feast (14:16)**

*<sup>16</sup>Then everyone who survives of all the nations that have come against Jerusalem shall go up year after year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Booths.*

The scene shifts in verses 16-19 from the fate of the wicked to the remnant of the nations that survives. At first glance, it may seem, difficult to believe that anyone from the nations besieging Jerusalem could have survived the plague, panic, and plunder of God, but that is a product of literal interpretation. Zechariah is clearly writing figuratively, and thus we must understand him in the same way.

The survivors of the nations apparently follow the credo “if you can’t beat them, join them,” because they are pictured as participating in the annual pilgrimage of the Feast of Booths, or Tabernacles or Ingathering, as it is also called. This was one of the three great feasts of the Jewish religious calendar, along with the Passover and the Feast of Weeks (called Pentecost in the New Testament, since it occurred 50 days after the offering of the first fruits). The description of this appointed festival is given in the Mosaic Law in the book of Leviticus:

<sup>33</sup>And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, <sup>34</sup>“Speak to the people of Israel, saying, On the fifteenth day of this seventh month and for seven days is the Feast of Booths to the Lord. <sup>35</sup>On the first day shall be a holy convocation; you shall not do any ordinary work. <sup>36</sup>For seven days you shall present food offerings to the Lord. On the eighth day you shall hold a holy convocation and present a food offering to the Lord. It is a solemn assembly; you shall not do any ordinary work. <sup>37</sup>These are the appointed feasts of the Lord, which you shall proclaim as times of holy convocation, for presenting to the Lord food offerings, burnt offerings and grain offerings, sacrifices and drink offerings, each on its proper day, <sup>38</sup>besides the Lord's Sabbaths and besides your gifts and besides all your vow offerings and besides all your freewill offerings, which you give to the Lord. <sup>39</sup>On the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the produce of the land, you shall celebrate the feast of the Lord seven days. On the first day shall be a solemn rest, and on the eighth day shall be a solemn rest. <sup>40</sup>And you shall take on the first day the fruit of splendid trees, branches of palm trees and boughs of leafy trees and willows of the brook, and you shall rejoice before the Lord your God seven days. <sup>41</sup>You shall celebrate it as a feast to the Lord for seven days in the year. It is a statute forever throughout your generations; you shall celebrate it in the seventh month. <sup>42</sup>You shall dwell in booths for seven days. All native Israelites shall dwell in booths, <sup>43</sup>that your generations may know

## Zechariah II – Lesson 26

that I made the people of Israel dwell in booths when I brought them out of the land of Egypt: I am the Lord your God” (Leviticus 23:33-43).

Like many other memorial observances, the Feast of Tabernacles had both a backward- and a forward-looking aspect. Historically, it was established for the people of Israel to remember their ancestors wandering in the wilderness after the exodus from Egypt. Specifically, they were to build themselves “booths” or lean-tos out of tree branches and dwell in them for the eight days of the festival in commemoration of the wilderness accommodations of their forebears.

But the feast also had a future focused perspective as well. Coming in the seventh month of the Jewish calendar (mid-October of our calendar), this festival was held to celebrate the ingathering of the agricultural crop (see Lev. 23:39). As such, it was a great time of joy, celebrating the goodness of God’s provision to them for the upcoming year. They had gathered their produce into the storehouse, and now they were sufficiently prepared for the winter season.

Spiritually speaking, we can see the past, present and future aspects of our own salvation through the different names given to this feast. As the Feast of Booths, it speaks to us of our past salvation or *justification*, since it celebrated the deliverance from the darkness of slavery in Egypt to the freedom of new life as the people of God at Mount Sinai.

As the Feast of Tabernacles, it reminds us of our Redeemer, Jesus Christ, who took on flesh and dwelt or “tabernacled” with man (cp. Jn. 1:14). Indeed, it was on eighth and final day of this feast, that Jesus promised to pour out His Holy Spirit upon the church:

<sup>37</sup>On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink. <sup>38</sup>Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’” <sup>39</sup>Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified (John 7. 37-39).

It is this aspect of the feast, the pouring out of the Holy Spirit, that we can associate with our present salvation, our *sanctification*. It is through the help of the Holy Spirit that we walk in step with the Lord, shun the works of the flesh, and crucify the flesh and its desires (cp. Gal. 5:16-25). The process of sanctification, or being made holy like God, is a work of God that continues throughout our entire Christian lives.

Finally, this festival is also known as the Feast of Ingathering, which brings with it an eschatological aspect, representing the spread of the gospel to the world and the harvesting of the nations for inclusion into the people of God. “Ingathering” looks forward to the completion of the spiritual harvest and the culmination of redemptive history in the consummation of Jesus Christ. Our salvation culminates in *glorification*, when all the saints have been gathered in, safe and secure in eternity, dwelling in sinless perfection in glory.

### 2. Enforcing the Feast (14:17-19)

<sup>17</sup>And if any of the families of the earth do not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, there will be no rain on them. <sup>18</sup>And if the family of Egypt does not go up and present themselves, then on them there shall be no rain; there shall be the plague with which the LORD afflicts the nations that do not go up to keep the Feast of Booths. <sup>19</sup>This shall be the punishment to Egypt and the punishment to all the nations that do not go up to keep the Feast of Booths.

## Zechariah II – Lesson 26

In verses 17-19, we have two allusions to Old Testament historical figures as a way of enforcing the universal keeping of the Feast of Tabernacles.

The first allusion in verse 17 is to the prophet Elijah, who famously prayed that it would not rain for three years, and then prayed again for the rain to return (James 5:17-18; cp. 1 Kgs. 17:1ff. ). This lack of rain, which led to a famine in the land of Israel, was in direct consequence of the apostasy of the northern kingdom and the idolatrous worship of Baal introduced by Ahab and his wicked wife, Jezebel. Since rain is one of God's foremost blessings upon an agricultural economy, the threat of a drought was a severe enticement to comply with the wishes of the King who could enforce such a situation. Sadly, the ancient kingdom of Israel did not repent of their sin, and Elijah consequently slaughtered the prophets of Baal at Mt. Carmel before the rain returned (1 Kings 18:40-41). However, this threat of withholding the blessings of rain does seem to be effective for most nations.

The exception would be the nation of Egypt, which, unlike most other countries, does not depend primarily on rain for their agriculture. Instead, it is the annual inundation of the Nile River that refreshes the land and provides the water needed to grow crops. Therefore, a different threat is imposed upon the land of Egypt: *the plague*. Despite the verbal connection with the "plague" of God's judgment in verse 14 of this chapter, the primary allusion here is to Moses and the ten plagues against Pharaoh and Egypt that led to the exodus (Ex. 7-12). Despite the recalcitrance of the exodus pharaoh, this is also an effective threat to ensure compliance.

The figures of Elijah and Moses stand apart in the Scripture as the greatest of the old covenant prophets, and they are linked together in the Old Testament, not only here, but also in the final verses of the last book of the Hebrew canon:

<sup>4</sup>“Remember the law of my servant Moses, the statutes and rules that I commanded him at Horeb for all Israel. <sup>5</sup>Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the great and awesome day of the Lord comes. <sup>6</sup>And he will turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the land with a decree of utter destruction” (Malachi 4:4-6).

These two giants of the Old Testament also make their appearance in the New Testament. At the Mount of Transfiguration, the heavenly glory of Jesus is revealed for a short time as He is seen by his inner core of disciples speaking with Moses and Elijah (Mt. 17:1-7; Mk. 9:2-8; Lk. 9:28-36) . Three epochs in biblical history stand out as two-generational eras of an intense concentration of miracles. While miracles (i.e., the suspension of or alteration of normal physical processes) are scattered throughout the Scriptures, they are concentrated in: 1) the period of the exodus from Egypt and conquest of Canaan; 2) the time of Elijah and his apprentice Elisha; and 3) and in the first advent of Christ and the subsequent ministry of the apostles, Thus, when Jesus spoke on the Mount of Transfiguration with Moses and Elijah, it represented the greatest concentration of power over the physical environment in redemptive history.

The book of Revelation pictures the ministry of the church in evangelism as two witnesses coming in the power of Elijah and Moses:

<sup>4</sup>These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth. <sup>5</sup>And if anyone would harm them, fire pours from their mouth and consumes their foes. If anyone would harm them, this is how he is doomed to be killed. <sup>6</sup>They have the power to shut the sky, that no rain may fall during the days of their prophesying, and they

## Zechariah II – Lesson 26

have power over the waters to turn them into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague, as often as they desire (Revelation 11:4-6).

In Revelation, the apostate world, symbolized by the beast, slays the two witnesses, but here in Zechariah, it is the power of Moses and Elijah that symbolically is used to enforce compliance of the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles.

### 3. Explaining the Feast

But why must the LORD God threaten a withholding of His blessings or an imposition of plague upon wayward nations to enforce an annual pilgrimage to Jerusalem for this festival, if this is supposed to be a picture of the glorious reign of King Jesus in a perfect future eternity?

Those who hold to a literal hermeneutic would argue that in fact this is not a vision of heaven, but a prelude to it on earth. They see here the millennial reign of Christ in this world before the final end of time, where Jesus rules over the conquered (but not necessarily converted) nations. While the king is perfect, the nations are not, and because of remaining sin they must be forced to comply with the iron will of the Lord (cp. Ps. 2:8-9). Phillips explains this view:

Having returned to the city of Jerusalem, which is physically besieged by the nations of the earth, Christ defeats them and sets up His earthly throne from that city. For a thousand years He oversees what amounts to a worldwide establishment of Old Testament religion, literally employing supernatural droughts and plagues to enforce His rule. Only after a thousand years of this earthly reign of Christ does the final battle commence, followed by the judgment day and the eternal state of glory (Phillips, p. 320).

While this viewpoint may explain the need to threaten the nations “to enforce His rule,” it introduces more problems that it addresses. A minor issue is the sheer impossibility of *everyone who survives of all the nations* to gather physically in Jerusalem year after year. Of course, dispensationalists who defend this interpretation may suggest that representatives of the nations will go to Jerusalem, analogous to how Congressmen and women go to Washington to represent their constituents. While that is a nice answer, it is not consistent with a literal reading of the text, which stipulates that “*everyone who survives*” must attend, not just their duly elected representatives.

But of much greater substance and import is the implication of this view that the so-called “millennial kingdom” reverts backward to the celebration of Mosaic covenant rituals. The Feast of Tabernacles was an old covenant institution, looking forward to the reality of Christ dwelling in our midst and ingathering the nations into His kingdom. In addition to the external trappings of living outside in booths or tents, the core of the Feast focused on the blood sacrifices offered upon the Old Testament altar. Indeed, the Feast of Tabernacles sacrificed an extraordinary number of animals during its eight day duration: a total of 199 bulls, rams, lambs, and goats, in addition to the normal daily burnt offerings (Num. 23:12-38).

While dispensationalists and others who hold to the literal hermeneutic mean well, any system of interpretation which permits or even demands a resumption of animal sacrifices, is not only contrary to the revealed will of God, but also anathema. The Old Testament sacrifices anticipated the one, final, sufficient sacrifice of Christ (cp. Heb. 9:24-25). The book of Hebrews was written to Jewish Christians tempted to renounce Christ and revert back to the sacrificial system of Judaism. You could not find a stronger opponent of that philosophy than the writer of Hebrews:

## Zechariah II – Lesson 26

<sup>11</sup>And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. <sup>12</sup>But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, <sup>13</sup>waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. <sup>14</sup>For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified (Hebrews 10:11-14).

Since the fountain of Jesus' cleansing blood was opened on the cross, there is no other sacrifice for sin that is either necessary or efficacious for our justification, sanctification, and glorification. To suggest that Jesus would willingly preside for 1000 years over a resumption of the sacrificial system that He made obsolete at such great cost is to offer grave insult to the founder of our salvation (cp. Heb. 2:10). Phillips agrees:

It is impossible to imagine that Jesus, having shed His own blood once for all, coming back to have bulls and goats and sheep shed once more for the remission of sins (cp. Heb. 9:28)... This is the fatal flaw in the thinking of those who look forward to a rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem and the reestablishment of Old Testament religion as some advance in God's redemptive program (Phillips, p. 320).

In fact, we must positively reject this sort of thinking, because it is actually equivalent to blasphemy and therefore is worthy of condemnation:

How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? (Hebrews 10:28).

Instead, we should interpret this scene in light of all that we have already seen in Zechariah chapter 14. The unique day of God's judgment has already come (14:6-7) and the blessings of the eternal state have already been bestowed upon His delivered people (14:8-11). After an aside in verses 12-15 to explain the final judgment against those who opposed God, the prophet has returned to a description of eternity in verses 16-19. All those who have opposed God are already destroyed (14:12-15); and all who remain are holy (see 14:20-21). Therefore the focus of verses 16-19, *everyone who survives of all the nations that have come against Jerusalem*, must therefore refer to converted Gentiles who comprise the church of Jesus Christ.

Zechariah picks the keeping of the Feast of Tabernacles as a way to describe the joy inherent in the eternal state. This feast was the most joyous of all the old covenant festivals, and it is an appropriate metaphor to describe the rejoicing of the ingathered and glorified remnant in eternity. Every aspect of the feast—past, present, and future—is a reminder of God's goodness in granting and completing salvation in the elect remnant. Those who have been redeemed and perfected in heaven will be glad to celebrate the feast; they will not need any external coercion from their Savior to worship Him for His manifold blessings and provision.

We should not take the threat of drought or plague literally, as if some possibility of rebellion existed in heaven after the second coming of Jesus Christ. Zechariah is not trying to describe the details of daily life in that eternal kingdom, but rather the character of His rule. "The prophet employs the descriptions of verses 16-19 not to provide details of the day to come, but to convey the absoluteness of the reign of Christ and the worship He deserves" (Phillips, p. 321). Mackay agrees:

If the LORD has come in His final power, how are there rebellious nations left? It seems best to view this in terms of the imperfection of the view given of the future in the Old

## Zechariah II – Lesson 26

Covenant. What is being stated by means of this hypothetical description is a complete assertion of the power and rule of God... There will be no possibility of continued rebellion in the eschaton, and even the blessings of common grace will cease (Mackay, p. 267).

### C. Full Holiness (Zechariah 14:20-21)

In our study of the Oracles of Zechariah, we have had many occasions to study word-pictures developed by the prophet and presented for our review. So far in the passage before us, we've seen a graphic description of God's final justice upon rebellious sinners, followed by a depiction of God's holy rule over the remnant unified in their joyful worship of His bountiful provision. Here in the last two verses of this book, we have one final portrait in this exhibition of God's prophetic gallery, and it is a study in holiness.

What does it mean to be "holy"? If something is "holy" or "sacred," it is set apart from every day use. It is consecrated for special service, for singular occasions. Holiness, or the state of being holy, is the opposite of being "common," or "profane," as older writers might say. For example, we have a set of dishes and stainless steel that we use every day in the serving and eating of our meals. These plates and utensils are our "common" dinnerware. However, for special occasions, such as Easter, Thanksgiving, or Christmas, we pull out the silver, the crystal, and the fine china to use for those feasts. In a sense, these superior pieces are "holy" or "sacred." They are set apart from common use and dedicated for particular service.

In the same way, our lives are to be holy, or set apart, from the world and its milieu of sinfulness. We have been saved by God and given new righteousness in order to serve Him alone. We are to be set apart from the world and, like my fine china, dedicated to the service of the God who has redeemed us.

Holiness is a communicable attribute of God, meaning that human beings can attain holiness. The problem, of course, is that sin destroys holiness. In the Old Testament, this was illustrated graphically to the people of Israel through the concept of ceremonial cleanness. You had to be "clean" to approach and worship God in purity and holiness, but the problem was that many different situations and conditions could render an otherwise righteous person "unclean." For example, touching a dead body rendered a person unclean. Having an illness, or a skin infection made you unclean. Eating an unclean animal was forbidden. Childbirth, menstruation, bodily discharges, bleeding – all these common things made a person unclean, made anything touched by the unclean person or discharge unclean, and so on. Being clean was hard to achieve and harder to maintain, because uncleanness was pervasive and "contagious." And so it is with us. It is hard to be holy when we remain riddled with indwelling and remaining sin. The only cure for that is complete and sinless perfection, which we will not achieve this side of glory.

The epitome of holiness is the Lord God Himself, who is unspotted by sin or uncleanness and as Creator is separate from and independent of the rest of creation. God is exceedingly holy (cp. Is. 6:3; Rev. 4:8), and we are to be holy like Him (Lev. 19:2; cp. 1 Pe. 1:15-16). Ultimately, this is the end goal of our justification and sanctification: that we might partake of His holiness. Indeed, holiness is a requirement for admittance into heaven into God's presence:

Strive for peace with everyone, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord (Hebrews 12:14).

## Zechariah II – Lesson 26

Zechariah's prophecy rightly ends with a portrait of pervasive holiness, a condition as yet unrealized in this world, but which will be the norm in the world to come. Moore writes:

Verses 20, 21 close up this picture of the future with a fitting finale, developing the great fact that this future state of the Church would be happy because it would be holy, and that this holiness would extend to everything connected with her. The distinction between sacred and profane was introduced by sin, and would cease with its termination on the earth. The Mosaic dispensations drew the line with much sharpness and narrowness; the Christian dispensation widened the limits, and made all the saints to be priests, but there comes a time when this consecration shall be wider still, and extend to the minutest things pertaining to life (Moore, pp. 315-316).

### 1. Outward Holiness (14:20-21a)

<sup>20</sup>*And on that day there shall be inscribed on the bells of the horses, "Holy to the LORD." And the pots in the house of the LORD shall be as the bowls before the altar. <sup>21</sup>And every pot in Jerusalem and Judah shall be holy to the LORD of hosts, so that all who sacrifice may come and take of them and boil the meat of the sacrifice in them.*

In his final portrait of holiness, Zechariah describes three vignettes of public life, religious life, and private life that would have been familiar to his original audience. In each one, the point is that if holiness extends down to such common and insignificant objects as those presented here, then holiness is not just an attribute to be desired, but a reality that pervades all of society. Clearly, this scene does not depict any state of civilization during the history of mankind, but is reserved alone for the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

The first scene is of horses, perhaps attached to a carriage for transportation, whose harness bells are inscribed with the following phrase: "*Holy to the LORD.*" These bells were added to the harness primarily for ornamentation; they had no functional purpose or real value. But even such trifling objects as these horse bells are dedicated to His service and are considered holy.

The inscription on the bells is an allusion to the attire of the high priest of Israel, who in his role as the priestly representative between God and man held the most holy office in the old covenant dispensation. The high priest wore beautiful and costly garments in performing the services of his office. To represent the holiness required of such service, a gold plate engraved with *Holy to the LORD* was attached to his turban, per the instructions originally given by God to Moses on Sinai:

<sup>36</sup>"You shall make a plate of pure gold and engrave on it, like the engraving of a signet, 'Holy to the LORD.' <sup>37</sup>And you shall fasten it on the turban by a cord of blue. It shall be on the front of the turban. <sup>38</sup>It shall be on Aaron's forehead, and Aaron shall bear any guilt from the holy things that the people of Israel consecrate as their holy gifts. It shall regularly be on his forehead, that they may be accepted before the Lord (Exodus 28:36-38).

In the Old Testament economy, the miter of the high priest was the only thing engraved with *Holy to the LORD* on it, signifying that it was consecrated or set apart for special service in the presence of God. But in the new heavens and the new earth, even such trifling items as the horses' bells will bear the same inscription! There will no longer be any distinction between common and holy, between sacred and profane, because everything will be holy. Where there is no longer any sin, all that remains is holiness.

## Zechariah II – Lesson 26

The second snapshot is of the serving vessels in the temple of God: *And the pots in the house of the LORD shall be as the bowls before the altar.* Just as I have common and sacred dinnerware, so did the ancient temple in the Old Testament. Golden bowls and other vessels were commissioned to be used in the service associated with the table of showbread, drink offerings, and the altar of incense inside the tabernacle (Ex. 25:29; 37:16). Because of their service, location, and material of construction, these would have been considered “more holy.” At the same time, pots for collecting ashes, along with other items in service at the burnt altar, were made of bronze (Ex. 27:3; 38:3). Their more lowly service, use farther away from the holy of holies, and baser material rendered these utensils “less holy” or more common. The priests would have also had pots in which to boil their portions of the peace offerings (Lev. 7:15ff. ), which also would have been of more common metal and service. However, the image presented here by Zechariah is that all of these vessels will have the same level of holiness. That is, there will be no distinction between gold and bronze, between ashes and incense, between near the LORD and far away from Him. In eternity, all of these differences will be eliminated, and everything in service to the LORD will be considered equally and completely holy.

The final description of holiness is an extension of the previous one. Not only the pots in the temple, but *every pot in Jerusalem and Judah shall be holy to the LORD of hosts, so that all who sacrifice may come and take of them and boil the meat of the sacrifice in them.* The point here is that there will be no distinction between priest and people. The priests of the Old Covenant were “more holy” than the laity, because their roles brought them in closer proximity to the God whom they served. To the priests only was reserved the right to eat of the peace offerings; it was not available to the general worshiper. But Zechariah here is eliminating that distinction between priest and non-priest, because there will be no difference in holiness between them. When everyone is perfectly holy, everyone has the same level of holiness!

As an aside, from an interpretive point of view, it is clear that a purely literal rendering of the last two word-pictures would not make sense in any setting after the propitiatory sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross. The whole purpose of the Old Testament tabernacle/temple was to prefigure the sacrifice of Jesus to come. Once Jesus has sat down at the right hand of God following his life, death, burial, resurrection, and ascension (Hebrews 10:12), the need for further animal sacrifices is obviated. Certainly, in the eternal state there will be no temple with ongoing animal sacrifices. Since there will no longer be any sin, and all sin has been atoned for anyway by Christ, such a service is clearly not required. The book of Revelation makes this point plain: “And I saw no temple in the city, for its temple is the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb” (Rev. 21:22). We will live in the direct presence of the holy God; that is why everything in heaven will be holy – the bells, the pots, and the people as well, because everything must conform to His standard of holiness.

### 2. Inward Holiness (14:21b)

*And there shall no longer be a trader in the house of the LORD of hosts on that day.*

Zechariah is not suggesting in the final phrase of his prophecy that all merchants will be banned from heaven! In the original Hebrew, the word translated “trader” is the same as for “Canaanite,” the original inhabitants of the promised land. The Canaanites were judged by God for their wicked and idolatrous behavior, and thus were displaced by the Israelites during the conquest of Joshua. In Zechariah’s day, the word was used generally of any ungodly person, and had the connotation of a dishonest merchant, one who would cheat his customer at any

## Zechariah II – Lesson 26

opportunity. This description conjures up the wrath of our Savior at the dishonest practices of the merchants and money-changers who sold “religious items” in the courtyard of the temple (Mt. 21:12-13; Mk. 11:15-17; Jn. 2:14-16). But even more so, Zechariah’s depiction here lines up with John’s vision of the new Jerusalem:

But nothing unclean will ever enter it, nor anyone who does what is detestable or false, but only those who are written in the Lamb's book of life (Revelation 21:27).

In Zechariah’s description of the pervasive holiness of the eternal state, he first focused on the outward nature of holiness. The bells, the pots, and the people have an outward conformity of holiness. From greatest to least, they are clean, pure, and dedicated to the service of our holy God. But this last phrase about the absence of traders or Canaanites in the new Jerusalem is a confirmation regarding inward holiness. The external holiness of heaven is matched by a corresponding inward holiness. There will be no ungodly people in heaven! The sanctification of God’s elect will be complete—they will have entered the celestial city and have left behind all corruption, uncleanness, and sin. At last, long last, we will live in a perfect environment as God originally created, one free from sin, free from pain, free from death, and absolutely holy, even as He is holy.

If we want to go to heaven, we need to learn to be holy, like our thrice-holy God:

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts;  
the whole earth is full of his glory!” (Isaiah 6:3b).

“Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty,  
who was and is and is to come!” (Revelation 4:8b).

### ***Conclusion and Application***

I trust and hope that this vision of the exceeding holiness of eternity, with which Zechariah closes his remarkable prophecy, leaves you yearning for heaven. This is the end-game of our salvation, this is why the Messiah came to earth—to make us holy and fit for heaven. Our entire salvation, from predestination and election through calling, regeneration, faith, repentance, justification, adoption, sanctification, and perseverance, all leads up to and finds its culmination in glorification, the perfecting of our souls in holiness and righteousness. If holiness is our destiny, then how do we become holy? Phillips responds:

By the renewing of our minds and hearts through God’s Word and in the power of the Holy Spirit. That is what this great closing chapter of Zechariah is for. The greatest possible incentive to holiness is what these final verses set before our eyes of faith: the glory of God in the holiness of His people by the saving reign of the Lord Jesus Christ (Phillips p. 326).

The fate of every individual who has ever been born ends in one of two ways. Those who embrace the Savior, submit themselves to His providential care, and trust in Him alone for salvation as He is offered in the gospel, will find the path to glory will be hard. The purifying process of sanctification is not easy, but it is so worth it. For on that last unique, glorious day, we will be with our holy God forever, worshiping Him with joy and peace and holiness.

On the other hand, those who ignored God, passively resisted Him, or actively spurned Him, will find to their eternal dismay in the last judgment that “the wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23). For

## Zechariah II – Lesson 26

those who did it *My Way* or claimed that “I am the master of my fate, I am the captain of my soul,” they will find out entirely how wrong they were.

There are many people like this, who hear the word of God and ignore it, chafe at it, or rebel against it. You would think that those who heard the original prophecy from the mouth of Zechariah themselves would have been overwhelmed with their sinfulness and repented on the spot. Oh, would that were true! Although we don’t know the fate of Zechariah from his own prophecy or any other revelation in the Old Testament, we do have the authoritative teaching of Jesus in the New Testament:

...so that on you may come all the righteous blood shed on earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah the son of Barachiah, whom you murdered between the sanctuary and the altar (Matthew 23:35; cp. Luke 11:51).

Zechariah, the priest and prophet, dedicated his life to the service of God in the temple at Jerusalem. From his night visions encouraging the post-exilic generation to rebuild the temple, up through his oracles and final portrait of the holiness of the temple precincts in the New Jerusalem, Zechariah’s life was focused on his priestly service to God. And yet, in the midst of that service, he was foully and unjustly murdered, “between the sanctuary and the altar.” We don’t know the circumstances, of course, but it seems likely that some local parishioner took such offense at Zechariah and the holiness which he advocated, that he struck the prophet down in the midst of his official priestly duties. Those who hate the holiness of God will all too soon find themselves bereft both of His common grace and gracious presence forever.

Since I cannot end the study of the glorious oracles of Zechariah on such a negative note, I close with the following hymn, written by Reginald Heber about 200 years ago. Based on Isaiah 6:3 and Revelation 4:8, this is the type of worship song that we will be singing in glory forever:

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!  
Early in the morning our song shall rise to Thee;  
Holy, holy, holy, merciful and mighty!  
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!

Holy, holy, holy! All the saints adore Thee,  
Casting down their golden crowns around the glassy sea;  
Cherubim and seraphim falling down before Thee,  
Who was, and is, and evermore shall be.

Holy, holy, holy! Though the darkness hide Thee,  
Though the eye of sinful man Thy glory may not see;  
Only Thou art holy; there is none beside Thee,  
Perfect in pow’r, in love, and purity.

Holy, holy, holy! Lord God Almighty!  
All Thy works shall praise Thy Name, in earth, and sky, and sea;  
Holy, holy, holy; merciful and mighty!  
God in three Persons, blessed Trinity!

Amen.

For next time: End of Course.