Zechariah 14:12-21

**Digging Deeper in the Word**

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***Zechariah 14:12–21*** (ESV)  
**12** And this shall be the plague with which YHWH 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. **13** And on that day a great panic from YHWH 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. **14** Even Judah will fight at Jerusalem. And the wealth of all the surrounding nations shall be collected, gold, silver, and garments in great abundance. **15** 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. **16** Then everyone who survives of all the nations that have come against Jerusalem shall go up year after year to worship the King, YHWH of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Booths. **17** And if any of the families of the earth do not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, YHWH of hosts, there will be no rain on them. **18** 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 YHWH afflicts the nations that do not go up to keep the Feast of Booths. **19** 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. **20** And on that day there shall be inscribed on the bells of the horses, “Holy to YHWH.” And the pots in the house of YHWH shall be as the bowls before the altar. **21** And every pot in Jerusalem and Judah shall be holy to YHWH 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 YHWH of hosts on that day.

1. Summarize the first part of this last oracle, which began in Zech 12:1.

The first section of Ch 12 is about victory “on that day” of the Messiah’s return. This will be a day final judgment, when God will bring both salvation to His people and overpowering wrath to the enemies of Israel. With God providing the strength, even the weakest will be like King David (recalling perhaps the battle of David and Goliath). The last section of Ch 12 speaks of the sorrow and mourning that will be the initial response of all of Israel when the Messiah returns and they realize their rejection of Him and the depth of their sins. But God will hear their pleas for mercy and pour out his grace upon them. He will bathe them in living water to cleanse them of all sin.

In Ch 13 we see that idolatry and false prophets will come to an end. The Shepherd (Messiah) will be struck down (his crucifixion) and his disobedient people will be scattered. Two thirds (or at least a majority) will be killed, but the remaining will be refined and purified with the result that their relationship with YHWH will be as it was originally intended. YHWH will be our God and we will be his people.

In Zech 14:1-11, we read that “on that day of YHWH” (or more precisely, just prior to Yeshua’s return) there will be a punishment for Israel, as the nations trample the land (intensely for 42 months). Half the city’s population will be taken. Then a great earthquake will occur, and God’s people will flee to safety. Yeshua (on the day of trumpets) will return to the Mt of Olives, from where he had ascended, and gather his holy ones (dead and alive), battling the nations and pouring out His wrath and judgement upon them. That day of YHWH will be like no other day in all of history, and will begin a period of time like we have never seen. The Light of World will be visible. The Living Water will bring life to even those places filled with death. Yeshua will reign as king over all. Israel will be inhabited again, and will live in security, never again to be destroyed.

1. Describe the plague that will come upon the people who wage war on Jerusalem. Who and what are affected by the plague? Compare to Zech 12:4.

***Zechariah 12:4*** (ESV)  
**4** On that day, declares YHWH, **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**.

Their bodies “will rot”, including their eyes and tongues. It seems to be immediate, “while they are still standing”. It would make sense that the horses would be blind if their eyes rotted out.

1. What could be the source of such a plague? Refer also to 2 Kings 19:32-36.

***2 Kings 19:32–36*** (ESV)  
**32** “Therefore thus says YHWH concerning the king of Assyria: He shall not come into this city or shoot an arrow there, or come before it with a shield or cast up a siege mound against it. **33** By the way that he came, by the same he shall return, and he shall not come into this city, declares YHWH. **34** For I will defend this city to save it, for my own sake and for the sake of my servant David.” **35** And that night **the angel of YHWH went out and struck down 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians.** And when people arose early in the morning, behold, these were all dead bodies. **36** Then Sennacherib king of Assyria departed and went home and lived at Nineveh.

It is a “plague with which YHWH will strike all the peoples”. Verse 13 says “a great panic from YHWH shall fall upon them.” This plague is clearly from YHWH. Whatever natural or physical means he uses is secondary.

One can imagine this could be a result of some kind of biological warfare, effecting all flesh, whether human or animal. It would make sense that eyes and tongue are specifically mentioned if those moist body parts were somehow affected more quickly by the biological agent. But of course we can only guess. We know only that YHWH will accomplish this in His way, as He did with Sennacherib in Hezekiah’s time.

1. What do you think causes the “great panic”? What happens in that panic? Compare also Hag 2:21-22 and Zech 11:9.

***Haggai 2:21–22*** (ESV)  
**21** “Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I am about to shake the heavens and the earth, **22** and to overthrow the throne of kingdoms. I am about to destroy the strength 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**.

***Zechariah 11:7–9*** (ESV)  
**7** So I became the shepherd of the flock doomed to be slaughtered by the sheep traders. And I took two staffs, one I named Favor, the other I named Union. And I tended the sheep. **8** In one month I destroyed the three shepherds. But I became impatient with them, and they also detested me. **9** So I said, “I will not be your shepherd. What is to die, let it die. What is to be destroyed, let it be destroyed. And **let those who are left devour the flesh of one another.**”

There will be great panic as people try to flee this plague which is quickly killing everyone in a horrific way. In the chaos of trying to flee it seems they end up killing each other.

1. Zech 14:14 is ambiguous. It could be translated “Even Judah will fight at Jerusalem” OR “Even Judah will fight against Jerusalem.” Which do you think it is? Review Zech 12:1-9 as well, especially in regard to Zech 12:2.

***Zechariah 12:2*** (ESV)  
**2** “Behold, I am about to make Jerusalem a cup of staggering to all the surrounding peoples. **The siege of Jerusalem will also be against Judah.**

There is no indication elsewhere that Judah will be fighting against Jerusalem. In fact it seems from Zech 12 that the nations will be attacking both Judah and Jerusalem. Also from Ezek 39 it seems that Judah will be plundering those that have attacked.

1. Look at the great battle prophesied in Ezek 39:1-10. Could this be the same battle as in Zechariah 14? What similarities to you see? How does

***Ezekiel 39:1–10*** (ESV)  
**1** “And you, son of man, prophesy against Gog and say, Thus says Adonai YHWH, Behold, I am against you, O Gog, chief prince of Meshech and Tubal. **2** And I will turn you about and drive you forward, and bring you up from the uttermost parts of the north, and lead you against the mountains of Israel. **3** Then I will strike your bow from your left hand, and will make your arrows drop out of your right hand. **4** **You shall fall on the mountains of Israel,** you and all your hordes and the peoples who are with you. I will give you to birds of prey of every sort and to the beasts of the field to be devoured. **5** You shall fall in the open field, for I have spoken, declares Adonai YHWH. **6** I will send fire on Magog and on those who dwell securely in the coastlands, and they shall know that I am YHWH. **7** **“And my holy name I will make known in the midst of my people Israel**, and I will not let my holy name be profaned anymore. **And the nations shall know that I am YHWH,** the Holy One in Israel. **8** Behold, it is coming and it will be brought about, declares Adonai YHWH. That is the day of which I have spoken. **9** “Then those who dwell in the cities of Israel will go out and make fires of the weapons and burn them, shields and bucklers, bow and arrows, clubs and spears; and they will make fires of them for seven years, **10** so that they will not need to take wood out of the field or cut down any out of the forests, for they will make their fires of the weapons. **They will seize the spoil of those who despoiled them, and plunder those who plundered them**, declares Adonai YHWH.

The mountains of Israel would have to refer to the Judean mountains, around Jerusalem. The enemy will fall on those mountains as they siege Jerusalem. And the birds will eat their rotting flesh. And God’s people, **which must refer primarily to Judah since the enemy has fallen in the mountains of Judea,** will “plunder those who plundered them.”

1. Who will be keeping Sukkot? Why do you think this particular festival is the one that is mentioned? What else will they do in Jerusalem?

The survivors of the nations (**goyim**) that warred against Jerusalem will keep Sukkot each year, AND will worship the King.

This particular festival celebrates God’s presence and provision, and is to symbolically recognize the millennial kingdom of the Messiah. So it is fitting that this festival is singled out here, since they are now experiencing that millennial reign, and are required to recognize it. It is an integral part o worshipping the King to recognize His rule. During this time we will experience the fullness of His presence and His provisions.

1. What is the consequence regarding rain if the people do not go to Jerusalem for worship during Sukkot? How is that connected to Sukkot? And what does it really mean? Is it literal or symbolic?

There will be no rain on them. Prayer for rain was a huge part of Sukkot (in Solomon’s prayer, and well as in the tradition of Judaism at the time of Messiah. As they celebrated thanksgiving for the harvest of the prior year, they recognized that it came from God and God alone. He was the One that provided the rain they needed for the crops to grow. So at Sukkot they prayed for God’s blessing of rain for the next year, asking for his provision for next year as he had provided for the past year.

Rain symbolized God’s provision. If the people were not obedient (and didn’t go to Jerusalem annually to worship YHWH at Sukkot), then God would withhold His blessing from them.

It could be either literal rain or symbolic rain (symbolizing his blessing), or both.

1. Look at Dt 28:1-14 (blessing for obedience) and Dt 28:15-24 (curse for disobedience). How would compare and contrast this Deuteronomy chapter with Zech 14?

***Deuteronomy 28:1–14*** (ESV)  
**1** “**And if you faithfully obey** the voice of YHWH your God, being careful to do all his commandments that I command you today, YHWH your God will set you high above all the nations of the earth. **2** And all these blessings shall come upon you and overtake you, if you obey the voice of YHWH your God… **7** “**YHWH will cause your enemies who rise against you to be defeated before you.** They shall come out against you one way and flee before you seven ways. **8** YHWH will command the blessing on you in your barns and in all that you undertake. And he will bless you in the land that YHWH your God is giving you. **9** YHWH will establish you as a people holy to himself, as he has sworn to you, if you keep the commandments of YHWH your God and walk in his ways. **10** And all the peoples of the earth shall see that you are called by the name of YHWH, and they shall be afraid of you. **11** And YHWH will make you abound in prosperity, in the fruit of your womb and in the fruit of your livestock and in the fruit of your ground, within the land that YHWH swore to your fathers to give you. **12** **YHWH will open to you his good treasury, the heavens, to give the rain to your land in its season and to bless all the work of your hands.** And you shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow. **13** And YHWH will make you the head and not the tail, and you shall only go up and not down, if you obey the commandments of YHWH your God, which I command you today, being careful to do them, **14** and if you do not turn aside from any of the words that I command you today, to the right hand or to the left, to go after other gods to serve them.

***Deuteronomy 28:15–24*** (ESV)  
**15** “**But if you will not obey** the voice of YHWH your God or be careful to do all his commandments and his statutes that I command you today, then all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you. **16** Cursed shall you be in the city, and cursed shall you be in the field. **17** Cursed shall be your basket and your kneading bowl. **18** Cursed shall be the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground, the increase of your herds and the young of your flock. **19** Cursed shall you be when you come in, and cursed shall you be when you go out. **20** “YHWH will send on you curses, confusion, and frustration in all that you undertake to do, until you are destroyed and perish quickly on account of the evil of your deeds, because you have forsaken me. **21** **YHWH will make the pestilence stick to you** until he has consumed you off the land that you are entering to take possession of it. **22** YHWH 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. **23** And the heavens over your head shall be bronze, and the earth under you shall be iron. **24** **YHWH will make the rain of your land powder. From heaven dust shall come down on you until you are destroyed.**

It is interesting that the these blessings and curses were for the people of Israel, depending on their obedience (or not). But they are basically the same blessings and curses that God is going to apply to the pagan nations in the last days, depending on their obedience (or not). It seems like in the end, God’s expectations for the nations are the very same as they were for Israel.

1. Why do you think Egypt is specified by name in Zech 14:18-19?

The same thing is being required of Egypt as of the other nations who have battled against Israel. But Egypt is solely listed as a specific example of such a nation. Perhaps this is because Egypt was the first of all nations to abuse God’s people. they were the strongest nation in the world at the time of Moses, and even during Zechariah’s time one could argue the same thing. there were powerful kingdoms in Mesopotamia, but they had come and gone over the centuries, where as Egypt had remained strong, powerful, a constant force to be reckoned with. Egypt more than any nation symbolized the continual opposition of the world against Israel.

1. In Zech 14:18b it says there will be “the plague with which YHWH afflicts the nations” when they do not go to Jerusalem to worship at Sukkot. Is this different than “no rain”? Could it refer back to the plague that killed so many during the prior battle? What do you think this plague refers to? Also compare to the continuation of the curses passage for disobedience in Dt 28:25-29.

***Deuteronomy 28:25–29*** (ESV)  
**25** “YHWH will cause you to be defeated before your enemies. You shall go out one way against them and flee seven ways before them. And you shall be a horror to all the kingdoms of the earth. **26** And your dead body shall be food for all birds of the air and for the beasts of the earth, and there shall be no one to frighten them away. **27** **YHWH will strike you with the boils of Egypt, and with tumors and scabs and itch, of which you cannot be healed.** **28** YHWH will strike you with madness and blindness and confusion of mind, **29** and you shall grope at noonday, as the blind grope in darkness, and you shall not prosper in your ways. And you shall be only oppressed and robbed continually, and there shall be no one to help you.

It is interesting that one of the curses for disobedience seems to refer to the plagues God put onto Egypt when He was delivering his people from the bondage of Pharaoh. So the punishment for disobedience was the same for Israel as it was for Pharaoh and Egypt. Looking then at Zech 14, it seems that we are again seeing a reference to such plagues as punishment for disobedience, this time again to Egypt as well as any nation that disobeys.

It seems likely that the “no rain” and the “plague” are different punishments.

1. Read Isaiah 60 which seems to talk about this future time when all the nations will worship the King. What similarities do you see with Zechariah’s final oracle (Zech 12-14?

***Isaiah 60:1–22*** (ESV)  
**1** Arise, shine, for **your light has come**, and the g**lory of YHWH has risen upon you.** **2** For behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and thick darkness the peoples; but YHWH will arise upon you, and his glory will be seen upon you. **3** **And nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising.** **4** Lift up your eyes all around, and see; t**hey all gather together, they come to you;** your sons shall come from afar, and your daughters shall be carried on the hip. **5** 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. 6** A multitude of camels shall cover you, the young camels of Midian and Ephah; all those from Sheba shall come. They shall bring gold and frankincense, and shall bring good news, the praises of YHWH. **7** All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered to you; the rams of Nebaioth shall minister to you; **they shall come up with acceptance on my altar, and I will beautify my beautiful house.** **8** Who are these that fly like a cloud, and like doves to their windows? **9** For the coastlands shall hope for me, the ships of Tarshish first, to bring your children from afar, their silver and gold with them, for the name of YHWH your God, and for the Holy One of Israel, because he has made you beautiful. **10** Foreigners shall build up your walls, and **their kings shall minister to you**; for in my wrath I struck you, but in my favor I have had mercy on you. **11** 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**. **12** **For the nation and kingdom that will not serve you shall perish; those nations shall be utterly laid waste**. **13** The glory of Lebanon shall come to you, the cypress, the plane, and the pine, to beautify the place of my sanctuary, and I will make the place of my feet glorious. **14** The sons of **those who afflicted you shall come bending low to you,** and all who despised you shall bow down at your feet; they shall call you the City of YHWH, the Zion of the Holy One of Israel. **15** Whereas you have been forsaken and hated, with no one passing through, I will make you majestic forever, a joy from age to age. **16 You shall suck the milk of nations; you shall nurse at the breast of kings**; and you shall know that I, YHWH, am your Savior and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob. **17** Instead of bronze I will bring gold, and instead of iron I will bring silver; instead of wood, bronze, instead of stones, iron. I will make your overseers peace and your taskmasters righteousness. **18** Violence shall no more be heard in your land, devastation or destruction within your borders; you shall call your walls Salvation, and your gates Praise. **19** **The sun shall be no more your light by day, nor for brightness shall the moon give you light; but YHWH will be your everlasting light,** and your God will be your glory. **20** Your sun shall no more go down, nor your moon withdraw itself; for YHWH will be your everlasting light, and your days of mourning shall be ended. **21** Your people shall all be righteous; they shall possess the land forever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I might be glorified. **22** **The least one shall become a clan, and the smallest one a mighty nation;** I am YHWH; in its time I will hasten it.

1. Sukkot symbolically anticipates the future event when the Messiah will establish his earthly kingdom. It is interesting that in Zech 14 we see the nations are **required** to keep Sukkot DURING the actual period of time which it foreshadowed. If all the nations (Gentiles) are going to be **required** to keep Sukkot in the future, and Scripture clearly commands God’s people to keep Sukkot in the Hebrew Scriptures, what would that seem to imply about God’s expectations for his people keeping Sukkot today?

We should be keeping it today! Nowhere in Scripture are we told any different. Today we are looking forward with expectation to that day of Messiah, anticipating it with our celebration of Sukkot. In the future, people will be celebration Sukkot in recognition that the Messiah’s day has indeed come, and that He is the King.

1. “Holy to YHWH” is inscribed on the bells of the horses. What does this phrase mean? Why would it be on the bells of horses? Look at Ex 28:36-37.

***Exodus 28:36–37*** (ESV)  
**36** “You shall make a plate of pure gold and engrave on it, like the engraving of a signet, ‘Holy to YHWH.’ **37** And you shall fasten it on the turban by a cord of blue. It shall be on the front of the turban.

The phrase is **Qodesh la-YHWH** “holy to YHWH”. Holy means “set apart”. So the bells (and presumably the horses on which they are hung) are dedicated as being set apart exclusively for the use by or service of YHWH, in the same way that the high priest was so designated.

Horses were known as war animals, but they would no longer be set aside for that purpose, but rather for YHWH. Perhaps this referred to their usage in bringing the worshippers from all the nations to Jerusalem for Sukkot.

1. In Zech 14:20 “the pots shall be as bowls before the altar”. This is hard to understand with doing some research on the Hebrew words used for “pot” and “bowl”. What do you think this means? (Hint: look at Ex 27:3 for usage of the pots.)

The pots (סִירוֹת, sîrôt) were the lowliest vessels of all in the inventory of the tabernacle and Temple. They were used as receptacles for ashes (Ex. 27:3), and presumably, for other mundane purposes (Ps. 60:10 [EB 60:8]; Eccl. 7:6). In the Temple of the Millennium they will enjoy a much more exalted function, that of the bowls (מִזְרָקִים, mizrāqîm) before the altar. Their connection with the altar attests to their exalted and holy purpose, but the day will come when they will be joined by their less honored fellows as holy instruments of worship.

Even more astounding, the pots of profane use, those of every household, will be transformed into holy containers for sacrifice (v. 21). Ordinarily used for household cooking (Ex. 16:3; 2 Kings 4:38), and even as a symbol for wicked Jerusalem (Ezek. 11:3; 24:3, 6), these domestic vessels, unclean by virtue of their very lack of consecration to sacred use, will be purified and made serviceable to the worship of YHWH.   
 **Merrill, E. H. (2003). *An Exegetical Commentary***

Pots were used to collect ashes, and for other lowly, common functions. But now they would be elevated to be used as bowls used for drinking wine, or washing sacrifices at the altar.

1. All the pots in Jerusalem will be “holy for YHWH”. What is significant about that?

Basically everything, even the most common items, will be dedicated to the service of YHWH. His presence in everywhere, no longer just at the temple. Likewise, everything in the city will be set apart for his service.

EVERY pot will be “holy” so that ALL who sacrifice can use their pots. On that day, since we will be a kingdom of priests, perhaps it is to be that all will be able to sacrifice.

1. In Zech 14:21, what is the Hebrew word which the ESV translates as “trader”? What do you think this final statement in Zechariah means?

The Hebrew word is כְּנַעֲנִי **kena’ani** “Canaanite” which also means “trader” presumably because the Canaanites were traders in the land.

The promised land was inhabited by the Canaanites. The people of Israel were told to take the land from the Canaanites (pagans), although they were never successful in doing that. As a result there were always Canaanites in the land. There will no longer be a Canaanite in the temple, seems to imply that at last only God’s people are there. The fact is that people from all the nations will be present, but at this point they will all be God’s people. So there will be no pagans (no Canaanites) present, in the temple, and probably by extension, in the land. God’s people have finally arrived at the promised land.

Alternatively, some suggest that this refers to the fact that all pots are now set apart for service to YHWH. So during Sukkot and other festivals there will no longer be a shortage of pots for use with the sacrifices, as may have been the case before. So there no longer be the need for “traders” to take advantage of the needs of the pilgrims coming to Jerusalem.

1. Do you think “on that day” in Zech 14:20 and 14:21 refers to one particular 24-hour day, or to a more general period of time?

It seems to refer to a general period of time associated with the return of the Messiah. It is doubtful that on one particular day all the horses’ bells would be inscribed. It is also doubtful that a Canaanite (trader) would be not be present in the house of YHWH only for a 24 hr day. That clearly seems to refer to an ongoing situation during the entire period of time which begins with the rule of the Messiah.

1. How would you summarize this section (Zech 14:12-21)?

When the Messiah returns to set up his millennial kingdom, he will afflict all the nations who are warring against Jerusalem with a horrific plague. Most will be killed, or they will kill one another in the ensuing panic. Then, in the Messiah’s kingdom, all the survivors from the nations will be required to come to Jerusalem annually to worship YHWH at Sukkot. If they don’t they will be punished with no rain as well as plagues. And during that time, everything in Jerusalem will be dedicated to YHWH. No one will be at His temple other than His own people, which will include those from all the nations.

1. What does this passage say to you, personally?