Zechariah 14:1-5

**Digging Deeper in the Word**

Wyn Laidig

September 2017

***Zechariah 14:1–5***   
**1** Behold, a day is coming for YHWH, when the spoil taken from you will be divided in your midst. **2** For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city shall be taken and the houses plundered and the women raped. Half of the city shall go out into exile, but the rest of the people shall not be cut off from the city. **3** Then YHWH will go out and fight against those nations as when he fights on a day of battle. **4** On that day his feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives that lies before Jerusalem on the east, and the Mount of Olives shall be split in two from east to west by a very wide valley, so that one half of the Mount shall move northward, and the other half southward. **5** And you shall flee to the valley of my mountains, for the valley of the mountains shall reach to Azal. And you shall flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then YHWH my God will come, and all the holy ones with him.

1. Summarize the first part of this oracle, found in Zech 12-13.

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.

1. Who is the “you” in Zech 14:1? What does it mean that “the spoil taken from you will be divided in your midst”? See also Joel 1:15.

***Joel 1:15***   
**15** Alas for the day! **For the day of YHWH is near**, and as **destruction from the Almighty** it comes.

The “you” refers to the people of Jerusalem (or perhaps all of Judah as well). There will be a battle and against Jerusalem and apparently Jerusalem will be defeated. The people will watch their possessions being taken and divided “in their midst” by their victorious enemies.

1. When is this battle against Jerusalem going to take place?

In the day of YHWH. Presumably this is at the time of Yeshua’s return, or just prior to it.

1. Look at Mt 24:36-42. How might this relate to Zech 14:2?

***Matthew 24:36–42***  
**36** “But concerning that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only. **37** For as were the days of Noah, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. **38** For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark, **39** and they were unaware until the flood came and swept them all away, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. **40** Then two men will be in the field; one will be taken and one left. **41** Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one left. **42** Therefore, stay awake, for you do not know on what day your Lord is coming.

Half the city is taken into exile, just as Yeshua teaches that one of every man and woman will be taken on that “day of YHWH”.

1. How might Rev 11:1-13 relate to this Zechariah passage?

***Revelation 11:1–13*** (ESV)  
**1** Then I was given a measuring rod like a staff, and I was told, “Rise and measure the temple of God and the altar and those who worship there, **2** but do not measure the court outside the temple; leave that out, for **it is given over to the nations, and they will trample the holy city for forty-two months**. **3** And I will grant authority to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth.” **4** These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth. **5** 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. **6** They have the power to shut the sky, that no rain may fall during the days of their prophesying, and they 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. **7** And when they have finished their testimony, the beast that rises from the bottomless pit will make war on them and conquer them and kill them, **8** and their dead bodies will lie in the street of the great city that symbolically (lit. **spiritually**) **is called Sodom and Egypt**, **where their Lord was crucified**. **9** For three and a half days some from the peoples and tribes and languages and nations will gaze at their dead bodies and refuse to let them be placed in a tomb, **10** and those who dwell on the earth will rejoice over them and make merry and exchange presents, because these two prophets had been a torment to those who dwell on the earth. **11** But after the three and a half days a breath of life from God entered them, and they stood up on their feet, and great fear fell on those who saw them. **12** Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, “Come up here!” And they went up to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies watched them. **13** And at that hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell. Seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven.

This seems to depict the same battle that Zech 14:1 talks about. The nations will trample Jerusalem for 42 months – this place is now “spiritually called Sodom and Egypt”.

1. How might Luke 21:20-28 relate to this Zechariah passage?

***Luke 21:20–28***  
**20** “But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near. **21** Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let those who are inside the city depart, and let not those who are out in the country enter it, **22** for these are days of vengeance, to fulfill all that is written. **23** Alas for women who are pregnant and for those who are nursing infants in those days! For there will be great distress upon the earth and wrath against this people. **24** They will fall by the edge of the sword and be led captive among all nations, and **Jerusalem will be trampled underfoot by the Gentiles,** until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. **25** “And there will be signs in sun and moon and stars, and on the earth distress of nations in perplexity because of the roaring of the sea and the waves, **26** people fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming on the world. For the powers of the heavens will be shaken. **27** And then they will see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. **28** Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near.”

The people of Jerusalem will be trampled by the nations; many will be killed and taken captive. But when these things happen, know that redemption is near.

1. With Zech 14:3, we see there is actually a twofold purpose in “gathering the nations against Jerusalem”. What are the two purposes? Where have we seen this twofold purpose before in Zechariah?

First, to punish the people of Jerusalem, which he allows the other nations to do. Second, to punish the other nations.

***Zechariah 11:6*** (ESV)  
**6** For I will no longer have pity on the inhabitants of this land, declares YHWH. Behold, I will cause each of them to fall into the hand of his neighbor, and each into the hand of his king, and they shall crush the land, and I will deliver none from their hand.”

***Zechariah 12:3*** (ESV)  
**3** On that day I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the peoples. All who lift it will surely hurt themselves. And all the nations of the earth will gather against it.

1. How might Joel 3:1-3 relate to this Zechariah passage?

***Joel 3:1–3***  
**1** “For behold, in those days and at that time, when I restore the fortunes of Judah and Jerusalem, **2** I will gather all the nations and bring them down to the Valley of Jehoshaphat. And I will enter into judgment with them there, on behalf of my people and my heritage Israel, because they have scattered them among the nations and have divided up my land, **3** and have cast lots for my people, and have traded a boy for a prostitute, and have sold a girl for wine and have drunk it.

Here we see YHWH fulfilling his second purpose. He judges the nations on behalf of his people Israel.

1. What is the symbolic imagery of Zech 14:4? Note that the Jewish view of YHWH leading his people though the desert for 40 years after the exodus from Egypt was that his two great legs were the pillar of fire and the pillar of cloud.

God will stand on the Mt of Olives, which will be split in two, possibly as the result of an earthquake or consequence of war. Presumably we are to picture one of his great legs on each of the two parts. This would remind his people that He was again in their midst, and would lead them step by step as He had done during the time of the Exodus.

1. Why do you think YHWH was not standing on Mt Zion, the place of his temple?

Perhaps because that place had been desecrated and/or destroyed (trampled) by the nations.

1. What direction is the Mount of Olives from the temple? Look at Ezek 11:16-23 and Ezek 43:1-5. How are these passages connected to Zech 14:4?

***Ezekiel 11:16–23*** (ESV)  
**16** Therefore say, ‘Thus says Adonai YHWH: Though I removed them far off among the nations, and though I scattered them among the countries, yet I have been a sanctuary to them for a while in the countries where they have gone.’ **17** Therefore say, ‘Thus says Adonai YHWH: I will gather you from the peoples and assemble you out of the countries where you have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel.’ **18** And when they come there, they will remove from it all its detestable things and all its abominations. **19** And I will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put within them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, **20** that they may walk in my statutes and keep my rules and obey them. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God. **21** But as for those whose heart goes after their detestable things and their abominations, I will bring their deeds upon their own heads, declares Adonai YHWH.” **22** Then the cherubim lifted up their wings, with the wheels beside them, and the glory of the God of Israel was over them. **23** And the glory of YHWH went up from the midst of the city and stood on the mountain that is **on the east side of the city**.

***Ezekiel 43:1–5*** (ESV)  
**1** Then he led me to the gate, the gate facing east. **2** And behold, the glory of the God of Israel was **coming from the east**. And the sound of his coming was like the sound of many waters, and the earth shone with his glory. **3** And the vision I saw was just like the vision that I had seen when he came to destroy the city, and just like the vision that I had seen by the Chebar canal. And I fell on my face. **4** As the glory of YHWH entered the temple by the gate facing east, **5** the Spirit lifted me up and brought me into the inner court; and behold, the glory of YHWH filled the temple.

Mt of Olives is to the east of the temple. YHWH (or more precisely, the Messiah) will come from the East. This will happen on “that day of YHWH”, as we see in Zech 14:4, when he stands first to the east of the temple, and then conquers the nations on behalf of His people.

1. Look at Acts 1:6-12. Where was the last place on earth that Yeshua was before he ascended to heaven. How will return? Where will return?

***Acts 1:6–12*** (ESV)  
**6** So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?” **7** He said to them, “It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. **8** But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” **9** And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. **10** And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, **11** and said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, **will come in the same way as you saw him go** into heaven.” **12** Then they returned to Jerusalem from the **mount called Olivet**, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day’s journey away.

He ascended from the Mt of Olives, and he return the same way. It seems from Isaiah and Zechariah that “the same way” also means at the same place.

1. A new valley is formed from the Mt of Olives. What is the purpose of that valley? See Zech 14:4-5.

God’s people will be able to flee from Jerusalem which is “being trampled by the nations”.

1. Where or what is Azal?

No one knows. Only used once in Scripture. Perhaps a place name.

***Micah 1:11*** (ESV)  
**11** Pass on your way, inhabitants of Shaphir, in nakedness and shame; the inhabitants of Zaanan do not come out; the lamentation of **Beth-ezel** shall take away from you its standing place.

Ezel is the same consonants as Azal, but no one has any idea where Ezel is either.

1. When was Uzziah king? Look also at Amos 1:1. Who is actually being addressed in Zech 14:5 and who actually fled from the earthquake when Uzziah was king?

Uzziah was king of Judah in 791-740 BC. We don’t know when the earthquake was, but it had to be also during the time of King Jereboam II who died in 753 BC. So somewhere between 791-753 BC. There is evidence of a sizeable earthquake in the stratum 6 excavations at Hazor, dating to approximately 760.

The “you” refers to God’s people, Israel. Zechariah is not saying the very same people alive in Uzziah’s day are the ones fleeing Jerusalem in the day of YHWH. The people of Israel are viewed as one with their ancestors. Just as they would say today that God provided for “us” when led “us” out of Egypt.

1. Zech 14:5b says, “**Then YHWH my God will come**, and all the holy ones with him.” How do we understand this in view of the fact that YHWH seems to have already come a couple verses earlier? What is the Hebrew word translated as “then”?

“then” is really the most common Hebrew conjunction **vav** which basically means “and”. So to translated it as “then” adds a sequential time element that is not present in the original text.

It could be taken as poetic repetition of a main theme, that YHWH is coming.

1. YHWH comes with his **qedoshim** “holy ones”. Who might this term refer to? Consider for example Dt 33:1-4, Ps 89:5-7, 1 Thes 3:11-13, and Jude 14.

***Deuteronomy 33:1–4*** (ESV)  
**1** This is the blessing with which Moses the man of God blessed the people of Israel before his death. **2** He said, “YHWH came from Sinai and dawned from Seir upon us; he shone forth from Mount Paran; **he came from the ten thousands of holy ones**, with flaming fire at his right hand. **3** Yes, he loved his people, all his holy ones were in his hand; so they followed in your steps, receiving direction from you, **4** when Moses commanded us a law, as a possession for the assembly of Jacob.

***Psalm 89:5–7*** (ESV)  
**5** Let the heavens praise your wonders, YHWH, your faithfulness **in the assembly of the holy ones!** **6** For who in the skies can be compared to YHWH? Who among the heavenly beings is like YHWH, **7** a God greatly to be feared **in the council of the holy ones**, and awesome above **all who are around him?**

***1 Thessalonians 3:11–13*** (ESV)  
**11** Now may our God and Father himself, and our Lord Jesus, direct our way to you, **12** and may the Lord make you increase and abound in love for one another and for all, as we do for you, **13** so that he may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father, **at the coming of our Lord Jesus with all his saints.**

***Jude 14*** (ESV)  
**14** It was also about these that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, “Behold, the Lord comes **with ten thousands of his holy ones**,

**Qedoshim** can refer to heavenly beings or to God’s people, who are “set apart” for him. It could be either or both in the context of Zechariah 14:5.

1. Consider further the possible identity of the “holy ones” in Zech 14:5 by looking at 1 Thes 4:16-17.

***1 Thessalonians 4:16–17*** (ESV)  
**16** For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a cry of command, with the voice of an archangel, and with the sound of the trumpet of God. And the **dead in Christ will rise first**. **17** Then we who are alive, who are left, **will be caught up together with them** in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and s**o we will always be with the Lord**.

It is possible that the holy ones are His people, caught up with him when he returns, never to leave His presence again.

1. I Thes 4:16-17 (above) speaks of the Messiah’s return when the trumpet sounds. Read Matt 24:31 and also 1 Cor 15:51-52, which specifically says “at the last trumpet.” With that in mind, read Rev 11:12-18. What similarities do you see with Zech 14:1-5? What is a possible sequence of events related to Yeshua’s return?

***1 Corinthians 15:51–52*** (ESV)  
**51** Behold! I tell you a mystery. We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, **52** in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, **at the last trumpet**. **For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised** imperishable, and we shall be changed.

***Matthew 24:29–31*** (ESV)  
**29** “Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. **30** Then will appear in heaven the sign of the Son of Man, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. **31** And **he will send out his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds**, from one end of heaven to the other.

***Revelation 11:12–18*** (ESV)  
**12** Then they heard a loud voice from heaven saying to them, “Come up here!” And they went up to heaven in a cloud, and their enemies watched them. **13** And at that hour there was a great earthquake, and a tenth of the city fell. Seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the rest were terrified and gave glory to the God of heaven. **14** The second woe has passed; behold, the third woe is soon to come. **15** **Then the seventh angel blew his trumpet,** and there were loud voices in heaven, saying, “**The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ**, and he shall reign forever and ever.” **16** And the twenty-four elders who sit on their thrones before God fell on their faces and worshiped God, **17** saying, “We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, who is and who was, for **you have taken your great power and begun to reign**. **18** The nations raged, but your wrath came, and the time for the dead to be judged, and for rewarding your servants, the prophets and saints, and those who fear your name, both small and great, and for destroying the destroyers of the earth.”

The two witnesses are killed after 3.5 years of tribulation (the nations trampling Jerusalem and God’s people). Then there is a great earthquake. Many people are killed. Yeshua returns and his people meet him in the air (the day of Trumpets). And God begins to pour out is wrath on the nations. He claims His victory and begins his reign over this earthly kingdom.

1. How would you summarize this section (Zech 14:1-5)?

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.

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