

Zechariah 14 When God Gives Victory (part 6 Already and Not Yet)

Today, we come to the end of the Book of Zechariah. And, for me, I'm ready to move on to another book. But at the same time, I LOVE Zechariah. I would not trade this time. I have learned so much! And, I think God has broadened my understanding of OT prophecy, PARTICULARLY as it looks forward to the Gospel of Christ as the fulfillment of ALL God's promises to his people, Israel. And I hope this has been helpful to you as well. With this in mind, under our umbrella of victory, I want to highlight two truths from the book of Zechariah and cp. 14: 1) God's people have victory now, and 2) God's people still wait for future victory.

1. God's people have victory now. There is NOW a present reality of victory. Paul says to the Corinthians and to us today: **"Thanks be unto God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ"** (1 Cor. 15:57). When Paul the Jew reads Zechariah and the Prophets, he understands their words as fulfilled in Christ . . . NOW, in his time, and now for our time. This is true of ALL the NT writers. Let's think about this a bit in the context of Zechariah.

With the Book of Zechariah, we see that God will bring victory to his people. We see this in the context of Israel in Zechariah's day. Israel has been released from Babylonian captivity. They are coming back to the land. They are returning to Jerusalem. They are rebuilding the temple. The sacrificial system is being reinstated with a proper priesthood. There are hints of a future king as God gives good leadership through the governor, Zerubbabel. This is the CONTEXT of Victory.

Yet, when we consider the history of "physical" Israel, the land will continue to be plundered. Jerusalem doesn't turn out to be such a safe city. Great wars and battles plague their history (nothing new today). Even during the time of Christ, the Romans rule the city and the land. Later, in 70 AD, the temple will be destroyed. YET, the prophets words still speak of GREAT VICTORY for the future of Israel. This is what we see in cps. 12-14, especially when we get to the very end when we see that ALL things will be HOLY; ALL things will be made new. And, if we read the other prophets, both pre-exile and post-exile, this is what we see. We see the same kind of language with an emphasis on blessings coming to the "LAND," the "CITY," the "TEMPLE," the "PRIESTHOOD," the "KING," etc. The SURE reality of VICTORY is described in the institutions of Israel's experience, Israel's reality. And the only things Israel knows about God's blessings are described in the REAL ways God has blessed them, in the REAL ways God has brought them victory. Let me give some examples.

i. Jerusalem. In cps. 12-14 he mentions Jerusalem 20 times, sometimes in the context of judgment, sometimes blessings and victory (37 times in the Book, 762 in the Bible). Concerning victory look at 14:8: **"On that day living waters will flow out from Jerusalem."** V. 11: **"And it shall be inhabited, for there shall never again be a decree of utter destruction. Jerusalem shall dwell in security."** In vv. 16-19, the nations go up to Jerusalem to worship. And in v. 21, EVERYTHING in Jerusalem will be holy. The blessings of God and great victory falls upon Jerusalem.

Now, for the Jews, no city on earth compares to its importance. After conquering the land during Joshua's days, God established Jerusalem as the place of blessing, as the place of victory. To the Jews, there was no city on earth like Jerusalem. And every culture has their cities. I think of Sydney. I think I can say, "*To Kristen, there is no greater city than Sydney.*" It is the place Captain Cook first landed and placed his feet in Botany Bay. It was later established as one of the greatest natural harbors on earth. And I must agree, that not many cities compare with its beauty. And when Kristen lands in that city, her Aussie heart beams with pleasure. That's her city! To me, it's not so much a city. It's the mountains of NC. I remember returning from Mexico City in 1990 and then driving to the mountains, thinking "*there's no greater place on earth.*" I think you get the picture. We all have our cities. But, none compare to Jerusalem for the Jews. For that was the place of God's established to bless his people. For the Jews there can be NO GREATER CITY than Jerusalem. And for them, ALL blessings, ALL victories, emerge from Jerusalem!

ii. Land. In the prophets, we see the reality of the "land" as the place of God's blessing. This began with Abraham as God promises to give him a land (Gen. 12). Well, fast forward to Joshua. God leads his people out of Egypt as slaves and gives them their own land, the Land of Canaan, with Jerusalem at the center. In Zechariah, he often speaks of the God blessing the "land" and the "people" of that land. It is a place that "flows with milk and honey." Look at vv. 10-11: "**The whole land shall be turned into a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem. But Jerusalem shall remain aloft on its site from the Gate of Benjamin to the place of the former gate, to the Corner Gate, and from the Tower of Hananel to the king's winepresses. And it shall be inhabited, for there shall never again be a decree of utter destruction. Jerusalem shall dwell in security.**" To Zechariah and the prophets, there is NO REAL blessing, no REAL VICTORY unless it comes to the "land." This is why we see him describe God bringing it back to its original boundaries.

Now, these are only two examples of Zechariah's understanding of victory. Of course God will bless Jerusalem! Of course God will bless the land! And I could continue with the pictures. God will bless the temple. God will bless Israel's king. God will bless the priesthood. The same is true of the temple and the altar. Let me ask, "**Why would we expect any of God's prophets in the OT to explain God's blessings in other ways?**" This would be impossible! For these were the ways God blessed his people and gave them victory! And, as will see in a moment, in this life which is short and full of troubles because of sin, All their hopes were bound up in these realities. I still can't convince Kristen there is any greater city on earth than Sydney! This is impossible.

Now, fast forward to the NT. Paul says "**Thanks be unto God who gives us the victory through Jesus Christ our Lord!**" He is saying, "NOW," we have victory! And who is the focus of this victory? Is it the temple? Does Paul say God will reestablish temple worship? Is his focus Jerusalem and the land surrounding the city? Does he say God will bless his people through the old Jewish priesthood? Does he say we need to be cleansed through OT washings and purity rites? Do any of the NT writers say we will be blessed or given victory through those OT institutions? NO! They say with Paul, "*Thanks be unto God who gives us the victory through*

Jesus Christ our Lord!” I think we have two choices: 1) God will reestablish Jewish forms and practices from the OT at sometime in the future. Or, 2) These forms and practices are fulfilled in Christ and his kingdom.

We don’t have time this morning. But, if we examine the words of Jesus, we see him use the same kind of language as the OT prophets, but in a different way. He uses their language to show that HE is the fulfillment of those realities. Now, we should not be surprised! Zechariah has spoken of Him throughout as the true King, the true Priest, the true Shepherd that will be struck down, the true Servant of God, the Branch from the line of David, etc. AGAIN, this is why Paul says we have the victory “NOW.” Jesus has come!

Think of Jesus’ words in Matt. 12. Jesus says he is “**Lord**” of the Sabbath. In other words, He is the fulfillment of God’s rest. And then, he goes to speak of the OT temple. He says, “**something greater than the temple is here**” (v. 6). Then, speaking of the prophets, he says “**something greater than Jonah is here**” (v. 41). And then, he says, “**something greater than Solomon is here**” (v. 42). In this one passage, Jesus shows that HE is the fulfillment of the Sabbath, the temple, the prophets, and the kings. Jesus knows He is the fulfillment of Zechariah’s words “in that day.” Do you remember when he speaks to the woman at the well in Samaria? He says to her, “**the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem will you worship the Father . . . but you will worship Him in Spirit and in truth**” (John 4).

Now, was Jesus departing from the OT prophets like Zechariah who speaks of great blessings and victory coming to Jerusalem and the land or the temple? NO! Why? Because those institutions of blessing and victory are fulfilled in Jesus! This is why I don’t think it is wise to see a “future” kingdom of physical Jews with a new city and a new temple with a reinstatement of sacrifices and festivals like the feast of booths. These things find their fulfillment NOW; victory in Jesus. Now, he is God’s priest. By his blood we are saved. He entered the true Holy of Holies. Now, he is God’s prophet, the ONE of whom Moses speaks (Deut. 18:15). In fact, He is the very WORD of God (John 1:1). NOW, He is God’s King! He conquered death and the grave! He ascended to the right hand of God where He now makes intercession for his people! If you are a Christian, there is victory NOW!

2. God’s people wait for a future victory. YES, we have victory NOW. But, there is more to come. Of course we get such an expectation from the NT! But, what about Zechariah (other prophets as well)? It is interesting that throughout the passage, we see an escalation of the kingdom. We see a “growing” of the kingdom. We may even call this an “expansion” of the kingdom. And this expansion leads to things we have not seen yet. This means God’s people still wait for victory. As I’ve noted before, these words of prophecy (12-14) speak of Christ’s kingdom in it’s entirety. (One of the difficulties of OT kingdom prophecies is that the prophets do not distinguish between the “already” and “not yet.” They merely see these things fulfilled in the coming kingdom.)

Now, It is obvious that sin, death, and the devil still remain. No one denies this as we live in this world. And there are many passages in the NT that show the devil is still on the loose. Death continues. And, sin remains, even for the Christian. But, when we read Zechariah (and other prophets) we find words that go beyond these realities. We see a war around Jerusalem where ALL God's enemies are destroyed (12:9). We see a time when there will be no idolatry (13:2). In 14:1-5 we see the LORD coming in judgment with his angels. In 14:9 we see pictures where NO ONE opposes God and Kingdom. In vv. 10-11 we see TOTAL security. In vv. 16-19 we see a PERPETUAL flow of the nations in Jerusalem and EVERYONE keeping the feast of booths. Now turn to vv. 20-21. Here we see some kind of finality, some kind of completion to the expansion of the kingdom. EVERYTHING will be holy. **“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. 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.”**

Now, we can say that these things exist NOW in the kingdom of the Son because of the person and work of the Son (as we've seen). BUT, there is more to come. There is the 2nd coming of Christ (see. v. 5). There is a final judgment where Jesus will separate the sheep from the goats. Satan will be cast out where he will remain forever. And when we get to the NT Paul speaks of a general resurrection and the consummation of all things. Brothers and sisters, these things still remain. This is why I can say, we wait for victory. BUT, ALL these things, NOW and FUTURE are still taking place in the Kingdom of the Son. His kingdom is still expanding. And his kingdom will never end. He will merely “turn it over” to the Father one day. This why we can say the kingdom of Christ is “inaugurated,” now, but we wait for the “consummation” in the future. Do you remember Daniel's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's dream? In 2:44-45 we read: **“And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever, just as you saw that a stone was cut from a mountain by no human hand, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold. A great God has made known to the king what shall be after this. The dream is certain, and its interpretation sure.”**

Already the kingdom has come. Yet, we wait for more. With this in mind, I want to mention some applications.

Application. No one can stop the building of the kingdom. God has been working all things and will continue to work all things to completion. (Dan. 2:45).

Application. As God's people we/you have the privilege of taking part in building the kingdom. Turn with me to 2 Cor. 5:17-19. **“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ**

reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us.” The means God uses is his Word. Faith comes by hearing and hearing the Word of Christ (Rom. 10:17). But, who shares the word? The subjects of the kingdom. Specifically, those who have been made “new” in Christ (v. 17) through the power of the Holy Spirit. What a privilege! How are we doing?

Application: Turn with me to Matt. 6:33. These words are right in the middle of Jesus’ Sermon on the Mount, some of his most concise teaching on the kingdom. As he speaks about anxiety and worrying he says: **“But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you . . .”** This is pretty clear: Seek FIRST the kingdom of God and his righteousness. There is a lot I could say. But, it seems to me that the seeking the Kingdom of Christ (which is the Kingdom of God) is FIRST for us, above all the other things in this world we may seek. And this begins with seeking the King.

Do you remember Mary and Martha. Martha is running around the house trying to get things ready as Mary sits at the feet of Jesus. And Jesus says to Martha, **“Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary . . .”** (Luke 10:38-42). As King David says, **“One thing have I asked of the LORD, that will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the LORD and to inquire in his temple”** (Ps. 27:4). As citizens of the kingdom (Christians) this is what we do; we look to Christ. For there is none greater to whom we can look. In Him we find God, we find the righteousness of God (gospel of Christ).

In conclusion, we can say, “Now, in Christ, the righteousness of God is revealed from heaven” (Rom. 1). We have victory NOW! Yet, the NT speaks of hope (which will one day pass away – 1 Cor. 13). We wait in hope for the completion of the kingdom where there will be a new heavens and a new earth.