

Post-Exile Prophets
THE FINAL WAR
Monday, September 8
Reading: Zechariah 12-14

Zechariah 12:3 *On that day, when all the nations of the earth are gathered against her, I will make Jerusalem an immovable rock for all the nations. All who try to move it will injure themselves...9 On that day I will set out to destroy all the nations that attack Jerusalem.*

In 1914 at the start of the Great War, author H. G. Wells said this would be “the war to end war.” A few years later, as the war raged on, President Woodrow Wilson asked Congress to declare war against Germany on April 2, 1917. He modified Wells’ statement calling for “a war to end all wars.” About 20 years after the end of that ‘war to end all wars’, World War II began (1939-1945). And there has been no lack of wars and conflicts since. This should not surprise us. Jesus warned us this would happen.

“You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pains.” (Matthew 24:6-8)

The last prophecy of Zechariah (chapters 12-14) describes the final war that will culminate in the coming of the Lord to destroy His enemies and establish His kingdom. Some have tried to interpret these chapters as past wars with Babylon or the Maccabees struggle with the Greeks or even the conquest of the Romans. But none of these past events fit the description given by the prophet. And Zechariah’s repeated use of “on that day” (17 times) tells us that He is talking about the ultimate “Day of the Lord” spoken of by other Old Testament prophets – the day when God would judge the world and set up His kingdom.

There are three major events that are described in these verses:

1. The ARMIES of the nations war against Jerusalem and Israel
2. The ARRIVAL of the Messiah¹ to save His people
3. The AFTERMATH of the battle and the redemption of Israel

This cycle of events is repeated twice (12-13 / 14) with various details given in each account. Together, they give us a detailed account of the final ‘war to end all wars.’

Today, we see wars and conflicts around the globe and many ask if we are at the end of history. Will humanity destroy itself? Jesus tells us that these things should be expected. But the final conflict is still to come. And God has already won! Listen to these encouraging words from the prophet Isaiah:

In the last days the mountain of the LORD’s temple will be established as the highest of the mountains; it will be exalted above the hills, and all nations will stream to it. Many peoples will come and say, “Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the temple of the God of Jacob. He will teach us His ways, so that we may walk in His paths.” The law will go out from Zion, the word of the LORD from Jerusalem. He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore.

Come, descendants of Jacob, let us walk in the light of the LORD. (Isaiah 2:2-5)

¹ We will use the Hebrew word ‘Messiah’ instead of the Greek ‘Christ’ in these devotions as they describe the 2nd Coming from a Jewish context. Both words mean “the anointed One.”