# Zechariah - Commentaries by Edward B. Dennett

Christian Truth: Volume 28, Zechariah 14:1-5

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Chapter 14 gives the details, to speak generally, of the result for the nations of the coming of Jehovah as the Messiah (see vv. 9-16); but, when more closely examined, it is seen to fall into two parts, the first of which closes with "Uzziah king of Judah" in the 5th verse. From that point the prophet returns and describes the coming of Jehovah with His saints, and in so doing "takes up the subject of the relationship of Jehovah with the whole earth," showing that His coming for the succor and blessing of His ancient people is but the occasion for the perennial flowing forth of "living waters" to the ends of the earth.

The chapter opens abruptly with the solemn proclamation, "Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee." v. 1. The "day of the LORD" has a fixed significance in the prophets, and is ever connected with judgment; as, for example, in Isaiah, "The day of the LORD of hosts shall be upon every one that is proud and lofty, and upon every one that is lifted up." (Chap. 2:12; compare Joel 2 Pet. 3:10.) And the context shows that it has this meaning here, that it is the day when Jehovah will appear for judgment upon His enemies, and for the deliverance of those who have waited for Him. (Isa. 25.) The "spoil" spoken of is probably the spoil taken from the nations (see v. 14), which the prophet says shall be divided in the midst of Jerusalem. In one sentence therefore, before he gives the details, the full result is placed before the reader—the full result of the assembling of the nations against Jerusalem. They will come to despoil it, but they shall be spoiled; and the people who were on the very eve of destruction shall divide the spoil of their enemies.

But before the end is reached, there will be terrible experiences. "For," says Jehovah, "I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city." v. 2. In chapter 12 mention is also made of the siege of Jerusalem, but there in reference rather to the effect upon the peoples who besiege her. Here we have the revelation that at first, before Jehovah appears, the enemy will triumph and capture the city. Jehovah permits this for the punishment of the apostates of Judah under the influence of the antichrist. Isaiah thus speaks, "Wherefore hear the word of the LORD, ye scornful men, that rule this people which is in Jerusalem. Because ye have said, We have made a covenant with death, and with hell are we at agreement; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, it shall not come unto us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves: therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation, a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste. Judgment also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet; and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place. And your covenant with death shall be disannulled, and your agreement with hell shall not stand; when the overflowing scourge shall pass through, then ye shall be trodden down by it." (Isa. 28:14-18; see also chaps. 8 and 10.) The scripture makes it also plain that Jehovah will suffer Jerusalem to be taken before He intervenes. Micah may allude to the same thing when he says, "This man shall be the peace, when the Assyrian shall come into our land: and when he shall tread in our palaces, then shall we raise against him seven shepherds, and eight principal men." Chap. 5:5.

It is in this way that God will teach Judah and Jerusalem that it is an evil and bitter thing to have rejected Christ, to have forsaken the living God; for now in their extremity, if they should call, there will be none to answer. Allying themselves with the enemy of Jehovah, and identifying themselves with his idolatries, they must now pass through these days of vengeance. "And," according to the word of the Lord, "the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity." No city in the world has undergone such frightful sieges. Jeremiah has signalized the sorrows of its capture by Nebuchadnezzar in his Lamentations; and a description of the horrors of the siege by the Romans has been preserved in the pages of Josephus; and, as we gather from this scripture, the sorrows of this chosen city are not yet ended. Does the reader inquire for the reason? The answer is found in the lament of our blessed Lord Himself: "0 Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!" Matt. 23:37. And since that day Jerusalem has added to all her sins in crucifying her Lord; and she will aggravate her guilt yet more by receiving him who will deny both the Father and the Son.

A remnant will not be cut off from the city; and the next verse tells us of Jehovah's mighty intervention: "Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when He fought in the day of battle." Whether the Lord appears immediately, or whether indeed this event is subsequent upon the capture of the city, is not evident. The fact is stated, and care must be exercised not to go beyond the fact, that the Lord goes forth against His enemies and the enemies of His people. It is possible that allusions to the same event may be made by Isaiah, when he says, "A voice of noise from the city, a voice from the temple, a voice of the LORD that rendereth recompense to His enemies." And again, "For, behold, the LORD will come with fire, and with His chariots like a whirlwind, to render His anger with fury, and His rebuke with flames of fire. For by fire and by His sword will the LORD plead with all flesh: and the slain of the LORD shall be many." (Chap. 66:6,15,16; compare Joel 3:9-17, and Rev. 16:13, 14.) In such a manner Jehovah will render recompense to His enemies; for He will gird His sword upon His thigh, and His arrows will be sharp in the heart of the king's enemies, whereby the people fall under Him; and then the nations of the world will have to learn what Pharaoh learned at the Red Sea—the irresistible might of Him against whom they have dared to set themselves in battle array. "The enemy said, I will pursue, I will overtake, I will divide the spoil; my lust shall be satisfied upon them; I will draw my sword, my hand shall destroy them. Thou didst blow with Thy wind, the sea covered them: they sank as lead in the mighty waters." Exod. 15:9, 10.

In the next verse we have one of the most remarkable predictions to be found in the prophetic scriptures. "And His feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south." v. 4. It was from the mount of Olives, as the reader will remember, that our Lord ascended up to heaven (Acts,1:12); and, after a cloud

had received Him out of the sight of the disciples, and while they were still wistfully gazing after their departed Lord, two angels said to them, "Ye men of Galilee, why stand ye gazing up into heaven? this same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven." Acts 1:11. No words could be more precise or state more definitely that Jesus Himself should return to the earth, and that in a visible manner; and now we learn from Zechariah that He shall return to the very spot whence He ascended, and that the very same feet that once trod Olivet, in company with His disciples, shall once again stand in the same place. No ingenuity whatever can explain away the simple words, "His feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives," and in this way, as another has pointed out, "Jehovah identifies Himself, so to speak, with the meek and lowly Jesus formerly on the earth, in order that the identity of the Savior and Jehovah should be clearly acknowledged."

But when Jehovah thus comes, in the Person of the Messiah, He comes with power and great glory; the earth will acknowledge the presence of her rightful Lord, and thus the mountain on which He will stand cleaves in the midst. As we read indeed in the Psalm, "The earth shook and trembled; the foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken, because He was wroth." 18:7. So will it be again on that eventful day. The effect will be that a great valley will be formed by half of the mountain removing toward the north, and half toward the south, running east and west, its western end being immediately opposite to the eastern side of the city of Jerusalem, and its eastern end terminating, it would seem, at Azal. Isaiah cries, "Oh that Thou wouldest rend the heavens, that Thou wouldest come down, that the mountains might flow down at Thy presence, as when the melting fire burneth, the fire causeth the waters to boil, to make Thy name known to Thine adversaries, that the nations may tremble at Thy presence! When Thou didst terrible things which we looked not for, Thou earnest down, the mountains flowed down at Thy presence." Chap. 64:1-3. So will it also be in this day of which Zechariah speaks, and the wonders flowing from the presence of Jehovah will strike terror into the hearts of the beholders, for they will flee as they fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah, king of Judah.

The prophet does not pursue this aspect of his subject. Jehovah has come, and His feet stand upon the mount of Olives, and He has thus renewed His relationship with Judah, or at least the remnant, of whom the disciples (who saw their Lord ascend, and who received the promise of seeing Him return) were the representatives. He now recommences (the second part of the chapter beginning at this point) with the corning of the Lord. He says, as if addressing Jehovah, "And the LORD My God shall come, and all the saints with Thee" (v. 5). The introduction of the saints as accompanying, or forming the cortege of Jehovah, is an additional feature; and the instructed reader will see in this a remarkable confirmation of what he has learned of the Lord's coming from the New Testament. Here, as it is His return to Israel, it is His public manifestation—when every eye shall see Him, and when, therefore, as Zechariah states, the saints shall come with Him. If, however, the glorified saints return with Christ, they must have been caught up to be with Him previously; and this is what the New Testament scriptures teach. Thus, in 1 Thessalonians 4, we learn that when the Lord descends from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trump of God, both the sleeping and the living saints will be caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so will be ever with the Lord. Here there is no question of any being caught up; the Lord comes to His own on the earth for their succor and temporal salvation. This shows the difference between the hope of the Church and the hope of Israel. Believers now wait daily to be caught up to meet Christ, and hence, afterward, "When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, then shall ye also appear with Him in glory." Col. 3:4. Whereas the believing remnant, in the day of which the prophet speaks, will await the coming of the Messiah in glory, as described in this chapter.

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The following verse tells of Christ's rejection: "And one shall say unto Him, What are these wounds in Thine hands? Then He shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of My friends." v. 6. He had in love become the servant of man; and for His love He had hatred, rejection, and crucifixion, and this, as He explains, in the house of His friends. For, according to the flesh, He was a Jew, Son of David, heir of the promises, and as such He came into the house of His friends. For Him too they waited; all their hopes were centered on His advent, and yet they would not receive Him, but met Him with the enmity of their evil hearts, and rested not until they had pierced His hands and His feet. All this is familiar to us, but we never weary of meditating upon it, because the cross, and the cross alone, is the measure of His love. One further remark may be added. He cannot conceal His love for His people; for though showing the wounds He had received while in their midst, He yet says, "the house of My friends." Truly, blessed Lord, Thy love is both unchangeable and unquenchable!

He was wounded by His friends, but He was smitten of Jehovah; and thus we read, "Awake, O sword, against My shepherd, and against the man that is My fellow, saith the LORD of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn Mine hand upon the little ones." v. 7. The application and fulfillment of this scripture have been indicated by the Lord Himself. After the Passover feast, "when they had sung a hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives. Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of Me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad." Matt. 26:30, 31. This makes it plain that the death of Christ in His character as the Shepherd is signified, and thus supplies the key to the interpretation of the passage. The address is to the sword, the sword being a figure of the judicial stroke that fell upon Christ in His death (compare Jer. 47:6); and the command to smite reveals that while the Jews by wicked hands took and crucified their Messiah, He was yet delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God. Wounded in the house of His friends was man's work and man's wickedness; smitten by the sword of judgment, though man was the instrument, brings in rather God's action; and thus in these two verses we have indicated His sufferings from the hands of man, and His sufferings from the hand of God. Under the hand of man He died for righteousness' sake a martyr; as suffering under the hand of God, because He offered Himself for the glory of God in expiation, He died as the sacrifice for sin. The 6th verse is therefore the 69th, and the 7th is the 22nd Psalm.

Then the character in which the Messiah is here presented must be noticed. First, He is termed "My shepherd." This title is especially used in relation to Israel. We thus read in Ezekiel, "I will set up one shepherd over them, and he shall feed them, even My servant David; he shall feed them, and he shall be their shepherd." Chap. 34:23. And the Lord when down here claimed for Himself that He was the Good Shepherd, even as also the Apostle speaks of Him as the great Shepherd of the sheep (Heb. 13). As here used, the title describes Him as the Messiah, who, in the words of Isaiah, "shall feed His flock like a shepherd: He shall gather the lambs with His arm, and carry them in His bosom, and shall

gently lead those that are with young." Isa. 40:11. (Compare Psalm 23; 78:70-72, etc.) Since, moreover, He is termed "My" Shepherd, He is brought be fore us as the One of God's providing and appointment, and as the One who answers to His mind. In a word, the Messiah will be God's Shepherd for His people when they are once again restored and blessed in the land; and He was presented as such on His first coming, but, refused, He laid down His life for the sheep. He was smitten of Jehovah's sword in the language of our scripture. If, however, the term shepherd points to His official place as the King, "the man that is My fellow" reveals to us His divinity; for of no other than He, who was one with the Father (John 10), who subsisted in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God (Phil. 2), and who, as the Word was with God and was God (John 1), could such language be employed. Wondrous words are they to be spoken of the meek and lowly Jesus, of Him whose "visage was so marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men (Isa. 52:14); but being used, they unfold the truth that Jesus of Nazareth was in very deed Gad manifest in flesh. And remark, as has often been done, that, addressed here in His humiliation as the "fellow" of Jehovah, in His exaltation where He is addressed as God, the saints are spoken of as His "fellows." (Psalm 45:7; Heb. 1:9.)

The Messiah then, as the Shepherd of Israel, and as the One who is described as the fellow of Jehovah, is seen here as smitten—smitten by the sword of judgment because, as the Good Shepherd, He laid down His life for the sheep, thus intercepting the stroke that was their due, that He might, on their behalf, meet all God's holy claims, and glorify Him concerning their sins.

A twofold immediate effect here follows. First, the sheep are scattered. This was fulfilled literally on the night of His apprehension, when all His disciples, those who had acknowledged Him as the Shepherd of Israel, forsook Him and fled; and in another way, we cannot doubt, it has been accomplished in the scattering of the Jews over the face of the whole earth; for it is written, "He that scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him, as a shepherd does his flock" (Jer. 31:10). He came to gather His sheep, but when they as a people refused to listen to the voice of the Good Shepherd, and He was smitten, God in His government, and judicially, "scattered" the flock. It is also added, "I will turn Mine hand upon the little ones." Thus while judgment should descend upon the sheep who did not know the voice of their Shepherd, and who, instead of fallowing Him, demanded His crucifixion, God would cover with His hand the "little ones" who had recognized their Messiah, the remnant in fact, who had attached themselves to Him during His earthly ministry, in that day of evil and trouble.

Last, we have the consequences of the smiting of the Shepherd in their final results for God's people. "And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the LORD, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein. And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: and they shall call on My name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is My people: and they shall say, The LORD is my God." vv. 8, 9. It is clear, we judge, that the whole of the present interval of grace must be interposed between the 7th and 8th verses; for while judgment, and terrible judgment, did fall upon the Jewish nation some thirty or forty years after the death of Christ, no such result as the bringing a third part through the fire into relationship with God was then reached. The accomplishment of this word, therefore, must be looked for in the future, when the Jews shall have been brought back to their land in unbelief, when God will resume His dealings with them, and when, as we know from other scriptures (Matt. 24; Rev. 13) they will be subjected to hitherto unheard of persecutions. It is then that God will deal with them on account of their sin in rejecting their Messiah, and when, as we read here, "two parts... shall be cut off and die," and when, as the Lord foretold, "except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened." Matt. 24:22. But a third part shall be brought through this fire, a fire seven times hotter than even Nebuchadnezzar's furnace, and God will purify them in the process, refining them as silver, and trying them as gold (compare Mal. 3:2, 3; also 1 Pet. 1:7), and thereby bring them back into relationship with Jehovah their God. This represents the end of all God's ways, in His judicial dealings, with the Jews. Because of their sins He had written the sentence of Lo-ammi (not My people) upon them; and now the sentence is reversed, and He out of the fullness of His heart, on His part, declares, It is My people; and they, brought back, repentant and restored, in gratitude respond, The Lord is my God. Blessed, happy, consummation for which God still waits, and for which too His ancient people unconsciously wait, but which will surely arrive in its own time; and when it comes, it will usher in the peace and blessing of the millennial day.

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