

From dark days to That day

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[0 : 0 0] good evening and a warm welcome to the service this evening i'm not going to go through intimations just now as we went through these in the morning we'll just come straight into the act of worship so let us worship god and sing to his praise in psalm 51 psalm 51 we'll sing from verses 7 down to the end of verse 13 do thy with hyssop sprinkle me i shall be cleansed so ye wash thou me and then i shall be whiter than the snow of gladness and of joyfulness make me to hear the voice that so these very bones which thou hast broken may rejoice all my iniquities blot out thy face hide from my sin create a clean heart lord renew a right spirit me within and we sing down to the end of the verse verse 13 to god's face do thou with this soft sprinkle me i shall be cleansed so yea wash thou me and then i shall be whiter than the snow of gladness and of joyfulness make me to hear the voice that so these very bones which thou hast broken may rejoice all my iniquities thy voice that so these very bones which thou hast broken may rejoice all my iniquities all my iniquities blot out thy face

Iniquities brought out Thy face I'd from myself.

Create a clean heart, Lord, renew A right spread me within.

Cast me not from Thy side, nor take Thy holy sweat away.

Restore me Thy salvation's joy, With Thy free spirit me save.

[3 : 2 4] Then will I teach Thy wisdom To those that transgressors be, And those that sinners are shall then Be turned unto Thee.

Am I up again?

aw-lip, fall-lip, test ■■■■■ the full story us monsters there day fill off their glad to go away.

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[6 : 3 7] ■■■■■ ■ demi Muy smooth There is the suffocatives that all■■■■■■s grupp■■■■■■ signs such as Pass them Mail now My brother does not live back and he scores you in the north is the the the the the the the the the the the uh you you subscript by Lobar, super limited,

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the the Amen.

[12 : 30] Erskarh di erster. Amen. Well, let's turn now to read God's Word together.

And we read from Zechariah chapter 14. As a congregation, we've been going through the book of Zechariah for some time now. It's not the best known book in the Bible, but it's a book where God speaks through a series of visions in the earlier part of the book and through a series of oracles as the book continues.

And we have been into the prophetic realm in this last chapter. And so we read from Zechariah chapter 14 and we'll read from verses 1 to verse 11.

This is God's Word. The day of the Lord is coming when your plunder will be divided among you. I will gather all nations to Jerusalem to fight against it.

The city will be captured, the houses ransacked, the women raped. Half of the city will go into exile, but the rest of the people will not be taken from the city. Then the Lord will go out and fight against those nations as he fights in the day of battle.

[13 : 54] On that day his feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, east of Jerusalem. And the Mount of Olives will be split in two from east to west, forming a great valley, with half of the mountain moving north and half moving south.

You will flee by my mountain valley, for it will extend to Asa. You will flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah, king of Judah.

Then the Lord my God will come, and all the holy ones with him. On that day there will be no light, no cold or frost. It will be a unique day, without daytime or nighttime, a day known to the Lord.

When evening comes there will be light. On that day living water will flow out from Jerusalem, half to the eastern sea and half to the western sea, in summer and in winter.

The Lord will be king over the whole earth. On that day there will be one Lord, and his name, the only name. The whole land from Geba to Rimmon, south of Jerusalem, will become like the Arabah.

[14 : 59] But Jerusalem will be raised up, and remain in its place, from the Benjamin Gate, to the site of the first gate, to the corner gate.

And from the Tower of Hananero to the Royal Wine Press. It will be inhabited. Never again will it be destroyed. Jerusalem will be secure.

Amen. And may God bless that reading of his word to us. Again, let's draw near to him in a moment of prayer as we come back to his word.

Heavenly Father, we do thank you for your word which we have sung, your word which we have read, and your word which now we turn to meditate upon. We thank you that this is a chapter which, like every chapter of scripture, was inspired by the Holy Spirit.

And we pray that we would know the help of that same Holy Spirit. Opening our eyes and our ears. Stirring our hearts that we may see Jesus, and may see our great need of Jesus.

[16 : 11] So move amongst us, we pray. Just a few of us here in this building, and perhaps more who will be in different places watching online.

Lord, we ask that although our structure may be different this week, we pray that we would know the same ministry of the Holy Spirit. And we pray that we would be impacted, that you would speak your words into our lives.

And what we pray for ourselves, we pray for all congregations that come together in different ways over these days. Be a work, Lord, we pray.

Wherever the gospel of Jesus is preached, we ask that you would add your blessing. Lord God, that you would build your church. We do pray that you would be with the Youth Fellowship as well, as they hope to meet shortly after the service this evening.

And we pray that you would be with those who lead there, that you would give them wisdom, that you would speak through them. And we pray for the hearts of the young people, that they would be soft and that they would be open to the message of the gospel.

[17 : 21] And we pray for our children as well. And we pray, Lord, that as they perhaps miss Sunday school, Lord, that they would receive that same teaching through your word as your people sit with them.

We pray that families would be gathered together around your word. And Lord, that you would speak into the lives of all who come to you. So hear our prayers.

Help us, we pray. We are much in need of help. We need you every hour. And we ask, my Lord, that you would open your word to us. We pray this in Jesus' name. Amen. If you could open your Bibles, please, to Zechariah chapter 14.

And we'll have a brief look at the verses that we read together. On a number of occasions over this last week, it's been reported on the news that we are going into dark days.

We're going into dark times. The Prime Minister said on Tuesday, the Prime Minister said on Tuesday, I quote, we will be working with senior leaders throughout the service, including with HR teams, to support the NHS workforce through these dark times.

[18 : 42] On Wednesday, the headline caught my eye again. Apple stock slides as bull sees dark days ahead for the iPhone maker. On Thursday, I read a discussion that was amongst economists who were talking in terms of dark days now having set in.

And you don't need me to go on at any great length about this. But we know that the situation currently is a dark backdrop.

There are challenges ahead. This is a difficult time. And the first point for us, first of two points this evening, is just a note of that.

Dark days. Point number one, dark days. And that's not just the note of what we may experience in our own culture presently. That's the note that Zechariah chapter 14 begins on.

Verses one and two, which we read there, are difficult verses to read. They paint a pretty dark picture.

[19 : 52] It's gruesome. It's graphic. These were dark days. And the question that we may ask, the question that we often find the psalmist asking, is why?

Why does God sometimes allow us to enter into and go through dark days? And we can ask that question. But sometimes, in fact, probably oftentimes, we don't know why.

Take Job, for example. He went through very dark days. You can read the book and follow the plot of it yourself. He went through intense suffering.

And yet he didn't know why. We're told why in chapter one. But Job didn't know why. His friends didn't know why. And we know that he wasn't, in that instance, being punished by God.

He was actually being attacked by Satan. And Job would be refined. He'd be built up. He would be actually strengthened through all that he suffered.

[21 : 04] But for God's people in the days of Zechariah, God was using dark days to call his people back to himself.

One of the commentators, Bentley, writing on this chapter, this section, says, God punishes his people because he wants to bring them back to himself.

He's never stopped loving them. And he longs for them to be back in a right relationship with himself. Don't you?

And I long for Scotland. A land that was once known for our love of God. A land that has, for a long time now, been going through dark days spiritually.

And a land that is now entering into dark days physically and economically. Don't you long that we as a nation who were once close to God but who now are far away from God.

[22 : 14] Don't you long that we would now be brought back to him. And will we pray for that? That's the encouragement that we are given.

That's what we hope and pray for. That's what we're called to do this evening. Even. It's to gather together to call upon the Lord.

And we have the encouragement there in Chronicles that I quoted in the morning. That if we, as his people, will call upon his name, if we will turn from our wicked ways and we will humble ourselves, he will hear our prayers, he will hear our prayers and he will heal our land.

When we go through dark days, whether it's nationally or personally, we should never believe that God has stopped loving us.

But I think we should always examine ourselves. And if we find that we are drifted from God, if we find that we have backslidden, as God's people so often did, then the call of God, which is sounded so clearly and so consistently through the book of Zechariah, it's a call to repent.

[23 : 42] It's a call to come back. To turn away from our sin and to turn in faith to the Lord.

Zechariah 1.3 It's the note that the whole book begins on. Therefore tell the people, this is what Zechariah is told by God, therefore tell the people, this is what the Lord Almighty says.

Return to me, declares the Lord Almighty, and I will return to you, says the Lord Almighty. And that's not exclusive to Zechariah's day.

That's a message that was played on repeat from heaven throughout the generations and the ages. Hosea, for example, another prophet that God took hold of, he was given the same word to proclaim.

I love the paraphrase of Hosea 6. It goes like this, Come, let us to the Lord our God with contrite hearts return. Our God is gracious, nor will we leave the desolate to mourn.

[24 : 51] His voice commands the tempest forth and stills the stormy wave, and though his arm be strong to smite, tis also strong to save. Long hath the night of sorrow reigned.

The dawn shall bring us light. God shall appear, and we shall rise with gladness in his sight. And if we cast our eyes down on this chapter here, we see in Zechariah 14 and verse 3 to 5, we have the news of God appearing.

We have this prophecy. We thought about last Sunday evening of the Lord's second coming. verse 5, Zechariah says, Then the Lord, my God, will come, and all his holy ones with them.

And there's that sense of joy that comes through there. There's a change in atmosphere with the Lord's coming. It's the darkness of the beginning, and then as the Lord comes, the light begins to break through and we'll come to that.

There's that sense of joy, there's that sense of victory. Dark days will be over when the Lord comes. And you and I can share in that sense of joy.

[26 : 10] We can share in that victory. We can rest in that guaranteed security if we are able to say what Zechariah said, Then the Lord, my God, will come.

When Jesus, when the Lord Jesus is my God, when we have a relationship with him, when we are trusting him, then we may go through dark days, but we are given faith to see over the horizon of dark days and see that day.

And that takes us to our second point. There's dark days, first of all, but secondly, finally, there's that day.

There's some days in our calendar and we mark them. We highlight them. We circle them with red pen. We set reminders on our phones so that we don't forget them.

There's certain dates that we know and we mark because they're important dates. Mother's Day today. It's an important date. I hope you've remembered it. If you haven't, you're too late to do anything to salvage that.

[27 : 33] Birthdays, wedding anniversaries, these are dates that we want to mark. We don't want to lose sight of them. And here in this chapter, Zechariah, he keeps on talking about that day.

And he keeps on talking about that day so that we will not lose sight of that day. Not the repetition. verse 4, verse 6, verse 8, verse 9, verse 13, verse 20, verse 21.

There's that recurring phrase that we can underline there. On that day. It's the day of the Lord. It's the day when the Lord Jesus will return to this world in great power and glory.

And glory. That day is a day when everything will be changed and made new.

That day is a day when, to use Tolkien's words from Lord of the Rings, everything sad will come untrue. it's a day that will bring an end to dark days for the Lord's people.

[28 : 47] So, I want to ask the question as we move to a conclusion, what does Jesus bring as he returns that ushers in an end to the dark days?

Well, there's three things. And the first thing is Jesus brings light. Jesus brings light. Light that shines into the darkness.

Light that overcomes the darkness. And we'll see that in a moment. But let's just look at the verse before us. The language in verse 6 isn't the easiest to grasp.

It says in the NIV here, On that day there will be no light, no cold or frost. Now, I'm no Hebrew scholar but one of the commentators, John L. Mackay, acknowledges the fact that his difficult language is hard to translate and he says the literal translation of that verse is there will not be light.

The precious ones, meaning the stars, will grow dim. And if we take that translation for verse 6, there will not be light.

[30 : 00] The precious ones, the stars, the stars, will grow dim. That translation fits with all these other texts which concern the day of the Lord. Isaiah 13, in verse 9, it says, See, the day of the Lord is coming.

And then in verse 10, the stars of heaven and their constellations will not show their light. The rising sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light. Joel 13, Joel 13, for the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision.

The sun and moon will be darkened and the stars no longer shine. Jesus, in Matthew 24, speaks about the day of the Lord. And he says, in verse 29 and 30, the sun will be darkened and the moon will not give its light.

The stars will fall from the sky and the heavenly bodies will be shaken. At that time, the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky and all the nations of the earth will mourn.

It will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory. It's quite a thought to consider that day.

[31 : 16] We should give it more thought than we do. We should always keep that day in our vision. It will be an amazing day.

Verse 7 says it will be a unique day without daytime or nighttime a day known to the Lord. When evening comes, there will be light.

When evening comes, there will be light. So where will the light come from on that day? Well, from Jesus.

The created lights of the sun and the moon and the stars, as we've read there, will fade and they'll be white but the light of Jesus will shine.

Remember when Jesus came into this world, John chapter 1, John said in verse 5, the light shines in the darkness. Speaking of Jesus coming.

[32 : 30] Verse 9 of chapter 1 in John, the true light, the true light that gives light to every man was coming into the world. When Jesus came, there was light and when Jesus returns to this world in all his glory, he will bring the light.

He will be the light of the new Jerusalem, of that heavenly city. We'll give a picture of it in Revelation 21 in verse 23.

John, as he's given this vision, says, the city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it for the glory of God gives it light and the lamb is its lamp.

Jesus brings light. You know, for us, we take it right down to the level of our own hearts. who is able on this day to chase away the darkness of sin from our hearts?

Who is able to cause the dim lights of this world that we are attracted to to fade? Jesus is.

[33 : 42] He is the one who brings light into dark days. He is the one who brings light into dark hearts. So as the hymn writer encourages us, let us turn our eyes upon Jesus.

Look full in his wonderful face and the things of earth will grow strangely dim in the light of his glory and grace.

There's a word that will encourage us. Let's turn our eyes away from the news for five minutes. Let's turn our eyes away from ourselves and from everything going on around us for five minutes and turn our eyes on Jesus.

Let's pray that his light will shine into our lives. Jesus brings light. Jesus also brings life.

Verse 8 On that day living water will flow out from Jerusalem half to the eastern sea and half to the western sea in summer and in winter.

[34 : 55] Jerusalem was a place actually that lacked water. There was a small spring of gihon or gaihon and there was various small supplies within Jerusalem but they didn't satisfy the population during the hot summers especially.

and we know that without water there is no life. We can have a scarcity of toilet rolls and we can keep on going for a while. We can have a scarcity of various things and yet we persevere but if we have a scarcity of water there's no life that can continue.

But on that day that Zechariah is opening up before us the promise given is that there will be living water flowing out from Jerusalem living water that flows from the east to the west an abundant sufficient supply.

So where do we get that living water? Because when we hear that phrase living water our minds should shoot ahead. Who is able to supply living water? Well there's only one source.

Jesus. It takes us to a chapter to chapter four of John's gospel. That phrase takes us to a well in Cypher.

[36 : 20] In fact let's go there for just a moment. John chapter four. John chapter four. We hear verse four.

It says there now he, that's Jesus, had to go through Samaria. So he came to a town in Samaria called Cypher near the plot of ground Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there and Jesus tired as he was on the journey sat down by the well.

It was about the sixth hour. When a Samaritan woman came to draw water Jesus said to her will you give me a drink? His disciples had gone into the town to buy food. The Samaritan woman said to him you're a Jew and I'm a Samaritan woman.

How can you ask me for a drink? For Jews do not associate with Samaritans. Jesus answered her if you knew the gift of God and who it is that asks you for a drink you would have asked him and he would have given you living water.

Sir the woman said you have nothing to draw with and the well is deep. Where can you get this living water?

[37 : 37] Are you greater than our father Jacob who gave us the well and drank from it himself as did also his sons and his flocks and herds? Jesus answered everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst indeed the water I give him will become in him a spring of water welling up to eternal life.

Jesus brings life living water and what happened next in this woman's life? Well she trusted Jesus she tasted the living water that only he could supply and for the first time in this woman's life she was truly satisfied but the first time in her life she truly was alive and for us tonight even we are we're offered that living water we have souls that are thirsty we have souls that are parched and Jesus comes to us and he offers to satisfy us he offers to refresh us he offers to give us life life the moment that we trust him and life that is perfected when we meet him on the day when he returns or calls us home

Jesus brings life Jesus brings light security verse 10 of Zechariah 14 the whole land from Giba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem will become like the Arabah the Jerusalem will be raised up and remain in its place from the Benjamin gate to the first site of the first gate to the corner gate and from the town of Hananel to the royal winepress it will be inhabited never again will it be destroyed Jerusalem will be secure now I've never been in the holy land but the commentators tell me that geographically Jerusalem it lies within a basin there's various hills that are around it and all these hills are higher than Jerusalem so Jerusalem is vulnerable it's open to attack there's an insecurity about it in terms of the geography but in this prophetic picture that Zechariah is given and passes on all the hills around Jerusalem are leveled they become like the plain of Arabah and Jerusalem is the only elevated place which means

Jerusalem is no longer open to attack it's no longer in a state of constant danger but it's secure and in prophetic terms here we're given a picture of heaven the new Jerusalem one commentator says the church of Jesus Christ will be lifted out of the valley of doubt fear dejection and despondency and will be raised up to confident hope and assurance of God's grace and life eternal who brings the security well Jesus does verse 9 the Lord will be king over the whole earth on that day there will be one Lord and his name the only name as we finish we feel

I think it's fair to say a lot of insecurity in ourselves and we feel we are so conscious today of how much insecurity there is in this world world but this world is not our home the presence of sin the attacks of Satan will mean that this world will always be unstable but if we're trusting in Jesus there's a place that he has prepared for us the new Jerusalem and it's a place of light not darkness it's a place of life abundant life not death and it's a place of eternal security so as we travel today through what we could consider to be dark days let us not be discouraged let us not worry and fret and stress as the world does but let us keep our eyes on that day and let us be ready to meet with our

[43 : 09] Lord and we'll pray our heavenly father we do ask that you would enable us to see Jesus to know the acute need that we have of Jesus and we pray that we would not simply hear these words but we pray that we would act upon we acknowledge the fact that we live in dark days and we acknowledge the fact that our hearts can be dark hearts we are we are sinful but we thank you that we have a savior in Jesus and we thank you that he is the one who brings light he is the one who brings life he is the one who brings an eternal security and we ask Lord that we would receive all that he is willing to bring to our lives as we take hold of him by faith and we pray all these things in Jesus name amen let's close with the benediction the grace of our

Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God the Father and the fellowship of God the Holy Spirit
be with us all both now and forever more amen