

Zechariah 14

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[0 : 00] A warm welcome to the service this evening and a special welcome to those who are visiting with us. It's good to have one or two with us. The intimation sheets are at the front. If you didn't pick one up, you can pick one up on the way out.

And the only thing really I want to highlight is that the community lunch, which we have on here for Tuesday, this coming Tuesday, we have decided not to go ahead with just with all the scares of Corona and infection and etc, etc.

So you can strike that off the intimations for the week and I think the rest is pretty much as it stands. So I'll leave you to go through these at your own convenience.

We're going to sing to God's praise and we'll sing the words on the screen from Psalm 98. Psalm 98, it's a psalm that looks forward to the coming of the Lord and we'll sing from verses 5 to the end of the psalm.

With harp, with harp, and voice of psalms unto Jehovah sing, with trumpets, coronets gladly sound before the Lord the King. This reminds me of Gordon from last Sunday.

[1 : 17] He was speaking about how Professor Macmillan, the Free Church professor, used to come to the Faith Mission College. And he would give them lectures on various things and one day he was giving them a lecture and he dealt with Psalm 150 in the lecture, which starts something like this psalm and it speaks about the timbrel and the harp and the stringed instruments and the organs and the dance and the cymbals.

He read it all and he paused and he went, In the Free Church, some of these psalms, we have to read them very quietly. Gordon thought that was great. So I thought I'd share it with you.

So we'll sing from verse 5 to the end of the psalm to verse 9. And we'll remain seated to sing in Galilee to God's praise. Amen. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

[4 : 04] Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you.

Thank you. Thank you. And if you could turn with me now please to Zechariah chapter 14.

Zechariah chapter 14. And we'll read the first 11 verses of the chapter.

And after we've done that I'll ask Gordon to come and pray in English please. The Lord comes and reigns is the title here. A day of the Lord is coming when your plunder will be divided among you.

[6 : 24] I will gather all nations to Jerusalem to fight against it. The city will be captured, the houses ransacked and 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. 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 Azzel. You will flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Jura.

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 winter.

[7 : 40] The Lord will be king over all the earth, 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.

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 Hananel to the royal winepress. It will be inhabited. Never again will it be destroyed. Jerusalem will be secure.

Amen. May God give us understanding as we come back to his word in a moment. Gordon will lead us in prayer now please. Let us pray.

Our gracious son of our blessed Lord. We thank you that we can come into your presence this night. And as we have sung heavenly father. That we would indeed know your glory.

[8 : 46] That heavenly father as the angels gathered before you and cried holy, holy, holy is the Lord. That we can come and we can sing this night.

Glory, glory, hallelujah. Our God is marching on. That heavenly father no matter what we face in life. No matter what difficulties, what challenges, what anxieties we have.

You tell us to come before you in prayer. And to cast all our cares and anxieties before you. And we thank you that we can come and do that this night.

As we have already prayed on this day, heavenly father, there is so much. That we see in our papers, read in our papers and see on the televisions, heavenly father. And heavenly father, we each have our own worries, our own cares, our own concerns.

Of what that means for us going forward. But heavenly father, we thank you that you know the end from the beginning. And the one thing that we are sure of, that you know the future.

[9 : 58] And heavenly father, that you have promised. That you will never leave us. That you will never forsake us. That whatever we face in life.

That if we put our trust in you. That heavenly father, that you will be with us and you will care for us. You will be with us through the valleys of the shadow. You will take us to the still waters and you will restore our soul.

For you are indeed the good shepherd. Lord. So as we come into your presence this night, heavenly father. May each one of us know what it is to be still and know that you are God.

And as we come before you and as we have had your word read to us. And as now, heavenly father, as we look to break it down. That your hand would be upon David.

That heavenly father, though he may feel tired, may feel weary. That you would uphold him at this time. And that heavenly father, as your word goes forth.

[11 : 02] And as he speaks this night and as you use him. That your word would indeed go forth in spirit and in truth. That heavenly father, each one of us.

Would still our hearts before you. That we would be open and receptive to your word. For you have promised heavenly father that your word will not return unto you void.

And heavenly father, as your word is read. And it goes forth. We know that it is like the sower going out into the field and sowing seeds. But we pray that each one that is gathered here this night.

That their hearts would be open and receptive. That heavenly father that they would shut out the things of the world as they come into this building. And that they would focus on you.

For you are the giver of life. And heavenly father, only to you can we come this night. So as we gather here, heavenly father.

[12 : 07] May they know your hand stayed upon us. That heavenly father this night. That we can leave here knowing that it was good for us to have been here. That for some that they may say that for the first time they saw the Lord high and lifted up.

For others for the first time that they may have tasted and seen that God is good. But heavenly father we pray most of all. That each one would indeed be awakened to you.

And your call upon their life. Come unto me all ye that are weak and heavily. Take my yoke upon you. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

Oh heavenly father that we would indeed draw close to you. And know the presence of you in our life. We pray for those that are unable to gather with us this night. Those heavenly father that are laid low through sickness.

Whose heart's desire would be here to have been here amongst us. Listening to your word. That heavenly father even in the stillness of their own home. That they would know that you are with them.

[13 : 21] That heavenly father that it is not about being in this place. But it is about getting ourselves into your presence. In the reading of your word.

And focusing upon you. That we can indeed have that blessing upon our lives. Guide us all we pray thee. And may you indeed go before us.

Not just in this service but in this coming week. And that we would know what it is to trust in you. To trust and not be afraid. In Jesus precious. Lust there. Father.

After I have 14. Again we will pray. Just as we come back to this passage. Heavenly Father. We thank you. Again for your word. And we pray.

That as we have read these verses. That you would bring them to us. and the power of the Holy Spirit. We pray that you would open our lives, our hearts to your word and that was prayed already that our hearts would be like the good seed, the good soil and that your word as the seed would take root and be deep within our hearts.

[14 : 33] So help us, Lord, we pray. Open your word to us, we pray. Enable us to see Jesus. Enable us to have a true biblical perspective about all that we see before us in time and enable us, we pray, to have always that reminder that we are en route to eternity.

So hear our prayers. Help us, we pray. And what we pray for ourselves here, we pray for the churches around us. What we pray for ourselves here, we pray for the YF as they meet after.

We bring the young ones to you, Lord. We thank you for those who are here and we thank you for those who come after the service. And we ask, Lord, that you would meet with them and we pray for Kyle as he shares his testimony tonight.

And we ask that you would give him the words to say that he would bear witness to the glory of Christ and that he would be encouraged as he shares testimony and that he would be an encouragement to those who will gather to listen.

So hear our prayers. Help us, we ask. And we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. Zechariah chapter 14. And the theme that we come to as we approach this chapter tonight is, I think, the theme of worry.

- [16 : 06] And it connects largely with what we were thinking about this morning. Although when I came to this passage much earlier last week, the events of the news were nothing like as serious as they were towards the end of the week.
- But that said, whether we are going through a state of alarm on a national level or whether we're having an ordinary kind of a week, I think all of us have a struggle with worry.
- Sometimes we worry about what's happening in the present, as is very much obvious just now. But more often than not, we worry about what may happen or what actually often does not happen in the future.
- Young folks before exams, often we worry. We don't know what the questions are going to be. We don't know how much we'll be able to remember on the day.
- And as the test date comes close, we start to get anxious. We start to worry. Before going to hospital, we get the date and the card.
- [17 : 32] We see it coming closer and closer. And we're okay with that until the morning that we have to go. And we have something going on in our stomachs. And we feel worry. Worry about what the doctor might say.
- Even with the smaller things. If you're not going to be able to do it, if you ever watch a real football fan watching their team on a TV or at a game, are they enjoying the game?
- Generally, they're not. I can think of one man in our congregation. I won't name him. But you can, before you ever get to his house, you see what team he supports in his shed window.
- He's got football strips, and he's got towels, and he's got all kinds of things that identify him as a certain supporter of a team from Glasgow, which I wouldn't encourage anyone to support.
- And I was asking him recently when there was an old firm game on, did you watch it? Did you enjoy it? And he says, no, I can't watch any of them. I just can't bear to watch them.
- [18 : 37] Because these people who are real fans, they're nervous wrecks, they're worried, as the game goes on, that their team might lose.
- But if their team's won, and if they've recorded the game, and if they're sitting down after full time, and they're watching the game that they know that their team has actually won, they sit back, and they enjoy the game.
- And they may see a goal or two going in against them. They may see a few difficult tackles. They may see a few bad decisions. But they're okay with it.
- Because they know the final result. And if you think about it in terms of school again, if you were going to sit an exam, but you had already had the questions, and you knew that you were going to pass somehow, you wouldn't worry.
- This morning, we thought about how we as God's people, if we're trusting in Christ, we shouldn't be overwhelmed with fear. when bad news hits us, as it sometimes does.
- [19 : 52] And this evening, I want us to consider why we shouldn't be fearful, and why we shouldn't be worried about the future. We don't know exactly what's up ahead.
- And at three o'clock in the morning, we start playing it out. But it shouldn't worry us. It shouldn't unhinge us. It shouldn't alarm us.
- God wants his people. He wants us to be trusting him. Not stressing about the future. And so in Zechariah 14, he tells us the future.
- He tells us how things will be, ultimately. And if we're trusting the Lord, if we're part of the church of Jesus Christ, there's great encouragement for us in this.

Even though the chapter actually begins with bad news. First point that we come to this evening, we see in verses 1 and 2 here, that in terms of the future, and looking to the future, we see the church will be under attack, but it will not be destroyed.

[21 : 12] Verse 1, A 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 the city will go into exile, but the rest of the people will not be taken from the city.

You know, it's a gruesome picture. It's a very graphic picture of an attack. And we know from past studies in Zechariah that when we read about Jerusalem here, we're being given a picture of the church.

We fast forward to the very end of the Bible, the new Jerusalem. It's a picture of the church. It's a picture of the church gathered in heaven. So this is an attack here that is predicted.

It's in the future, as Zechariah writes, and it's a predicted attack on the church. And the question for us is, when will this happen? And the answer is that this has been happening ever since the day Jesus ascended into heaven.

God's people have always been, since that day, under attack, and even before that day.

[22 : 37] Satan, we see, although he uses nations, although he uses scenarios and people groups, Satan is always trying to attack.

He's trying to plunder the church. One of the commentators, Bentley, says, Satan has plundered the church. The purity of the gospel has been plundered because in so many places of worship, it has ceased to be preached in its fullness and fullness.

The church is being plundered. The gospel is the riches and the devil wants to get in and he wants to remove it.

He wants to plunder the church and remove the precious riches of the gospel. And we see that in our own country. We heard stories of it last weekend, as Gordon shared with us.

Accounts of old men and ladies who sat in churches all their days for decades. And they heard a message of try hard, be nice, and maybe you'll be okay in the end.

[23 : 40] It's not the gospel. And that's Satan's work. He wants to come into the church.

He wants to remove the Bible. He wants to do a cut and paste exercise on Scripture so that we take out the bits that we don't like and culture doesn't like and we shape it into something else and it's not the gospel.

So we see the church under attack in our own nation, in our own day, as there are so many efforts constantly to remove the light of the gospel.

But if we look to other countries more so than our own countries, we see God's people constantly under attack. We can take these verses and we can see it happening literally.

We can pick up books like this. I took off my desk before I left the house. It's a book that tells us how we can pray for the persecuted church.

[24 : 54] And I could flick through this and I could read out extracts from this where we see exactly this happening. Houses ransacked.

Women raped. The church under the most brutal attack. It's happening. I was reading just a day or two ago on social media.

A Nigerian civil society claims that no fewer than 350 Christians have been killed this year in Nigeria.

And as they look back over the past five years in Nigeria, their estimate is that there's round about 11,500 Christians that have been executed simply because they belong to the church of Jesus Christ.

The church is under attack from without and from within at home and abroad. And yet in spite of all that the church is not destroyed.

[26 : 10] The gates of hell are not prevailing over the church and will not prevail over the church. That's Jesus' promise. He will keep on building.

And there still is and there always will be a remnant of God's people. So we can take encouragement from that.

The Bible is very real. It's very gritty. It goes into the real life facts of what we can expect in our experience as Christians.

and we see that here. Makes for hard reading. But we can take great encouragement by this. If you are part of the church of Jesus Christ, if you are believing, trusting in Jesus, then you are part of a group that are indestructible.

yes, you and I will be under attack. So we shouldn't be surprised by it and we shouldn't be discouraged by it.

[27 : 22] But we should be encouraged by the promise of God that we see here and it's threaded all the way through Scripture. The church will be under attack but it will not be destroyed.

so be encouraged. That's the first point. The second point as we look at the future is we see here that Jesus is coming back.

Yes, there will be attacks. Yes, there will be battles. Yes, there will be heartaches. No, the devil will not overcome. And the reason the devil will not overcome is because Jesus is protecting his church today and Jesus is coming back.

Just as he came into this world, his promise is he will come back. But not as a little baby. Quietly and in humility, he will come back with great power and might.

Those who like to watch boxing films and wrestling films, they love to see a good comeback story. You know, we've seen it in a thousand different movies over the years.

[28 : 43] You know, Rocky is on the ropes. The odds are stacked against him. He's bleeding, he's battered, he looks like he's finished.

Down he goes. He crashes onto the floor and it looks like it's all over. And then up he comes with great power and takes the victory.

We love to see these kind of films and that's something like what's predicted here, although it's predicted in much more power and magnitude.

Zechariah here predicts the greatest comeback of all time. So we have the scene set in the opening of the chapter. all nations are gathered together.

It's reminiscent of Psalm 2 as well, although we won't go there tonight. All nations are coming together. They're gathered together to fight against God's people. It looks like there's no hope for God's people.

[29 : 45] It looks like there are defeated people. And then in verse 3, everything changes. as we see Christ come into focus.

And that's so often the principle in scripture. When evil appears to be at its strongest, when the church looks at its weakest point, when things are bad beyond words, that's very often when God goes forth in great power.

that's very often when he appears on the battlefield. Makes you wonder what's happening just now.

Certainly something we should be praying into. So we have this picture here of the Lord coming back in verse 3 and following.

Then the Lord will go out and fight against those nations. Does he fight? As he fights on the day of battle, 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 of the mountain moving south.

[31 : 05] You will flee by my mountain valley, but it will extend to Azriel. And so it goes on. It finishes there in verse 5. Then the Lord my God will come, and all his holy ones with him.

The Lord is coming. That's the message. That's the prediction. That's the promise. Jesus is coming back.

it's a prediction that relates to the coming of Jesus. We see references in these verses to the Mount of Olives. And remember when Jesus ascends in Acts chapter 1 verse 12, we're told that it was from the Mount of Olives that he ascended.

And as Jesus ascended into heaven, and as the disciples stood looking up into the sky, this heavenly messenger says to the disciples, why do you stand here looking into the sky?

We can picture them on the Mount of Olives. Jesus has ascended, and they're standing, looking into the sky.

[32 : 19] And they're asked the question, why are you standing here looking into the sky? This same Jesus who has been taken from you into heaven will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.

So this is a prophecy, it's a reminder of the fact that Jesus is coming back. How he will come back is unclear, the details of it.

When Jesus will come back, it's not revealed to us, it's not known. But what is clear what is known is that Jesus is coming back.

At a time when people will not expect him, at a time when evil looks to be so dominant, then Jesus will come back in great power and victory.

Then the Lord my God will come and all the holy ones with him. If you want a fuller picture of that, you can go to 1 Thessalonians 4, verses 13 and following.

[33 : 39] We're given this amazing picture of Jesus coming back with all his people, all his holy ones with him. God will burn this into our minds and our hearts and burn this into our calendars.

Jesus is coming back. now how does that make you and I feel? How are you and I preparing for the coming of Christ?

You know, we're seeing mass preparations just now for the potential coming of Corona. it's all people are talking about and we don't know when or how or to what extent it may come, how near it will ever come to us, but we have absolute assurance Jesus is coming and every eye will see him and every tongue will have to confess that he is Lord.

Every knee will bow before him. So how are we preparing? for the coming of Jesus. If we're part of the nations to use Zechariah's phrase here, if we are part of those who oppose Jesus and do not trust Jesus, this should cause us to be in a state of great alarm and fear.

It should cause us to repent while there is still time. Because we cannot stand against Jesus and prevail.

[35 : 33] We can sit in these chairs for a period and grit our teeth and sit in polite defiance for a period, but on the day that Jesus comes back, there will be no such state of rebellion.

we will not be able to stand against Jesus. So if we are those who are still strangers to Christ, if we are not trusting in Christ, if we are going our own way, this should cause us to be fearful.

It should cause us to repent. but if we are part of the church, this picture of Jerusalem that we have here, this should cause us to rejoice.

It should bring to us a great wave of comfort and reassurance. Tolkien, in his book Lord of the Rings, we have that lovely phrase about everything sad coming untrue.

And for the believer, that's what's promised, everything sad, everything that breaks our heart, everything that sin spoils, every wrestle, every tension, every struggle will be undone when Jesus comes back.

[37 : 09] and when he comes back, the Lord whom we love, whose name is used as a curse in our day and age, he will be given the honour that he is due.

We won't have to switch on our TV screens and listen to comedians trampling all over the name of Christ. We won't be out on playgrounds and at football pitches and walking along the street and hear the name of Jesus being cursed because on that day every knee will bow and every tongue will confess that he is Lord.

Jesus is coming back on that day says Zechariah, Jesus is coming back.

Luther famously said, I only have two days in my calendar. This day, today, today, and that day, that day when Jesus will return.

And for you and I, if we focus only on this day and tomorrow and the weeks ahead and maybe the months ahead of that, we can become discouraged and we can drift off course.

[38 : 39] we can give in to worry. But when we keep that day, that great day, in our focus, even if we get bad news as we thought about this morning, whether it's about relationships or health or exams or whatever, even if bad news hits us, we have no fear of it because we see the bigger picture.

We see Jesus is coming back. And when our focus is on that day and not just this day and the days ahead, our lives will be lived much more effectively because we're conscious that at the end of this short life that we're given, we will have to stand before the Lord and explain what we did with the lives that he gave us.

Sometimes we hear the phrase, we shouldn't be so heavenly minded that we're of no earthly use, but the reality is those who are most heavenly minded are those who will be of most earthly use.

The most heavenly minded person ever to walk this world was Jesus and nobody had a greater impact on the needs of the people around him than Jesus did.

Or take Wilberforce as an example. The man who was used to bring about the abolition of the slave trade. Wilberforce was known for being somebody who said, I think he said, never a day passed.

[40 : 28] It might have been an hour, but I think he certainly said never a day passed when he did not think about the fact that Jesus is coming back.

So what is the future according to Zechariah? Well, according to Zechariah, the church will certainly be under attack constantly, but the church will not be destroyed.

And the promise that we are given here, the promise that should cause us to repent and believe if we have not yet done so, the promise that should cause us to rejoice and be at peace if we have trusted Christ, is the promise that Jesus is coming back.

So when we have these great truths in our mind, and I only have time to do the two, I can't go into the rest. Why do we worry?

The future is mapped out. We're not given the micro details, but we're given the big picture. And we are told, if we are trusting in Jesus, if he is our saviour, if he is our Lord, if we are part of his church, the new Jerusalem, then we have nothing to fear, nothing to worry about, and everything to thank him for and rejoice in.

[42 : 15] So let's pray. Amen. Heavenly Father, we thank you again for your word. We thank you that we are given this reminder of the shortness of our time in this world and the length of time we will have in eternity.

We have no continuing city here. sometimes, Lord, we confess we live as if we are to have a continuing city here. Sometimes we try to store up riches, we try to build a reputation for ourselves, we try to build bigger nests and bigger barns, and all the while we know that you are telling us, Lord, that we will only be here for a while, and then there is eternity.

So enable us, we pray, if we are Christians, to spend our days investing in the things of heaven, that place where moth will not eat away at the prizes that Christ has set aside for us, that place where rust will not cause corrosion.

But we thank you that it is possible for us to have a prize, to have the assurance of an eternal investment when we pour out our lives in service of and devotion to Jesus.

So enable us, Lord, to live that way, we pray. And for anyone here tonight who has not yet trusted in Christ, we ask that you would be at work in their lives, and that they would, even before they go from this building, go on the knees of their hearts, and confess sin, and turn in faith to Jesus.

[44 : 20] And we thank you that when he is our saviour, we have nothing to fear, and we ask all this in Jesus' name. Amen.