



river west church

The Big Picture: Passion Week, the Return of Christ and the Final Judgment

Zechariah 14

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The Final Word in Zechariah

In Zechariah 14 we come to the final chapter in this amazing prophetic book. It's a chapter that points to the final victory of God over all the kingdoms of this world. It fulfills the second part of the two part description of the Messiah, which was given in Zechariah 9:9-10. Zechariah 9:9 speaks of the first coming of Christ the King, humble and lowly and seated on a donkey. That's the prophecy about Palm Sunday. But Zechariah 9:10 is about the second coming of Christ. It's a prophecy of His return as King of Kings and His victory over all the kingdoms of this world. In many ways chapters 9-14 of Zechariah are an exposition of these two key verses about Jesus. That's why so many of the themes in Zechariah 9-14 appear in the events of Passion Week in the pages of the Gospels.

So it is no surprise that right in the middle of Passion Week Jesus began to focus on many of the themes from Zechariah 14; The siege of Jerusalem, the coming of God to the Mount of Olives, God's victory over the nations, judgment and the salvation of those who come to Him in faith.

The Big Picture

Matthew chapters 24 and 25 contain one of the longest teachings of Jesus in all the Gospels. This is a detailed and complex teaching about the future. It is a teaching about the destruction of Jerusalem, the return of Christ and the final judgment. Jesus gave this teaching right in the middle of Passion Week. This is really important, especially so because it was given just days before Jesus went to the Cross.

The ultimate focus of Passion Week is Christ's death and Resurrection. But all the things that Jesus did and said as He approached Good Friday and Easter were intended to shine a light on the full meaning of the Cross and the Resurrection. This is exactly why Jesus spoke of His second coming, the final judgment and "the end of the world" during Passion Week.

Think of it as Christ showing us the "big picture." Jesus is teaching us that His death and Resurrection are the central elements in the master plan of God; a plan that encompasses all of time and all of history, past, present and future. It is a plan that involves Israel as a nation and Jerusalem as a city. It is a plan that actually determines the final outcome of all of history. The events of Good Friday and Easter Sunday make all the difference in the world, and even effect the very "end of the world", including the final judgment in which each person must stand before God. Wow.

Jesus wants you to know these things. He wants you to get the big picture. He wants you to know that He died for your sins and rose again for your justification. So it's about you. But it's not ONLY about you. The Gospel is life changing. But it is also world changing and eternity changing. As we begin to see this, our faith grows and our worship deepens. We are also inspired to "look up" and "watch for" Christ. We know that this world is not our ultimate home. We know that Christ will return and judgment will come. We rejoice that our lives are hidden in Christ by faith, and so we are ready to face that great day.

Reading God's Word During Passion Week

Take some extra time to read God's Word this week. Remember that almost a third of everything written in the Gospels focuses on the events of Passion Week. Clearly this is a crucial focal point for our faith and our understanding of the Gospel. An easy way to do this is simply to read a little bit each day from

the Gospel of Matthew. Matthew 21 starts Passion Week off with Palm Sunday. Matthew 28 is Easter Sunday. So just divide up Matthew 21-28 and read a section of it each day. Or you could read through the whole thing several times over the course of the week. As you do, notice how Jesus points us to ultimate things, right in the middle of it all – in Matthew 24 and 25. It is all very intense, and it is challenging to figure out all the details. Don't let that discourage you! Instead, try to look at the big picture. Christ will come again as conquering King. Judgment is coming too! All of this is not meant to overwhelm you. This is meant to show you the full meaning and value of the death and Resurrection of Christ. Jesus, who will come again as King and judge, is the one who took our judgment upon Himself at the Cross on Good Friday. Jesus will forever bear in His body the scars of the Cross; even when He returns. This is an invitation for each of us to put our trust in Jesus; to receive the gift of forgiveness and the hope of eternal life through His Resurrection life. Amen!