

# On That Day...

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[ 0 : 00 ] Amen. Please keep that page open as we spend our time in it and let's pray as we do that. Father, we turn to you and rely upon you. Even as we open up your word, we confess that we can have no lasting good from it, unless it is given by your spirit.

So, bless us, we pray. Answer our pleas for mercy. Come to us and speak to our hearts, we ask, about your grace and about our Lord Jesus. For this we ask in his name. Amen.

Amen. No one can tell the future. Sounds like a very obvious thing to say, but it is worth saying, the further we try to look ahead, often the fuzzier and vaguer things seem to us.

When will I leave home? When will the baby come? When will we get away on holiday? When will I retire? But as the future gets closer, so to speak, or we get nearer to the future, the things that seemed uncertain at first come more into focus.

Things that hovered over the calendar, not sure quite where to land, come down to land on a certain day. Flynn and Rachel will remember their wedding day every year. That's what an anniversary is, isn't it? A day to remember.

[ 1 : 39 ] We celebrate one another's birthdays. Not all days are happy ones. The day that somebody that we loved died. The day of their funeral. Lots of you know, Susie and I have a day coming up this week that you kindly ask, we've actually known that it was coming since before our littlest Ezra was born.

But the thing that has weighed on us, and that many of you have wanted to know, is do you have a date yet? Everything in our future seems uncertain to us now, and yet it has a day when it will happen.

Our passage in Zechariah this evening was written for people who were peering forward into an uncertain future, not sure what it held for them. They're God's people, returned to his place at Jerusalem in the land of Judah from exile in Babylon.

They've come treasuring God's promises of restoration and renewal in their hearts, hearts, but they've found the reality on the ground, the outworking of those promises, to be much harder. Things are going slower and growing smaller than they expected. And as we've gone through this book, we've heard the Lord through Zechariah call them to return fully to him in their hearts.

[ 3 : 02 ] He's heaped up reasons for them to hope in him, and he's also encouraged them in their service of each other. The overall message of this book, I think, could be summed up by this verse we find in Hebrews 12, where the writer says, Lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint, but rather be healed.

It's a book of firm encouragement to adjust course where needed and not grow weary of doing good. But now as the book comes towards its close, and God's people stand among the rubble of Jerusalem, looking towards the horizon with trepidation, Zechariah tells them about a great and awesome day that is coming.

He uses that phrase eight times in our passage, on that day. So everything, if you like, in chapters 12 and 13 and 14 next time, Zechariah says will all happen on a single day.

We'll think a bit about what that means as we go on. The point is that what seems uncertain and hazy to his people then, is in fact fixed and certain in God's calendar.

He promises that it will happen on a day. So don't stop now. Keep going. Because on that day, the Lord will fulfill all his precious and very great promises to you.

[ 4 : 46 ] Keep hoping in him. Don't give up. That's the message of these chapters. So what is the Lord promising to do on that day to give us so much hope and confidence?

Well, firstly, he says the Lord will defend his people's lives. As his people lift up their eyes and wonder where their help will come from, Zechariah reminds them that their help is in the name of the Lord who made heaven and earth.

This is the oracle, the weighty word of the Lord who, 12 verse 1, stretched out the heavens and founded the earth and formed the spirit of man within him.

So therefore, what he has to say comes with a certainty and assurance that human beings cannot offer each other. Only he spoke and it came to be.

So now he speaks and we know that it will be. What will be then for God's people? Well, when we think of apocalyptic writing in the Bible, probably what comes to mind is visions of battle, judgment, heaven, hell, horses and riders and so on.

[ 6 : 05 ] But actually, apocalyptic writing in the Bible is about revealing the reality behind appearances. That's what the word apocalypse means. Revelation. Pulling back the curtain of heaven to see behind the things that are happening on earth.

And Zechariah is doing that here. He's piling up lots of different and unusual images together to reveal the truth that God will come to his people's defense.

So verse 2, he will make Jerusalem, he says, a cup of staggering to the surrounding peoples. The nations will come to pour God's people out like water and drink them up, only to find that their drink has been spiked.

They will stagger around. Or verse 3, the Lord will make Jerusalem, he says, a heavy stone for all the peoples. All who lift it will surely hurt themselves.

There was a craze when I was in school. Simpler times when people would superglue pound coins to the floor so that whoever came by and tried to lift it would find that it couldn't be moved.

[ 7 : 19 ] Now, the consequence of that was just embarrassment. But trying to lift this heavy stone of God's people will put your back out. Crush your fingers, he says.

God's people didn't look like such a heavy stone to lift and chuck away, but God would make them immovable. Or again, verse 6, the Lord will make the clans of Judah like a blazing pot in the midst of wood, like a flaming torch among sheaves.

Inevitably, this summer, somebody's barbecue will catch some dry grass or wood on a camping trip. And what will happen? The fire devours to the left and the right.

If you were here for our life group study in the book of Judges, one scene you're sure not to have been able to forget, even if you wanted to, was the judge, Samson, catching 300 foxes, tying their tails together and sticking a flaming torch in the knot and setting them loose in his enemy's fields.

They burned down the whole harvest and the orchards. The Lord says he'll make his people like that. They will consume the surrounding peoples like a wildfire, whilst Jerusalem will remain inhabited in its place in Jerusalem.

[ 8 : 43 ] Now, what's the point? That Jerusalem ain't going nowhere. In fact, when her enemies come together to attack, it will be they who stumble and fall, because the Lord will make his people as overpowering a strong drink, immovable as stone, invincible as wildfire.

He will defend their lives. Fast forward into the New Testament and we see that's still his promise to us today as his church.

Think of the way that God's enemies tried to uproot the newborn church out of Jerusalem. Stephen was stoned for having preached that Jesus had died and risen again and we read there arose a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem and they were scattered throughout all the regions of Judea and Samaria except the apostles.

They tried to lift the heavy stone, chuck it away, but they couldn't. The apostles, the gospel witness, remained rooted in its place.

And in fact, as a result of their opposition, the church spread like wildfire left and right, consuming nations and peoples even up to this very day. God's enemies were overpowered in the very act of trying to destroy his people.

[ 10 : 16 ] Sometimes we do know individually as Christians the Lord's protection from danger. I think of our own Anna and her trips to places like Laos and Vietnam and the Lord's protection of his people in those countries and the team as they go to take God's word into places where the gospel is violently opposed.

But Jesus is clear that we are not individually invincible. We may well be hurt or killed for the gospel as Stephen was, and yet the Lord will not let his church, his people on earth, be extinguished.

To put it this way, he will not ever let his Jerusalem become uninhabited. Many Christians were imprisoned and died under the Maoist regime in the 20th century in China, and yet in the space of those 30 years, it's estimated that believers in China grew from about 700,000 to over 10 million. The church continues in places that we imagine the gospel couldn't grow, like North Korea, parts of Nigeria, or Manipur, as we prayed earlier.

Where believers face threats on their lives for placing their trust in the Lord Jesus. Go back 500 years in Scotland and preachers like Patrick Hamilton or George Wyship were burned at the stake for preaching what we take for granted here this evening, the good news of Jesus' death and resurrection.

[ 11 : 55 ] But fast forward 100 years, and the Reformation had taken that same gospel to the very corners of our land, and we tonight stand upon that same witness here in Scotland.

Friends, God makes his church strong when we are weak, overpowering, immovable, invincible, and so we are assured that the light of the gospel in his church will never go out on earth.

An image that will resonate with those of us who have been listening in to our Exodus series in the morning is there in verse 4, Luke. On that day, declares the Lord, I will strike every horse with panic and its rider with madness.

Remember Moses' song in Exodus chapter 15, the horse and its rider he threw in the sea. This is a promise of defense and protection on that scale.

It's an Exodus-shaped deliverance. It's there again in verse 8, on that day the Lord will protect the inhabitants of Jerusalem so that the feeblest among them on that day shall be like David and the house of David shall be like God, like the angel of the Lord going before them.

[ 13 : 20 ] God will so strengthen his people from smallest to greatest that it will be like being guarded again by the pillar of cloud and fire as it led them through the wilderness.

Friends, what's the message? the message is this, we know, we know that the Lord will in every age grant his promised protection to his people because he has saved us and is continuing to save his people through the gospel that we preach of the Lord Jesus Christ.

And of course, we look forward, don't we, to the fullest fulfillment of that promise when Jesus comes to our defense on the last day to finally remove all danger, every opposition before us.

What a day to live in and what a day to look forward to. The Lord will defend his people. But what else? Secondly, on that day, the Lord will melt his people's hearts.

The tone suddenly changes, like in verse 10, where he says, I will pour out on the house of David and inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and please for mercy so that when they look on me, on him whom they have pierced, they shall mourn for him as one mourns for an only child and weep bitterly over him as one weeps over a firstborn.

[ 14 : 53 ] We've had cheering for victory, but now the Lord makes his people cry. He says on that day he'll pour out his spirit and they will weep for what they have done to him.

They have pierced and killed him. Now, this hopefully is where we begin wondering when this day actually is. Sometimes I have conversations with my two older children that go a bit like this.

Which day will it be? Tomorrow. Which day is tomorrow? Monday. Why does it have two names, tomorrow and Monday? Tomorrow is just the name for the next day but the day is called Monday.

So what is today called? Sunday. And then we get to Monday and start all over again because of course by then Monday is called today and tomorrow is Tuesday.

Wednesday. In the same sort of way that we're always living in today there's a sense that God's people always live with that day in view.

[ 16 : 06 ] The day of the Lord. See, for Zechariah he's waiting for a time when God will pour out repentance on his people and they will grieve what they've done metaphorically to pierce the Lord with their sin.

That would be a partial fulfillment wouldn't it of the promise of that day. But it's fulfilled a little more fully when Jesus' body is pierced on the cross so that John in his gospel can write another scripture says they will look on him whom they have pierced.

The Lord incarnate. Christ crucified. We could say also it finds even greater fulfillment on the day of Pentecost when Peter says that all the house of Israel therefore know for certain God has made him both Lord and Christ this Jesus who you crucified.

Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the apostles what shall we do? Peter said repent and be baptised every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the

forgiveness of your sins and ye will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.

They looked through Peter's preaching at Christ upon the cross and grieved his death and their sin that had led him there. The Lord poured out a spirit of grace and they pled for mercy what shall we do to be saved?

[ 17 : 39 ] Indeed on that day it says Zechariah 13 verse 1 there will be a fountain opened up for the house of David and inhabitants of Jerusalem to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness.

And so there was and 3,000 people were added to the number of believers. But the fullest fulfillment of that day is coming with the return of the Lord Jesus as John writes in Revelation chapter 1 behold he is coming with the clouds and every eye will see him even those who pierced him and all tribes of the earth will wail on account of him.

So there is a future census John in which the crying that Zechariah saw will include those who continue to oppose Christ around the world.

He will grieve when they look on him whom they have in their words thoughts and actions pierced as though nailing him to the cross ever since that day.

And so we might ask which day is the day? Is it Zechariah's day? The day that Jesus died? The day of Pentecost? The day of his return? The Bible says yes they all are.

[ 19 : 02 ] Zechariah sees all those days as if they were one day. Like seeing a mountain range in the distance it sort of flattened out against the horizon.

But as God's people have travelled closer and further into that mountain range we perceive the depth of that day in a way that Zechariah didn't. We see what Zechariah saw as one mountain actually has multiple peaks leading up to one great peak which is still ahead of us.

The biblical authors are not arguing with each other about which is the real day. In fact John who wrote the gospel also wrote Revelation. He's not arguing with himself about when we will see the pierced one.

He's saying with Zechariah and the rest of the Bible that the most consequential day in history and the most certain day in history is the day when God has planned by his spirit for his people to look on him whom they have pierced and grieve his death at their hands.

Friends, that day has come and it is coming. In a sense that day is whenever the Lord pours out a spirit of grace on anyone as the death of the Lord Jesus is set before them so that they are moved by the thought of their own sins that as it were pierced him and nailed him upon the cross thrust the spear into his side and being so moved turned to the Lord for mercy to be cleansed of their sin and uncleanness.

[ 20 : 55 ] Is that you tonight? Friends, now is the favourable time. Now is the day of salvation. The Lord has opened up a fountain where we can go and be washed clean of our wrongdoing forever at the very place where we should be hung for high treason.

We look up at a cross where the Son of God was nailed and though we should be nailed there for what we have done, said, and thought against him, instead, he says, come and wash in the water that flowed from his pierced side.

Come and wash the blood of your hands in the blood that he bled for you. If you haven't already, come tonight and wash your soul clean at the foot of the cross.

surely to look on him whom we have pierced by our sin and hear God's message, not of wrath but of mercy, is enough to move us to tears, bitter tears over what we have cost him, joyful tears over our salvation.

what a day to live in, what a day to look forward to. God will melt his people's hearts. And thirdly, on that day and more briefly, the Lord will judge the false prophets' lies.

[ 22 : 30 ] In Zechariah's time, as in every age and generation, there were inevitably false teachers who claimed to speak for God but actually just said what they thought, what was popular or profitable.

But on that day, the Lord says that will all end, 13 verse 2, on that day, declares the Lord of hosts, I will cut off the names of idols from the land and they will be remembered no more.

And I will remove from the land the prophets and spirit of uncleanness. In other words, his people will have a zero-tolerance policy on false teaching.

It's interesting actually, isn't it, that the fate of the false teacher here is the same as the Lord's fate at the hands of his people. See that? Verse 3, being pierced through.

And so, it's as if it were that the cleansing and salvation that would be available through the Lord's being pierced has been forfeited by the false prophets so that they are pierced through themselves. [ 23 : 37 ] Ultimately, that is what is so dangerous about twisting God's message or mishandling his word, that it actually cuts both teachers and hearers off from the saving work of Christ.

They are holding out a fake Christ, half a Christ, but not the real Christ, who was crucified, died, and rose again, who alone can take our place before God and die for our sins.

as an aside, on that day, don't be surprised if your ministers and elders warn you not to listen to certain teachers, preachers, podcasts.

Expect us to be careful about who we ask to come and preach in this pulpit. Very occasionally, expect us to intervene if we think that false teaching is getting in among us.

The best case scenario on that day is the one described in verses 4 to 6, where a former false prophet is asked where he got those wounds, presumably from the beating he got from his parents in verse 3.

[ 24 : 49 ] And he's so ashamed he makes this excuse, I'm no prophet, just a humble farmer. These scars are not no, I've just got them messing around with my mates. No false teaching here.

I've never been a prophet. Repentance. Putting away all falsehood and lying. Humble yourself before the truth of God's word.

It's what we want for false prophets. But failing that, we know a day will come that every mouth will be closed, every lie exposed, every false teacher condemned, Jesus says they will even lie about that day.

Look, here he is. Look, he's over there. Or more pertinently, in our own day, where is this promised coming? Isn't history just ticking along as it always has?

It won't ever end. I don't see Jesus coming back anytime soon. But, says Peter, the day of the Lord will come like a thief. And then the heavens will pass away with a roar, the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed.

[ 26 : 06 ] Friends, while Christians are discouraged and made complacent and led astray by people who claim to speak for God to speak about the truth, that is really good news.

No more false gods named, no more false worship, no more false teaching, only the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

What a day to look forward to. God will defend his people, melt his people's hearts, cut off false teaching, but how will he do that?

How will he do that all in a day? Well, Zechariah confirms how he presses it home. We've touched on it already. Our last point, verses 7 to 9, the good shepherd will be struck.

Lord says, 13, verse 7, awake, O sword, against my shepherd, against the man who stands next to me. We heard last week from Donald in chapter 11 about a few different shepherds, didn't we?

[ 27 : 22 ] Three false shepherds, a doomed flock, and a good shepherd. Remember, the good shepherd played by Zechariah destroyed the three bad shepherds, but the sheep didn't thank him for it, they hated him.

And so he left them to their fate, and the sheep traders paid him pennies to go. Then God sent Zechariah back to play a foolish shepherd instead. So which shepherd is chapter 13 speaking about?

Is it the bad shepherds, the good shepherd, the foolish shepherd being struck? Well, the Lord calls him my shepherd, and the next line in verse seven confirms that he is the man who stands next to me.

That's even more striking if we think of the language of shepherds in the Old Testament is often talking about kings, shepherds over God's people. So replace the word shepherd with the word king, and we get a better sense of who verse seven is about.

Awake, O sword, against my king. Strike the shepherd king, and his people will be scattered. We heard those words not so long ago in Matthew's gospel, on the lips of Jesus, no less, as he and his people walked to the Mount of Olives the night he was betrayed, he said to his people, you will all fall away because of me this night, for it is written, I will strike the shepherd and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.

[ 29 : 05 ] Who does Jesus see here? Himself. The Lord calls for his good shepherd to be struck.

That is, the Lord Jesus to be rejected, suffer and be killed. And the effect of that will be, says Zechariah, that two thirds of the scattered flock will be cut off and perish, but one third will live and

be tested and purified like silver and gold.

You know, often when you hear about religion being talked about on, you know, the radio or TV or in the news, something is said always like religion brings us all together.

It's all about what unites us, isn't it? Friends, Jesus' death, the shepherd's death, will never bring everyone together. Jesus' death divided Jerusalem.

It divided Jewish towns, it divided Greek cities, it divides families, churches, the world. Far from it being a failure that a minority in the land would be saved, the good shepherd's death achieved all God's purposes on that day, both of salvation and of judgment.

[ 30 : 20 ] Remember that this is the flock doomed to slaughter, the sheep who despised the good shepherd. We should be amazed that any sheep would be spared through his death.

we all deserve what Zechariah said, what is to die, let it die, what is to be destroyed, let it be destroyed. But now, says the Lord, his shepherd will be struck so that a third will be kept alive. The good shepherd laid down his life for the sheep, and so he separates his flock, the sheep from the goats, to save a remnant whose faith is purer than twenty-four carat gold, and who call upon his name.

I will say they are my people, says the Lord, and they will say the Lord is my God. So, brothers and sisters, tonight take great heart in the Lord and his promises.

Look to Christ as we fix our eyes on that promised day. Take his promises to heart, trust in his death all the way, and do not give up or grow weary of doing good, for his day is here, and it is coming in all of its fullness, a day when everything that opposes him and his people is overthrown, and we his people are delivered, redeemed, saved once and for all.

[ 32 : 04 ] Let's rest our hope in him as we pray. Let's pray together. good and gracious shepherd, Lord Jesus, we thank you that by your death we are saved, that you, knowing that you would be struck and your sheep would be scattered, went to the cross to be struck, to be pierced, for the sake of our sins, to take upon yourself our death and curse, so that we might receive life and blessing.

Lord, as we look upon you tonight, pierced for our transgressions, we pray that we would be moved deeply to repentance, repentance, that seeing what our sin cost you, that we would deeply hate our sin and turn from it.

Lord, we pray that we might even weep for what you have done for us and for your mercy extended through your suffering and death towards us. Lord, help us, we pray, to live lives that honor you and are worthy of the gospel of our Lord Jesus.

Help us, we pray, to believe no falsehood regarding him. Help us, we pray, to love one another, to serve one another. Help us, we pray, to trust in your protection, even when we feel threatened and ashamed.

Keep us, we pray, preserve us to that last and final day that when we see him come with the clouds of heaven, him who was pierced for us, we might rejoice.

[ 34 : 06 ] This we pray in his name. Amen.