

# The Hope of Israel

## A Sermon on Prophecies Concerning Israel

by

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### 1. Introduction

### 2. The Day of the Lord

- a. The Day of the Lord is a term that pops up throughout the prophets and in virtually every instance, it is referring to final judgment.
  - i. We also see it called the Day of Visitation, or the Day of Wrath, and the reason for this is simply that this is the time where God kicks off this series of Divine judgments near the end of the age. For the unbeliever, this Day is a terrible day.
    1. Amos calls it a day of darkness, or a day of gloom with no brightness in it (Am. 5:18-20).
    2. The prophet Joel speaks of this being a day of destruction from the Almighty, where all the people of the earth tremble in fear. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the great and awesome day of the Lord (Jo. 1:15, 2:1, 2:11, 2:31).
      - a. Joel also depicts many multitudes in what he calls the valley of decision (Jo. 3:14).
      - b. Many take this to be an evangelistic passage, but it refers to final judgment.
    3. Ezekiel also talks about this being a day of clouds and a time of doom for all the nations (Ez. 30:3).

- a. Likewise, the prophet Obadiah speaks of this being a time where the Lord comes to all the nations in judgment (Ob. 1:15).
  - b. What we find then is that this Day of the Lord is indeed a day where God makes good on His promise to judge all the nations of the earth.
- ii. In the New Testament, we are shown this reality with a bit more clarity. We are told this Day will come like a thief in the night, the heavens will pass away with a roar, the elements will be destroyed with an intense heat, and the earth and its works will be burned up (1 Thess. 5:2; 2 Pe. 3:10).
1. Over and over again, the reality being depicted for the unbeliever during this great day of wrath is that it is a horrific and terrible time of judgment.
  2. From the prophets to the Psalms, to the gospels and the epistles, and all the way through the book of Revelation, we find a continual warning of this Day to come.
- b. The Day of the Lord is not a Day of hope for the unbeliever, but for the faithful Israelite and the Gentiles God would call to be His people, the prophets depicted this as a great Day of hope.
- i. We talk about this all the time when we talk about the gospel; we have not been saved only from our sins, but we have been promised that we will be spared on the great and terrible Day of God's wrath.
  - ii. Yet there is also this aspect to judgment on the Day of the Lord that we don't often like to think about because it messes with how we understand love, and grace, and mercy.
    1. On that Day, God promises to vanquish all the enemies of His people—and no one would have understood and cherished this more than the faithful Israelite.
    2. All throughout the history of Israel, they have not only dealt with the corruption of their own people who have sought to destroy them from the inside out, but the constant threat of pagan nations who also desired to destroy them.

3. For the faithful Israelite, the promise bound up in the Day of the Lord is the culmination of God's faithfulness in His promise to bless those who bless Israel and curse those who curse Israel.

### 3. The Salvation of Israel

- a. Zechariah 12-14 is all one unit of prophecy, dealing with these final days of judgment and restoration.
  - i. There are several things that start to fall into place during this time.
    1. The nations are punished not only for their sin and rejection of God, but specifically because they have set themselves against the nation of Israel in order to destroy it.
      - a. Before the nations are gathered to go to war against Israel, one of the things that has to happen first is that the Israelites actually have to be regathered and repossess the Promised Land.
      - b. Zechariah doesn't allude to that here, but he does in chapter 10. We also saw this in the book of Amos (Am. 9:14-15).
    2. When we come to Zechariah 12, all of this is already in mind when the prophet starts to speak of this Day coming, which is the Day of the Lord.
      - a. "It will come about in that day that I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the peoples; all who lift it will be severely injured. All the nations of the earth will be gathered against it" (Zech. 12:3).
      - b. Again in v. 4, "In that day, declares the Lord, I will strike every horse with bewilderment and his rider with madness, but I will watch over the house of Judah."

- c. Then again in v. 6, “In that day I will make the clans of Judah like a firepot among piece of wood and a flaming torch among sheaves, so they will consume on the right hand and on the left all the surrounding peoples, while the inhabitants of Jerusalem again dwell on their own sites in Jerusalem.”
  - d. Then again in v. 8, “In that day the Lord will defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem.”
  - e. Then in v. 9, “In that day I will set about to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.”
- ii. There’s this constant referral to “that day,” which is the Day of the Lord, but notice all that he’s just said about this Day.
  - 1. All the nations of the earth will come to war with Jerusalem, and this is the same war that’s in mind in Rev. 16, referred to as the battle in the valley of Armageddon.
  - 2. But God works to preserve Israel and save them from being slaughtered by all the nations who have risen against them.
- b. “I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn. In that day there will be great mourning in Jerusalem, like the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the plain of Megiddo” (Zech. 12:10-11).
  - i. Notice in v. 10 that he says the Spirit of grace and of supplication comes upon them— but for a very specific purpose: so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced, and they will mourn for Him.

1. God is speaking here and says they will look upon “Me” whom they pierced, and then He says they will mourn for “Him.”
  - a. What Zechariah is alluding to here is the same thing Isaiah spoke of regarding the Suffering Servant in Isaiah 53.
  - b. Israel will look upon Christ, who is God Himself, and recognize they have been the cause of His sufferings—and what gets produced from this is a bitter grief that overcomes all the people of Israel who are left in the land.
  - c. In other words, they’re going to confess their sins and repent, and finally come to embrace their Messiah.
2. “In that day a fountain will be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for impurity. It will come about in that day, declares the Lord of hosts, that I will cut off the names of the idols from the land, and they will no longer be remembered; and I will also remove the prophets and the unclean spirit from the land.”
  - a. Not only do we find that Israel mourns over piercing their own Messiah, but the Lord promises to remove idolatry, false prophets, and even unclean spirits from the land—all because of His promise given to David.
  - b. What’s being depicted here is a time of complete spiritual renewal in Israel.
  - c. In v. 7, Zechariah speaks of the same reality that Isaiah does with the Suffering Servant: God Himself will strike the shepherd, so that the sheep may be scattered; and He will turn His hand against the little ones.

- d. Notice first in v. 8 that two thirds of the land will be but off and perish, but one third will be left—and the result is salvation.
- ii. It is when Israel’s spiritual renewal takes place that it gives way to the return of Christ, which then flows into God’s deliverance from their enemies.
  - 1. “Behold, a day is coming for the Lord when the spoil taken from you will be divided among you” (Zech. 14:1).
    - a. He then speaks of all the nations coming to war against Jerusalem—and the resultant destruction and exile.
    - b. This half that is exiled and the half that remain in Jerusalem are part of the original third that have not died during the time of tribulation.
  - 2. In v. 3, God takes on the role of the Divine warrior who fights for His people, Israel—and this is what the Day of the Lord culminates in.
    - a. “Then the Lord will go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fights on a day of battle. In that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west by a very large valley, so that half of the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south.”
    - b. It is Christ’s actual, physical visitation on earth that the Scriptures repeatedly refer to as this great and terrible day. This is also foretold of in Acts 1:11.
    - c. We don’t get a depiction of all the details of this here, but in terms of the book of Revelation, this is chapter 19 in a nutshell.

- d. Again, this is all part of the hope of Israel that we've seen from chapter 12 of Zechariah all the way through chapter 14.

#### 4. The Millennial Kingdom

- a. When the Millennial Kingdom is brought into being, there are several things that will take place that the Minor Prophets foretold of.
  - i. There are several characteristics of what the Millennium will look like according to the prophets.
    - 1. The first is that the Davidic Throne will be established and Christ Himself will be seated on it.
      - a. Amos 9:11 tells us that in that day, God will raise up the fallen booth of David and wall up its breaches, and raise up its ruins and rebuild it as in the days of old.
      - b. If you remember, we learned from Isaiah 9 that it is Christ Himself who will sit on the throne of David and uphold perfect justice in righteousness, and there will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace.
    - 2. During the time Christ is seated on the throne of David, all the nations will flock to Him.
      - a. Micah 4:1-3 speaks of the nations streaming to Jerusalem, to learn God's ways and walk in His paths, and have Him settle any disputes that arise.
      - b. Malachi 1:11 also says the name of the Lord will be great from where the sun rises to where it sets, meaning every corner of the earth will recognize and honor Christ as Lord.

- c. Zechariah 14:16-17 tells us that any of the Gentiles who didn't die when the nations went to war against Israel will come from year to year to worship the King and celebrate the Feast of Booths.
  - ii. The result of Christ's rule is that as Micah tells us in chapter 4:3-4, the norm for the Israelite will be that they will sit on their land without fear because the Lord dwells among them.
    - 1. Joel 3:16-17 tells us that the Lord will reign from His holy mountain and strangers will no longer pass through the land, meaning they won't go to war with them.
    - 2. Amos 9:13-15 speaks of the fact that the land will yield so much harvest that the hills are dripping with wine; the one who harvests won't be able to keep up with all of the produce.
- b. In every aspect, there will be peace and prosperity and universal worship to Christ in Israel (Zechariah 8:3-5).
  - i. The simple reason for this is that God has promised to be faithful and righteous to them as their God.
    - 1. All that means is that God will not renege on His promises to dwell among them.
    - 2. Remember, they know the promises given to the patriarchs, to David, and to the prophets—so they know of this One who is to come and rule and set all things right.
      - a. They know this One to come will usher in peace under His reign and restore the fallen nation.
      - b. As they look to this day where the fortunes of Israel will be reversed, they look for it with much hope because they see it as part of a Divine reversal.



- ii. We can't even imagine a world now where the effects of sin are slowly being turned back—but imagine what this would mean to the Israelites when these words of hope were given to them.
  - 1. Picture a day where old men and women can sit, and children can play on the streets of the inner city of Chicago, without fear of gang activity.
    - a. No one would have a fear of being robbed or caught up in the crossfire of shootings.
    - b. In a way, this is the promise being given to Israel. Their God will dwell among them and keep the peace, fully and finally.
  - 2. Remember, these are words of hope given to Israel in the midst of judgment from God.
    - a. As these words are being given to them, they are living under the constant strain and tension of sin.
    - b. The sad reality as we've seen through the Minor Prophets is that Israel continually falls under judgment for their rebellion, but the prophets all consistently point them toward a day where this will be no more.

## **5. The New Heavens, the New Earth, and the New Jerusalem**

- a. We have to step outside of the Minor Prophets briefly because the New Heavens and the New Earth isn't mentioned explicitly within them, but the prophet Isaiah speaks of this in chapters 65 and 66.
  - i. Much of what's described in these two chapters of Isaiah is what we've seen thus far today.

1. Leading up to this point, Isaiah describes this time of judgment upon the nations who have come to war with Israel, yet also the salvation and restoration of Israel.
2. He likewise describes the conditions we find in the Millennium, where aspects of the curse are being lifted.
  - a. It will no longer be a thing that infants die, nor old men fail to live out their years.
  - b. Jerusalem will dwell in complete safety and enjoy the fruit of their labors.

But all of this is leading up to the New Creation.
- ii. He says in Isaiah 65:17, “Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind.”
  1. What he’s speaking to here is the same thing we see in Revelation 21, where John sees the new heaven and a new earth, and the holy city of Jerusalem coming down from heaven.
  2. A major feature of this new creation foretold of is the New Jerusalem, which is mentioned several times in the Minor Prophets.
    - a. Joel 3:17 tells us that on the day the Lord dwells on His holy mountain, Jerusalem itself will be holy and no longer will strangers pass through their land.
    - b. Zephaniah 3:14-17 speaks of this day as a day of great joy because God has taken away His judgments against Jerusalem.
    - c. Micah 4:6-8 speaks of this day where the Lord reigns from Zion, and the former dominion of Jerusalem will come.

- d. In the book of Zechariah, we find several mentions of God’s favor and compassion being returned to Jerusalem (Zech. 1:14-17), where the city will know no boundaries because of how richly God has blessed them (Zech. 2:1-5), and where the nations will dwell in their midst and become God’s people (Zech. 2:10-12).
  - e. Zechariah 14:20-21 tells us that at this time, everything will be considered holy.
- b. In the simplest of terms, final judgment has taken place, and at this point, sin, death, and Satan are no more—and this was the ultimate hope of Israel bound up in all of these things.
- i. We see this in Isaiah 66:22-24, “‘For just as the new heavens and the new earth which I make will endure before Me,’ declares the Lord, ‘So your offspring and your name will endure. And it shall be from new moon to new moon, and from sabbath to sabbath, all mankind will come to bow down before Me,’ says the Lord. ‘Then they will go forth and look on the corpses of the men who have transgressed against Me. For their worm will not die and their fire will not be quenched; and they will be an abhorrence to all mankind.’”
    - 1. Likewise, the apostle John tells us in Revelation 21 that when we enter the new creation, there will be no more darkness, for the glory of God will be our light.
    - 2. Beyond this, there will be nothing unclean, and no one who practices abomination and lying shall ever come to the New Jerusalem, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life.
  - ii. There shall be no more tears, no more death, nor mourning, nor crying, nor even pain, why? For the first things have passed away, and all things new have come.

1. This was the hope of Israel: freedom from the curse, but more than this, dwelling with God in perfect unity and purity for all eternity.
  - a. The New Heavens and the New Earth, and the New Jerusalem will be a place of immense beauty and joy that will never be dull to us.
  - b. This is what I've been laboring to show you through the prophets—because our hope is bound up in the hope of Israel.
2. Israel's hope ultimately folds into the hope of the world, and particularly, the hope we have in the eternal kingdom of God.
  - a. We know that when the Day of the Lord comes, we will not be swept up in wrath like the unbeliever, but neither will you and I go through the Millennium like the Israelites and whoever else lives during this time.
  - b. 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18 and 1 Corinthians 15:50-57 tells us that when Christ descends from heaven, we will be caught up in the air with those who are dead in Christ and put on immortality.
  - c. 1 Corinthians 6:2-3 likewise tells us that we will have authority over the world and even angels to judge them.
  - d. But we will still be waiting for that Final Day when where the culmination of all these things leads us into God's eternal kingdom, and this is a thing of great hope.

## 6. Conclusion