

8. Verse 9 brings this context to its climax as it proclaims the singularly great outcome of Yahweh's promised theophany. It unites the entire revelation of this theophanic day by spotlighting the Lord's ultimate goal in His coming. This "day of Yahweh" would follow the pattern of its predecessors as a day of divine retribution, deliverance and restoration, but it would also be *unique* among them in that it was going to accomplish with full finality what those counterparts only prefigured and presaged. This divine intervention would see the establishment of the long-promised and long-awaited kingdom; judgment, deliverance, purging, ingathering and the Lord's return to dwell in Zion would be realized in truth as He at last took His throne as the king over all the earth (14:9a).
- a. As a starting point, it's worth noting that some have struggled with the idea of God *becoming* king as it seems to call His sovereignty into question. How can God be sovereign and not be king? Two related considerations are important here:
- 1) First of all, the issue of divine sovereignty as such doesn't enter into this passage and its meaning. God has always been sovereign over His creation, but He hasn't always been *king* in the sense indicated here. This becomes obvious when one regards Yahweh's kingship the way the Scripture does, namely as an aspect of salvation-historical fulfillment.
 - 2) The concept of divine kingship is an important component of the scheme of the salvation history and its fulfillment in Christ. Within that scheme, God's kingship doesn't speak so much to divine sovereignty as to eschatology: *God's kingship is about the creation attaining its foreordained destiny in relation to its Creator*. In that sense, God was not king until He became king in Jesus Christ. The coronation of the Creator-God occurred with the coronation of the Son (cf. 14:9-11 with 9:9-17).

A summary consideration of the salvation-history (which is Israel's history) reinforces the point: Following the fall and the creation's alienation from God, He initiated the process of restoring His creation to Himself by making a covenant with Abraham that he would be His instrument of reconciliation. This covenant relationship and charge passed to Israel as the Abrahamic seed. The point is this: Yahweh was king in Israel, not because He is sovereign, but because of the *covenant relationship* He'd established with that nation. He was uniquely Israel's *king* even as He was uniquely Israel's *God*. Yahweh had taken Israel to Himself and chosen to love and lead them as their king; so Israel was obligated to submit to her king in loving devotion (cf. Deuteronomy 7:1-10, 33:1-5). *Relational intimacy was at the heart of Yahweh's kingship over Israel* (ref. Deuteronomy 6:1-15, 10:12-11:32; Jeremiah 11:1-8; Daniel 9:1-10; etc.), and thus the era of the Judges – an era of Israel's deepening apostasy – was characterized as a time when the nation *had no king*. The point of this indictment was not that there was no human king in Israel, but that *Yahweh Himself* wasn't king. And He wasn't king in the sense that the sons of Israel had departed from Him, renouncing Him in their hearts: *Everyone did what was right in his own eyes* (Judges 17:6, 21:25).

God's covenant relationship with Israel made Him Israel's king, but His kingship never existed in truth; His subjects were always estranged from Him such that they actually served themselves as "king." But as the Israelite *kingdom* prefigured another kingdom – the true kingdom of God promised by all the prophets, so Yahweh's *kingship* looked to the coming of that kingdom. One day He would be Israel's king in truth, and that would come about when Israel became *Israel* in truth. And when Israel became truly Israel, then she would fulfill her identity as the seed of Abraham and the nations would come to know Israel's God and enter into His blessing. *In that day, Yahweh would become King of all the earth.*

Read through the lens of the Israelite salvation history, the meaning of Zechariah's proclamation is both obvious and supremely glorious. While the prophet's indication of Yahweh's *future* kingship doesn't in any way argue against His sovereignty, kingship here is not a synonym for divine sovereignty. Indeed, reading it that way actually forfeits its meaning and contribution to the context. *Most importantly, it strips the statement of its christological significance:* Zechariah was affirming that Yahweh's promise to usher in His kingdom (and so become king over all the earth) would be fulfilled; He would show Himself faithful to His covenant oath to Abraham and David. And the coming of the kingdom meant more than a son of David on Israel's throne; *it meant the end of Israel's exile.* And the end of Israel's exile meant deliverance from her enemies, purging of her uncleanness, the restoration of Zion as Yahweh's dwelling place and His return to be with His people forever.

- b. Thus the promise of Yahweh's kingship was the pledge of true and full reconciliation resulting in the unqualified, mutual devotion of king and subjects; *Yahweh's kingship would mean the eradication of all other objects of devotion.* And inasmuch as all such allegiances (idols) are expressions of man's falseness in his alienation from God, the eradication of all other "gods" means the elimination of falseness as such: In that day, the Lord would be *one* and His name *one* (14:9b). And when in this manner Yahweh became King *in Israel*, He would also become King *in all the earth* because Israel's faithful devotion – its authentic sonship – would lead the nations to know the one living God (cf. 8:18-23, 2:1-12).

In the day when Yahweh established His kingdom and kingship, He would become *Lord* in the hearts and minds of His image-sons: In that day there would be no other "gods" or "lords"; Yahweh will have purged the idols from the land (ref. again 5:1-11, 9:1-10, 3:1-5). Thus His coronation as King means the fulfillment of His oath to Abraham: *I will be your God and you will be My people* (cf. Genesis 17:1-8 with Leviticus 26:1-12; Jeremiah 11:1-8; Ezekiel 36:16-28; Hosea 1-2; also Zechariah 2:1-11, 8:7-8, 13:1-9). It also means the fulfillment of the *Shema*, which expressed the essence of Israel's obligation to her King (Deuteronomy 6:4ff): Yahweh is *One*, and therefore the God of all the earth, not just Israel. And He chose Abraham (and so Israel) for the sake of the whole world and its restoration to Him. Thus Israel was to love Yahweh with heart, soul and strength; by doing so, the world would come to love Him in the same way.

- c. This “day of Yahweh” would have its climax in His royal coronation; He was coming to be crowned king of all the earth – the King of kings. And His kingship would not be limited to human beings, but would extend to the whole creation. For man’s alienation from God implicated the created order; if the human race needed to be brought under Yahweh’s kingship, so did the rest of the creation. If men needed to partake in the living waters flowing out of Zion, so did the natural order; for the whole creation, death needed to be swallowed up in life.

And so Zechariah treated the Lord’s coronation as king in terms of its effect on the earth and its inhabitants: *He focused, not on the **fact** of Yahweh’s kingship, but its **fruit***. And the preeminent fruit of His coronation was to be Zion’s exaltation as His royal dwelling place and the seat of His throne (14:10). Zechariah’s imagery depicts Zion as rising above its surroundings as the whole land of Judah “*from Geba to Rimmon*” is made like a plain. In Hebrew, the expression is, “*like the Arabah*,” which likely refers to the depression which runs from Mount Hermon in the north, through the Jordan Valley and to the Red Sea in the south. This long depression is notable for having within it the lowest point on earth’s surface, so that Zechariah’s depiction captures the supreme loftiness of Jerusalem’s exaltation by contrasting it with an image representing the lowest of places.

The reference to the Arabah highlights the *degree* of Zion’s exaltation and Geba and Rimmon indicate its *uniqueness*. For, while these two towns here represent the northern and southern boundaries of Judah, they also stood at the northern and southern limits of Judah’s hill country. The point is that Mount Zion isn’t unique in Israel; Judea contains many such elevated sites, *predominately in the region between Geba and Rimmon*. And so Zechariah’s proclamation that all the land from Geba to Rimmon was to become like the Arabah emphasizes that Zion’s exaltation would be unique; no other lofty places would remain alongside her.

Once again it ought to be obvious that this imagery should not be taken literally. The point here is *theological* and not geological or topographical. That is, the issue in this prophecy isn’t changes in the landscape of Judea, but the unmatched glory of Zion as the Lord’s eschatological habitation and the seat of His throne. The Scripture employed this sort of imagery to speak of Yahweh’s *heavenly dwelling* (cf. Isaiah 6:1, 57:14-15, 66:1), and it is drawn upon here to signify that the Lord has now returned to Zion to dwell there as the earth’s enthroned king.

In that day, heaven and earth were going to merge as Yahweh’s sanctuary descended from the heavenly realms to earth to assume its role as the true and everlasting habitation of God with His people. Zion was to be singularly exalted, *but unto the goal of embracing the whole earth*. When the Lord restored Zion, she who had been stripped of her children in her adultery would again bear offspring – this time, faithful offspring for Yahweh drawn from all the peoples of the earth (cf. Isaiah 50-54 and Daniel 2, 7 with Revelation 21-22; cf. also Zechariah 8:18-23; Isaiah 2:1-4; note also the transformation of the Abrahamic promise – Genesis 13:14-18, 15:18 with Romans 4:13 and Hebrews 11:8-10; cf. also Matthew 5:3-5).

Thus, to treat verses 9-10 literally and restrict them to the physical land of Israel (Palestine) is to miss the meaning of the imagery. *Even more, it is to set this verse in antithesis to Zechariah's larger prophecy and the overall Old Testament prophetic witness.* For the prophets explained the Lord's eschatological mission in terms of creational and even cosmic renewal – a new heavens and earth. When Yahweh finally intervened on Zion's behalf, it would be for the sake of restoring the whole creation to Himself. And so, while Zechariah's imagery appropriately focuses on the exaltation of Jerusalem (Zion) as it represented Yahweh's dwelling place, Zechariah's wider prophecy (together with the other prophets) emphasizes the fact that Zion's exaltation would entail global restoration and ingathering; again, when the Lord at last became king in Zion, He would become King over the whole earth (ref. again 2:1-11, 6:9-15, 8:1-23, 9:9-10; cf. Psalm 2, 48:1-2; Isaiah 11:1-12, 49:1-6, 54:1-55:5, 65:17-19; Daniel 2:1-45; etc.).

- d. Zion was destined for exaltation as Yahweh's everlasting dwelling place, but the fullness of her glory was that her children would be restored to her: The Lord was going to dwell in Zion with His people, and Zechariah identified this outcome with the *eradication of the curse* (14:11). Though the natural inclination is to interpret this in terms of the creational curse, the contextual meaning is the curse upon Israel (and so Zion) manifest in the nation's *exile* (cf. Isaiah 43:28 in the context of 43:14-44:5). This was the curse threatened by Moses – the curse he indicated would indeed come upon Israel in the future when they departed from Yahweh (Deuteronomy 28-29). Moses predicted the curse of exile, but also pledged the end of this curse in connection with Israel's repentance and Yahweh's return to Zion (Deuteronomy 30). And what Moses pledged Zechariah affirmed nearly a thousand years later: Zion was to be restored with her children dwelling securely because Yahweh is her king in her midst (cf. again Zechariah 1-4, 8).

The contextual concern is the curse upon Israel, but this necessarily implicates the curse upon the whole creation. For Israel – as the Abrahamic seed – was God's elect “son,” chosen by Him to be His instrument of blessing for the world. Thus Israel's restoration implies the realization of the Lord's purpose for His creation:

- When Israel at last became Israel *in truth*, it would then fulfill its calling to mediate Yahweh's blessing to all the earth's families: In terms of Zechariah's imagery, the removal of Zion's curse meant that living water would flow out from her to the east and the west. And this reconciliation and renewal were to culminate in a new heavens and new earth: the restoring of the whole creation to its Creator (cf. Isaiah 35 with 59-66).
- Israel was destined to fulfill its identity and calling, but in Yahweh's *Servant* – the True Israel and Branch of David (Isaiah 49:1ff). He would secure Israel's restoration in Himself so that the restored remnant might carry out its mission to the world (cf. Matthew 28:16-20; Acts 1:1-8). In and through Him, Yahweh was going to pour out His blessing on all the families of the earth – indeed, on the whole creation (Ephesians 1:9-10).