



# Prophetic oracles regarding the Day of the Lord in Zechariah 14:1-9 and their implications for the Church today

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## Abstract

The article examined the prophetic oracles regarding 'the Day of the Lord' as found in Zechariah 14:1-9 and its implications for the church today. It closely scrutinized the phrase, הַיְהוָה יוֹם-בָּא לַיהוָה, *hinnəh yôm-b<sup>10</sup> LAdonay* (Behold, a day of the LORD is coming), which conveys a serious warning in Scriptures that must not be taken for granted. The day is of great importance to the Church because it brings to climax God's program of salvation for His people. The consistency of this prophetic utterance of the Day of the Lord, as proclaimed by other prophets, is traced systematically to buttress Zechariah's declaration. The writer gives the historical background of the book of Zechariah, the Hebrew text, along with the literal translation of Zechariah 14:1-9, a careful exegetical and theological analysis of the pericope is also provided with the exegetical discoveries made. The day of the Lord in this article is considered as a special time in history which God has kept in His power to judge the nations, bring to full completion His purpose for Israel as a nation, the Church and to user in His sovereign reign. On this Day, the Lord comes not as a lamb but as 'the Lion of the Tribe of Judea', as 'the Mighty Warrior' and as 'the King of kings.'

**Keywords:** Prophetic, oracles, day of the Lord, Zechariah, Church.

## Introduction

The reoccurring phrase in Zechariah 14, הַיְהוָה יוֹם-בָּא לַיהוָה, *hinnəh yôm-b<sup>10</sup> LAdonay* 'Behold, a Day of the Lord is coming' is such that awakens the curiosity of any diligent student of Eschatology and makes him or her want to understand what the day is all about. The fact that some Christians are ignorant of Biblical prophecies concerning the 'Day of the Lord' is obvious. Just like believers in Thessalonica in Paul's day, who were ignorant of what happens to dead believers (1 Thessalonians 4:13), some Christians today still exhibit ignorance of the 'Day of the Lord' by their complacent lifestyle, conduct, and negligence to in-depth study of Scriptures, especially as regards 'Day of the Lord'. Several interpretations and teaching regarding the coming of the Lord and events associated with it has pervaded the contemporary Church thereby leading many into confusions



Grudem (2018). There have been several attempts to predict a specific date when Jesus Christ will return but such predictions have been proved to be false with the passage of time. It is important to note here that “the intricate details of prophecy must be related without contradictions” (Pentecost, 1958).

Furthermore, the new generation gospel preachers who have become infatuated with prosperity gospel would rather appeal to the lust of their congregation instead of awakening in them the consciousness of the coming ‘Day of the Lord’ (Batchelor, 2020). Nonetheless, God who is the architect of the ages has not left the church in the dark as touching His plan for the future. He has made known in details His program and purpose for the ages, past, present and future and they are all well documented in the Holy Book for our learning. There are a number of major events such as the rapture, the resurrection of the dead, Christ’s second coming, the judgment, millennial reign of Christ, are unignorably features of the ‘Day of the Lord’ which has great implications for the Church, believers need to understand them. The plain truth is that Eschatological prophecies unlike other major areas of theological discourse have suffered much in the hands of interpreters. These include those whose interpretations, though based on Scripture, but have conflicting views (Grudem,2018). This therefore necessitates the need for sound theologians with both spiritual and intellectual endowments to diligently engage in in-depth study to provide proper guidance and awareness for the contemporary church as the soon coming ‘Day of the Lord’ approaches.

Hosea in his day identified a serious problem that up to the current era is still affecting the church; ‘My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge...’ (Hosea 4:6 NKJV). Today’s church is flooded with the knowledge of prosperity messages, seed-faith, seed-sowing, how to make it, how to destroy one’s enemies, prayer of vengeance, miracles, healings, among others, but is starved of the knowledge of prophetic oracles regards the ‘Day of the Lord’ and the events that would characterize the coming of the Lord Spencer (2017). Messages coming out from preachers from countless pulpits are bereft of teachings regarding the coming of the Lord and how saints can get themselves ready. Several preachers love to preach on topics that stimulate the emotions of their congregations, but rarely teach on eschatological topics that would challenge Christians to “watchful living” (Lahaye & Jenkins, 2001). This obvious omission of analytical, comprehensive and accurate teachings about the ‘Day of the Lord’ has kept the people of God in ignorance. This perennial ignorance exposes the church to the possibility of being taken on aware when the ‘Day of the Lord’ comes and thereby suffer the fate of the people in the days of Noah (Genesis 7:1-24).

## **Research Methodology**

Taking into cognizance that the study is exegetical and theological in nature, the qualitative method was adopted. Also, descriptive cum hermeneutical methods were adopted to provide illumination on these neglected prophetic oracles regards ‘Day of the Lord’. Materials were sourced from books, journals and online publications. An inductive study of English and Hebrew texts was followed in attempt to buttress the actual concept of ‘Day of the Lord’ as portrayed by Zechariah in his prophetic oracles.

## **Exegetical and theological analysis of Zechariah 14:1-9**

### **Historical background of the Book of Zechariah**

The historical background of the Book of Zechariah is that of divine intervention and fulfillment of prophecy. Zechariah was the grandson of Iddo, who is mentioned in Nehemiah 12:4,16 as the head of one of the priestly families that returned from the exile Dummelow (1908). About 538 BCE. the king of Persian by name Cyrus, issued a decree that all who desired to return to Jerusalem to



rebuild the temple were permitted to do so (2 Chronicles 36:22,23; Ezra. 1:1-4). In response to this decree close to 50,000 exiles availed themselves of this compassionate policy (Pfeiffer,1962).

There is a noticeable difference between Haggai and his contemporary, Zechariah. If Haggai was the builder, responsible for the solid structure of the new Temple, Zechariah was more like the artist, adding colorful windows with their symbolism, gaiety and light. To make sure that their symbolism is rightly understood an interpreting angel acts as guide, adding in some cases a message that goes far beyond what could be deduced from the visions (Constable,2015).

### **Authorship of the Book of Zechariah**

Most scholars agree that Zechariah is the author of the book named after him (2015). 'The name Zechariah, זְכַרְיָה (Z'karyah, literally means Yahweh remembers) was a common one among the Israelites, which identified at least 27 different individuals in the Old Testament' (Young, 1960). Like the prophets Jeremiah in (1:1), and in Ezekiel (1:3), Zechariah was not only a prophet but also a member of a priestly family. 'He was born in Babylonia and was among those who returned to Judah in 538/537 BCE, with Zerubbabel and Joshua' (New International Version, 2022). He became a leading priest in the restoration community succeeding his grandfather (or ancestor), Iddo, who also returned from captivity in 536 BCE as the leader of his priestly family (Nehemiah 12:4, 16). Zechariah's father, Berechiah (1:1, 7), evidently never became prominent Constable (2015).

A very few among scholars disagree with Zechariah's authorship of the entire Book. (2015) This they claim is based on some clear differences between the two sections of the book. The first section (chapters. 1-8) contains unmistakable references to time and place of which are attached, by a series of three references, to Zechariah (1:1, 7; 7:1). In the second part, (Zechariah 9-14) the name of Zechariah does not appear and there are no clear allusions of an historical nature – most notably an absence of any indication of the completion of the Temple as might be expected from the occupation with the Temple in the first part of the book. The possibility that the book of Zechariah is a unity must not be lightly dismissed because most claims for alternative authorship of chapters. 9-14 are generally inconclusive (Bruce & Ellis,1979).

### **Purpose and Themes**

Zechariah ministered to the restoration community to motivate those Jews to finish rebuilding the temple and to rededicate themselves to Yahweh with the prospect of His blessing. The central theme of the book is encouragement and hope (Bell,1990). The key to this hope is the coming of Messiah and his overthrow of ungodly forces and establishment of His kingdom on earth. The prophet is concerned to comfort his discouraged and pessimistic compatriots, who was in the process of rebuilding their temple and restructuring their community but who view their efforts as making little difference in the present and offering no hope for the future (Merrill, n.d.). This prophet dealt with the future of Israel, and particularly its distant, eschatological future, to an extent that surpassed the other Old Testament prophets (cf. 12:1-3, 9; 14:1-5, 16-21). His revelations concerning a future day of the Lord are numerous. 'What former prophets revealed at length, Zechariah epitomizes for us in terse sentences or even clauses' (Feinberg, 1976). This book also contains many messianic prophecies (cf. 3:8-9; 6:12-13; 9:9-10, 14; 11:12-13; 13:7; 14:4, 9, 16).

Particularly prominent in the book is the Messianic element. With the exception of Isaiah, there is no other prophet whose book contains such a wealth and variety of this element, not only in proportion to the total amount of material offered, but also as a sum total of passages. Constable



(2015) asserts that ‘few books of the Old Testament are as difficult of interpretation as the Book of Zechariah; no other book is as Messianic.’

### Date of Writing

According to Baldwin (n.d:60) Zechariah's inspired preaching began in the eighth month of 520 BCE (1:1). His eighth month night visions followed three months later in 520 BCE (1:7), when he was a young man (2:4). He delivered the messages in chapters 7—8 in 518 BCE (7:1). Nehemiah mentioned Zechariah as the head of a priestly family when Joiakim, who succeeded Joshua, was high priest (Nehemiah 12:12, 16). This may have been as late as during the reign of Artaxerxes I (465-424 BCE).

### Background to the Text

‘As one of three postexilic prophets along with Haggai and Malachi, Zechariah ministered to the small remnant of Jews who had returned to Judah to rebuild the temple and their nation.’ (NIV life application study Bible, 2005). With spectacular apocalyptic imagery and graphic detail, Zechariah told of the Messiah, the one whom God would send to rescue His people. This fourteenth chapter of Zechariah’s prophecy goes on to portray the eventual triumph of the Messiah over all the earth and His reign over God’s people. It serves as a message of warning to those who are prone to forsaking the Lord, which was the basis of their being exiled to a foreign nation. It is also a message of hope to those who consistently follow YAHWEH and waits for His eternal kingdom and reign (Lindsey, 1985).

### Hebrew Text and Literal Translation of Zechariah 14:1-9

VERSES	LITERAL TRANSLATION	TEXT IN HEBREW
1a	Behold, a day of the LORD is coming	הִנֵּה יוֹם־בָּא לַיהוָה
1b	when the spoil taken from you	וְחֶלֶק שְׁלָלְךָ
1c	will be divided in the midst of you.	בְּקִרְבְּךָ:
2a	For I will gather all the nations	וְאַסַּפְתִּי אֶת־כָּל־הַגּוֹיִם
	against Jerusalem to battle,	אֶל־יְרוּשָׁלַם לְמִלְחָמָה
2b	and the city shall be taken	וְנִלְכְּדָה הָעִיר
2c	and the houses plundered and the women ravished;	וְנִשְׁסוּ הַבָּתִּים וְהַנְּשִׂים תִּשְׁגַּלְנָה
2d	half of the city shall go into exile,	וְיָצָא חֲצִי הָעִיר בַּ
2e	but the rest of the people shall not be cut off from the city.	וְיִתֵּר הָעָם לֹא יִקְרַת מִן־הָעִיר:
3a	Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations	וְיָצָא יְהוָה וְנָלַחַם בַּגּוֹיִם הָהֵם
3b	as when he fights on a day of battle.	כַּיּוֹם הַלְחָמוֹ בְּיוֹם קָרְבַּ:
4a	On that day his feet shall stand	וְעָמְדוּ רַגְלָיו בְּיוֹם־הַהוּא
4b	on the Mount of Olives	עַל־הַר הַזֵּיתִים
4c	which lies before Jerusalem on the east;	אֲשֶׁר עַל־פְּנֵי יְרוּשָׁלַם מִקֶּדֶם
4d	and the Mount of Olives shall be split in two	וְנִבְקַע הַר הַזֵּיתִים מִחֲצָיו



4e	from east to west	מִזְרָחָה וְיָמָה
4f	by a very wide valley;	גִּיא גְדוֹלָה מְאֹד
4g	so that one half of the Mount	וּמִשׁ חֲצִי הַהָר
4h	shall withdraw northward, and the other half southward.	צָפוֹנָה וְחֲצִי־נֹגְבָה:
5a	And the valley of my mountains shall be stopped up,	וְנִסְתָּם גִּיא־הָרִי
5b	for the valley of the mountains shall touch the side of it;	כִּי־יִגִּיעַ גִּי־הָרִים אֶל־אֶצֶל
5c	and you shall flee as you fled from the earthquake	וְנִסְתָּם כַּאֲשֶׁר נִסְתָּם מִפְּנֵי הַרְעַשׁ
5d	in the days of Uzzi'ah king of Judah.	בְּיָמֵי עֲזִיָּה מֶלֶךְ־יְהוּדָה
5e	Then the LORD your God will come,	וּבָא יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵי
5f	and all the holy ones with him.	כָּל־קְדוֹשִׁים עִמּוֹ:
6a	On that day there shall be	וְהָיָה בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא לֹא־יְהִיָּה
6b	neither cold nor frost.	אוֹר יְקָרוֹת יִקְפְּאוּן:
7a	And there shall be continuous day (it is known to the LORD),	וְהָיָה יוֹם־אֶחָד הוּא יִוָּדַע לַיהוָה
7b	not day and not night,	לֹא־יוֹם וְלֹא־לַיְלָה
7c	for at evening time there shall be light.	וְהָיָה לַעֲתֵּר־עֶרֶב יְהִי־אֹר:
8a	On that day	וְהָיָה בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא
8b	living waters shall flow out from Jerusalem,	יֵצְאוּ מִמֵּי־חַיִּים מִירוּשָׁלַם
8c	half of them to the eastern sea	חֲצִים אֶל־הַיָּם הַקְּדֹמוֹנִי
8d	and half of them to the western sea;	וְחֲצִים אֶל־הַיָּם הַאֲחֵרוֹן
8e	it shall continue in summer as in winter.	בְּקִיץ וּבְחֹרֶף יְהִיָּה:
9a	And the LORD will become king over all the earth;	וְהָיָה יְהוָה לְמֶלֶךְ עַל־כָּל־הָאָרֶץ
9b	on that day the LORD will be one	בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא יְהִיָּה יְהוָה אֶחָד
9c	and his name one.	וּשְׁמוֹ אֶחָד:

### The Battle against Jerusalem (Zechariah 14:1–2)

In verse 1a the phrase הִנֵּה יוֹם־בָּא לַיהוָה (Behold, a day of the LORD is coming) conveys the idea that there comes a day which is exclusively known to the Lord, inasmuch as He alone brings it to pass, and belongs to Him Friedrich and Franz (2002). The word יוֹם, yom, 'day' is a noun, common, singular, masculine, the day in prophetic literature designates any time when Yahweh steps into the arena of human events to effect his purposes Merrill (1994). The question whether the day is going to be a 24 hours period or long period of time need not arise, because in the New testament (2 Peter 3:8) clearly states that 'with the Lord one day is as a thousand years'. Allen notes that this day will at first bring calamity or destruction upon Israel; but this calamity will provide occasion for the Lord to display His divine power and glory, by destroying the enemies of Israel and saving His people. The nations issue the ultimate challenge to the Lord in that they ravage and despoil His



people and the city which He has chosen as His dwelling place on earth Allen (1972). The prophet commences directly with the main fact, in a most vivid description, and only gives the explanation afterwards in verse. 2a. יִפְּאֵרְתִּי (For I will gather) connotes that the Lord gathers all nations together to war against Jerusalem, and gives up the city into their power, that they may conquer it, and let lose all their blood thirstiness upon it, plundering the houses and ravishing the women (cf. Isaiah 13:16, where the same thing is affirmed of Babylon). Just as in the Chaldaean conquest the people had been obliged to wander into captivity, so will it be now, though not all the people, but only the half of the city. The remaining portion will not be cut off out of the city, i.e., be transported thence, as was the case at that time, when even the remnant of the nation was carried into exile (2 Kings 25:22). It is obvious at once from this, that the words do not refer to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans, as Theodoret, Jerome, and others have supposed (Friedrich & Franz, 2002).

### **The Lord comes to the help of His people (Zechariah 14:3–5)**

The Lord will go in to fight against those nations that have fought against Jerusalem. The word לַחֵם, *lacham*, a primary root meaning to feed on, figuratively to consume; by implication to battle (as destruction), devour, eat, fight, overcome, prevail, make war is used to describe the fact that the Lord will fight those nations and conquered it Strong (1996). יְיָ יִגֹּד, as the day, i.e., as on the day, of His fighting, to which there is added, for the purpose of strengthening, His feet touch the mountain, it splits in half so that a large valley is formed Friedrich and Franz (2002). ‘All the nations against Jerusalem to battle is a picture of a multinational army assembling to attack Jerusalem’ (David & Howard, 2002). According to Walter (1996) The attacking nations will ransack Jerusalem. This is not a hit-and-run raid, but with intent to subdue and completely take control.

The splitting of the mountain in verse 4d וְנִבְקַע, *v<sup>n</sup>ibqa*’ (be divided) is the effect of the earthquake under the footsteps of the Lord, before whom the earth trembles when He touches it (cf. Exodus 19:18; Judges 5:5; Psalm 68:8; Nahum. 1:5, etc.). The more precise definition of the situation of the Mount of Olives, viz., “before Jerusalem eastwards,” is not introduced with a geographical purpose—namely, to distinguish it from other mountains upon which olives trees grow—but it is connected with the means employed by the Lord for the salvation of His people, for whom He opens a way of escape by splitting the mountain in two. According to Friedrich and Franz (2002:618-623) the mountain is split מִתְּחִלָּתוֹ מִזְרְחָהּ וְיָמָה, from the half (i.e., the midst) of it to the east and to the west, this implies that a gap will created, which runs from the center of the mountain both eastwards and westwards; so that the mountain split in a latitudinal manner, one half (as is added to make it still more clear) removing to the south, the other to the north, and a great valley opening between them.

Into this valley the half of the nation that is still in Jerusalem will flee. The description of the valley in verse 4f, גֵּיא גְדוֹלָה מְאֹד, *geey’ g<sup>e</sup>dolah m<sup>e</sup>’od*, ‘by a very wide valley’, is with the accusative of direction. Keil and Delitzsch says that:

This valley is not the valley of the *Tyropaeon*, or the valley between Moriah and Zion, but the valley which has been formed by the splitting of the Mount of Olives; and God calls the two mountains which have been formed through His power out of the Mount of Olives *hârai*, ‘my mountains.’ Nor is it connected with the valley of Jehoshaphat; for the opinion that the newly-formed valley is merely an extension of the valley of Jehoshaphat has no foundation in the text, and is not in harmony with the direction taken by the new valley—namely, from east to west. The explanatory clause which follows in verse 5b, אֶל אַצְלֵה, *’el ’azal*, “for the (newly-formed) valley of the mountains shall reach the side of it” shows that the flight of the people into the valley is not to be understood as



signifying that the valley will merely furnish the fugitives with a level road for escape, but that they will find a secure place of shelter in the valley. The phrase, אֶל אַצֵּל, *El 'Azal* has been taken by different commentators, in an appellative sense to mean, 'to very near,' which Koehler interprets as signifying that the valley will reach to the place where the fugitives are. This would be to Jerusalem, for that was where the fugitives were then. But if Zechariah had meant to say this, he could not have spoken more obscurely. *'Azal*, the form in pause for *'ātsēl*, as we may see by comparing 1 Chronicles 8:38 and 9:44 with 1 Chronicles 8:39 and 9:43 is only met with elsewhere in the form אֶצֵּל, not merely as a preposition, but also in the name בֵּית־הָאֶצֵּל, and is here a proper name, as most of the ancient translators perceived, —namely, a contracted form of בֵּית־הָאֶצֵּל, since בֵּית is frequently omitted from names of places constructed with it. This place is to be sought for, according to Mic. 1:11, in the neighborhood of Jerusalem (Friedrich & Franz, 2002:618-623).

In verse 5c the phrase, וְנִסְתַּמְּוּ כַּאֲשֶׁר נִסְתַּמְּוּ מִפְּנֵי הָרָעַשׁ, *v<sup>e</sup>nasthem ka'aser nasthem mipene hara'as*, "and you shall flee as you fled from the earthquake", is a comparison of the flight to the flight from the earthquake in the time of king Uzziah, to which reference is made in Amos 1:1. This is intended to express not merely the swiftness and universality of the flight, but also the cause of the flight,—namely, that they do not merely fly from the enemy, but also for fear of the earthquake which will attend the coming of the Lord. In the last clause of verse 5 the object of the coming of the Lord is indicated. He has not only gone forth to fight against the enemy in Jerusalem, and deliver His people; but He comes with His holy ones, 'כָּל־קֳדֹשִׁים, *kal q<sup>d</sup>oshiym*, "all the holy ones" here may include both believers and angels, they will accompany the Lord when He comes to perfect His kingdom by means of the judgment, and to glorify Jerusalem (NIN Study Bible, 2002:1446)

### **An Unusual and Unique Day (Zechariah 14:6–7)**

In verse 6b the word, אור, *'owr*, is translated in the RSV Bible as cold and frost, but in the NIV it is translated as light. The truth that is being revealed here is that the presence of God's glory will give light to the whole universe, and there will no longer be any difference between day and night, as was explained in verse 7, cf. Revelation 21:23-25 (Adeyemo, 2006:1091). The coming of the Lord will produce a change on the earth. The light of the earth will disappear. The way in which לא אור יהיה אור, *lo' yih<sup>e</sup>yeh 'owr*, 'there shall neither be light' is to be understood is that in that day the light shall not be clear nor dark. This is a description of the Day of judgment, in which, in the presence of the Lord Almighty who is Light, all earthly light will grow pale. So it should be understood that the phrase אור יקרזות יקפאון, (neither cold nor frost) consequently, designate the transitory or disappearing of the brightness of the shining stars, answering to the prophetic announcement, that on the day of judgment, sun, moon, and stars will lose their brightness or be turned into darkness (Joel 4:15; Isaiah 13:10; Ezekiel 32:7, 8, Matthew 24:29; Revelation 6:12). In verse 7 this day is still more clearly described: first, as solitary in its kind; and secondly, as a marvelous day, on which the light dawns at evening time.

### **The Lord Reigns Over All the Earth (Zechariah 14:8–9)**

Friedrich and Franz (2002:618-623) states that 'כָּל־הָאֲרֶצִּי, *kal-ha'arets*, 'all the earth' does not mean the whole earth, but the whole of the land of Canaan or of Israel, which is bounded by the Dead Sea and the Mediterranean' This in my view extends beyond the whole land of Canaan or of Israel because Canaan, or the land of Israel, is a type of the kingdom of God in the full extent which it will have on the earth in the last days. Whereas, the old Israel continually rebelled against God



being King, both by its sin and its idolatry. This rebellion, that is, the apostasy of the nation from its God, is to cease, and the Lord alone will be King and God of the redeemed nation, and be acknowledged by it; His name alone will be mentioned, and not the names of idols as well. Even though some like, Friedrich and Franz, hold to the view that the Lord's reign will be limited to the land of Canaan or of Israel, the truth remains that כָּל-הָאָרֶץ, *kal-ha'arets*, all the earth, signifies a universal reign, though centered in Jerusalem. He will provide the basis for true unity; 'for in that day shall there be one Lord and His name one' (Falwell, 1982:1841).

### **Exegetical Discoveries**

- i. Zechariah introduces his prophecy by predicting that a day is coming. This day will be the time of the fulfillment of the prophecy.
- ii. Zechariah's repeated reference to the 'day' of 14:1 is aimed at communicating that this is a single prophecy. It will only be fulfilled as a sequence of events. It is not a collection of events where some can be fulfilled at one time, and others at a different time. Each of the key details of the prophecy must be fulfilled 'on that day.' This means that Zechariah 14 is a single prophecy. Whether 'that day' refers to 24 hours of day or is simply a phrase used to refer to a narrow window of time, the point is that all these events must happen together in a relatively short period of time (Whitefield,2018).
- iii. Some have insinuated that the destruction of Jerusalem in CE 70 was the fulfillment of the prophecy of Zechariah 14, but it is obvious that the words do not refer to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Romans. If it was fulfilled in CE 70, then it means that Israel's salvation has already come and therefore we should not consider Israel's salvation to be a future event, but a past event.
- iv. The return of the Lord here is literal and also visible. In His return, He will descend on the mount of Olives, which is the location from which He ascended into heaven after his earthly ministry. The splitting of the mountain is the effect of the earthquake under the footsteps of the Lord, before whom the earth trembles when He touches it (Falwell,1982).
- v. The universal reign of Messiah is clearly brought into view. On that day, the Lord Jesus alone will be Lord without any rivals. All forms of idolatry and polytheism will be done away with (Adeyemo, 2006).

### **Implications of the Day of the Lord for the Church today**

One of the fundamental teachings of the Bible that Christians should be motivated to take cognizance of and herald on daily basis is the doctrine of the Day of the Lord, a term which in the New Testament is synonymous with the literal Second Coming of Christ for the Church. It is one of the greatest of the foundational doctrines of Christianity and has great implications for the church today.

It is unfortunate to state that some in the Church today have neglected the literality of the prophecies concerning the coming day of the Lord. Grant, states emphatically that this is 'due to the erroneous interpretative system of spiritualizing and allegorizing the language of the Scriptures. Tragically, this rejection of the literal Second Coming has caused millions of Christians in numerous denominations to miss the meaning of the coming Kingdom of God' (Jeffrey, 2001:17).





Feinberg, notes that beginning with the early church, Christians have considered the church to be the new Israel. A crucial issue in regard to prophecy about end times is this: are Old Testament prophecies about Israel fulfilled in the church or in a future restored nation of Israel? (Feinberg, 1988:222-38). Regardless of what individuals' response to the above question may be, the fact remain that the prophecy regards the 'Day of the Lord' in Scriptures has great implication both for the Church and the nation of Israel. Therefore, if the coming 'Day of the Lord' concerns and affects the church, it becomes necessary to closely examine the implications (Stephens, 1993:56).

### **Implications for the Church Today**

The common creed of Christianity, which is referred to as the Apostles' Creed (c. 700), states that Jesus Christ 'rose again from the dead, ascended to heaven, sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty, thence He will come to judge the living and the dead' (Leith, 1977:24). all Orthodox theologians upholds this doctrine. This implies that the concept of the day of the Lord is well entrenched in beliefs of the church today. "It is the basis of the Christian's hope, the one event which will mark the beginning of the completion of God's plan" (Erickson, 1985:1186). The Lord Jesus Himself places His return in the awesome setting of the great 'Day of the Lord', when He identified His Parousia completely with the coming of Israel's God: 'They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather His elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other (Matthew 24:30-31, cf. Zechariah 14:5)' (LaRondelle, 2000). This make the Day of the Lord very crucial for the Church, for in it is attached the blessed hope of the rapture and the resurrection of saints. Bruce affirms that, 'Since God had raised Jesus from the dead, He would assuredly raise all His people in due course more specifically, at Jesus' Parousia, His advent in glory' (Bruce, 1978:307). If this is true and the church is waiting in anticipation to experience this promise, then there is no time to be ready it than now.

### **Theological Implications**

Herbert (2009) states the Day of the Lord, (יּוֹם-יְהוָה) is an Old Testament term, which becomes contextualized by eschatological writing in the New Testament. The term is mentioned by the Old Testament prophets in the following text: In Isaiah 2:12, which contains the first prophetic oracle concerning the 'Day of the Lord' that was given by the prophet, it underscores the future establishment of God's kingdom (Isaiah 2:2-4), the present sinful state of Israel (Isaiah 2:5-9); and the future day of reckoning (Isaiah 2:10-22). Young states that:

The prophet appears to look beyond the near to the far future in the judgment emphasis of Isaiah 2:10-22, just as he had looked to the eschatological kingdom in Isaiah 2:1-4. There are several indicators of millennial conditions in Isaiah 2:1-4 (cf. Revelation 20:1-6). Mt. Zion will be the world capital and all the nations will come to it (Isaiah 2:1-2) in order to seek God's word (Isaiah 2:3). God will judge between the nations and war will be no more (Isaiah 2:4-5). This eschatological emphasis in Isaiah 2:2-4 makes it reasonable to conclude that eschatological judgment is in view in Isaiah 2:10-22, rather than to God's chastisement of Judah by Assyria and Babylon (Young, 1972:123).

Again in Isaiah 13 another oracle concerning the 'Day of the Lord' is found but in reference to Babylon. Verse 1-8 deals with God's use of Babylon as His instrument of indignation for the destruction of Israel (Isaiah 13:5-6). Mayhue, posits that:



The Day of Lord was near in the mind of Isaiah (13:6), it is obviously going to be a day of destruction, terror, and pain (Isaiah 13:8). There is little doubt that this refers to the near eschatological event fulfilled by Babylon from 605-586 B.C. However, there is good reason to believe that Isaiah 13:9-16 speaks of Day of Lord implications for the far future. The near emphasis returns in Isaiah 13:17-22 where the end of Babylon is described (Mayhue, 1985:239).

Joel also alluded to the 'Day of the Lord' in his prophetic oracles. Worthy of note among all his references to the 'Day of the Lord' is Joel 2:31, in it he emphatically states that a great cosmic signs will be a prelude to the Day of Lord ('before the great and awesome day of the LORD comes'). This seems to limit the Day of the Lord in time to the very end of the eschatological tribulation period if Joel 3:15, Matthew 24:29 and Revelation 6:12 refer to the same event. The experience of the Day of Lord, at the end of the eschatological distress will include unique displays of God's greatness. It comes with both physical disturbances (cf. 2 Peter 3:10) and a great spiritual awakening. 'Judgment and repentance are the main themes which are stressed' (Mayhue, 1985:239)

Unambiguously expressing his speech Zephaniah in Chapter 1:14 of his book portrays the 'Day of the Lord' as a day of wrath. He also describes the day as characterized by trouble and distress, destruction and desolation, darkness and gloom, clouds and thick darkness, and trumpet and battle cry. Ladd, refer to the above as the five pairs which effectively specify what the "Day of the Lord" entails. The sin of Judah is clearly shown to be the reason for this judgment (Zephaniah 1:4-6, 9,18). Zephaniah again describe the 'Day of the Lord' as a historical disaster at the hands of some unidentified enemy (Zephaniah 1:10-12, 16-17; 2:5-15); but he also describes it in terms of a worldwide catastrophe in which all creatures are swept off the face of the earth (Zephaniah 1:2-3) so that nothing remains (Zephaniah 1:18). Nevertheless, out of universal conflagration emerges a redeemed remnant (Zephaniah 2:3, 7, 9), and beyond judgment is salvation both for Israel (Zephaniah 3:11-20) and for the Gentiles (Zephaniah 3:9-10) (Ladd, 1974:68).

Zechariah is considered by Mayhue as the first post-exilic prophet to speak explicitly of the 'Day of Lord'. He affirms that

because the Assyrian and Babylonian judgments were history, Zechariah's entire prophecy deals with the far eschatological expectation. Zechariah's subject in chapter. 14 is 'Day of the Lord' and its subsequent results. The chapter states that things will get worse (Zephaniah 14:2, 5) before they get better (Zephaniah 14:1, 14). God will then intervene against the nations and fight on Israel's behalf (Zephaniah 14:3-5, 12-13). This pictures Christ's return at Armageddon (cf. Joel 3, Matthew 24, Revelation 19) to establish his millennial kingdom and to claim his rightful place on the throne of David." (Mayhue, 1985:242).

Another implication that can be deduced theologically is the affirmation that the kingdom follows tribulation. In the text, the kingdom comes following the siege and deliverance of Jerusalem. Also there is affirmation of the future significance of Jerusalem and the people of Israel. Jerusalem is not only delivered by the Lord; it appears to operate as the capital city of the Lord's kingdom. Jesus Himself predicted that a day was coming when Gentile domination over Jerusalem would come to an end (Luke 21:24).



## **Universal Implications**

The coming Day of the Lord is going to impact the entire universe. The kingdom of God that He establishes on the earth among men shall be a universal and united kingdom. Zachariah explicitly states 'And the LORD shall be king over all the earth...' The kingdom does not just involve Israel – it involves all the nations. All living everywhere will recognize Him as King. Just like the seventh angel proclaimed in Revelation 11:15 'The kingdoms of this world have become the kingdoms of our Lord and of his Christ.' The Messiah will be 'King over all the earth.' Also '...in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one' Henry states that 'all shall worship one God only, and not idols, and shall be unanimous in the worship of him. All false gods shall be abandoned, and all false ways of worship abolished; and God shall be the center of their unity' (Henry, 2008:1264).

## **Political Implications**

Morgan (2017) states that 'politics does its world building through the kinds of power and control that we just don't see in Scripture. Passing laws, pushing money around, making war and threats of war – these are not the ways God has chosen to build His kingdom on earth.' Consequently, when the Day of the Lord comes, all the world's political systems shall give way for God's rule. The nations will obey and submit to His rule, but as Zechariah 14 points out, whenever a nation does not act as they should there is punishment. On the other hand, in the eternal state of God's rule there will be absolutely no disobedience on the part of the nations. The picture of the nations in the eternal state is only positive. The king of the nations' brings their contributions to the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:24) and the leaves of the tree of life are said to be for the healing of the nations (Revelation 22:2) (Viach,2012).

## **Social Implications**

According to Osuigwe,

...the church is faced today with quite a number of social issues, especially the challenge of religious fundamentalism, syncretism, pluralism, modern idolatry under the mask of technology, social media, fashion, entertainment, faith negating human rights, heterogeneous sexual practices, such as lesbianism, homosexuality, bestiality, and celebrity craze. The challenge of Islamic insurgency and terrorism, political disorders and violent conflicts. The global economic meltdown, climate change, extreme poverty, unemployment, underemployment, diseases, inequality and oppression (Osuigwe, 2017:26).

The challenge of illiteracy, child abuse, child labor, violence against women, crime, alcoholism, drug abuse corruption and juvenile delinquency are serious social problems confronting the world today. Notwithstanding, the Day of the Lord is going to bring a permanent end to all forms of social disorder. The coming of the Lord will bring about the destruction of all that is evil and a setting up of an eternal kingdom built on the foundation of righteousness, justice and peace (2017:26) God will purify the heavens and earth with fire; then He will create them anew. By this all the corrupt social system of the world shall cease to exist and the new earth which God creates will experience a new social system as well.

## **Conclusion**

This article has examined the prophetic oracles regarding the day of the Lord as found in Zechariah 14:1-9 and its implications for the Church today. Although, this prophetic oracle was given several



years ago, it still speaks to the contemporary church, and serves as a cursor to God's future plan, not only for the nation of Israel, but also for the church. Through His Prophet He has communicated to His people what lies ahead of them, a day designated by Him to judge sinners and consummate the salvation that He promised to believers of all ages. When that day comes, it shall be a time when God will manifest His universal rule and might by a series of destructive judgments on both the nations and Israel. Those who align themselves with God's plan will receive His blessings. Those who follow a policy of opposition to God's purpose will receive His swift and severe judgment without limitation Hagee (2006). The Day of the Lord, as found in Scripture has strong implications for the contemporary church. As enumerated, all the implications – the theological, universal, political and social implications are all guide posts to how the church should respond to the prophetic utterance. Obviously, The Day of the Lord gives hope to God's people and as well as a warning both to the godly and the ungodly. The lingering fulfillment of this prophetic oracle should not be taken for slackness as expressed by Peter in his second epistle. Rather, it should be viewed in the light of God's patience and unwillingness that any should perish (2Peter 3:9). The certainty of the fulfillment of the prophetic oracles regarding the day of the Lord, which connotes Christ's second coming is as sure as that of His first coming.

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