

“Evil in the Millennial Age?” An Exposition of Zechariah 14 – A Response to a Premillennial Objection to Amillennialism¹

The Issue Under Debate

I am convinced that one of the major weaknesses of all forms of premillennialism is the presence of evil in the millennial age (The Presence of Evil in the Millennium -- A Huge Problem for Premillennarians). How do people in natural human bodies pass through the events associated with Christ's return (the general resurrection, the final judgment, and the creation of a new heaven and earth) without being raised from the dead and appointed to their eternal destiny (heaven or hell)? There is a related question also raised by the premillennial understanding of redemptive history; “how can evil exist on the earth, while Jesus rules over the nations from David's throne in Jerusalem after he has judged the nations?” Premillennarians seek to avoid this conundrum by assigning final judgment and elimination of evil to the close of the millennial age, fully one thousand years after Jesus returns. But the millennial age is not future as premillennarians claim, it is a present reality. Christ's return is the final consummation, the summing up of all things, not but another step on the way to the final consummation a thousand years later.

Premillennarians respond to this amillennial challenge by asserting that the presence of evil in the millennial age was foretold by the Prophet Zechariah in the fourteenth chapter of his prophecy, thereby parrying the thrust of the amillennial argument.[1] The purpose of this essay is to set Zechariah's prophecy in its context, summarize the varying interpretations of Zechariah 14 (including premillennialism and Reformed amillennialism), then interpret the entirety of the chapter, before drawing some final conclusions.

The Context for Zechariah's Prophecy

Zechariah's prophecy concludes in chapter fourteen with a remarkable glimpse of the time of the end—a day of cosmic upheaval, a time when YHWH will be acknowledged by all to be king over all the earth and Lord of all the nations. The seven-fold repetition of the phrase “on that day” throughout the final chapter points ahead from Zechariah's time (about 518 B.C.) to the messianic age and beyond, indeed to the time of the end and the disruption of the entire created order. The scene given us in the final chapter of Zechariah is framed in the language of apocalyptic; dramatic scenes and images are used by the prophet to make important theological points. Zechariah describes a scene in which mountains split open, Jerusalem is raised to great heights, the surrounding land is leveled, and the waters reverse their course. In this prophetic oracle we are given a vision of the summing up of all things in the language of prophetic idiom (the language often used by Old Testament prophets),[2] which, in turn, is depicted in the New

¹ Taken from the Riddleblog essay “Evil in the Millennial Age?” An Exposition of Zechariah 14 – A Response to a Premillennial Objection to Amillennialism@kimriddlebarger.com

Testament as the day of Christ's return, when our Lord raises the dead, judges all people, and renews the cosmos.

Zechariah 14 is echoed in several New Testament texts. In Revelation 6:12-14, John writes of the Lamb (Jesus), "when he opened the sixth seal, I looked, and behold, there was a great earthquake, and the sun became black as sackcloth, the full moon became like blood, and the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale. The sky vanished like a scroll that is being rolled up, and every mountain and island was removed from its place." When Christ returns, stars fall from heaven, and mountains and islands are said to be displaced. There is cosmic upheaval of the entire natural order. Similarly, in 2 Peter 3:10, the Apostle writes, "but the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a roar, and the heavenly bodies will be burned up and dissolved, and the earth and the works that are done on it will be exposed." Again, the natural order passes away, resulting a new heaven and earth. In this, we see how the New Testament writers interpret prophecies such as Zechariah's final oracle—they are tied to Christ's return and the Day of the Lord, not to a semi-renewed earthly millennial kingdom.

The "big picture" images given by prophets such as Zechariah, were never intended to be taken literally.[3] They point beyond themselves to future realities not yet conceivable to the original audience—those exiles working to rebuild the temple in Zechariah's day, who may anticipate a messianic age, but who, before Christ's resurrection, have no category for a Messiah's second advent or the ushering in of a new heaven and earth.

The vision given in the final chapter of Zechariah can be summarized as follows. The Warrior Song of YHWH has reached its victorious climax. The good news for the exiles is that the Day of the Lord is coming, a time when YHWH once again brings the nations back to Jerusalem to defeat them in final victory. The bad news for the exiles is that YHWH will allow the nations to attack, defeat, and then plunder his city. The Gentile nations who have done Judah so much harm will unite as one against YHWH and his people. But YHWH brings about the miraculous deliverance of his people and then brings terrible judgment upon his enemies. The natural order will be appear to be turned upside down. The Lord will physically touch down on the Mount of Olives, splitting it in two and leaving no avenue for YHWH's enemies to escape. Jerusalem will rise to new heights (symbolic of the heavenly city), while everything else will be leveled. After this divine act of rescue and judgment, the nations will flock to Jerusalem for the Feast of Booths. All things will be rendered "clean" and no Canaanite will dwell in the city.[4]

Even this brief summary reveals that this is a difficult passage. Martin Luther candidly admitted "I am not sure what the prophet is talking about." [5] Despite Luther's candid admission, there are seven main interpretations of Zechariah 14. We can rule out from the beginning the opinions of those critical scholars who look to an event before the days of Zechariah as the reference point, since there is no evidence whatsoever of any historical fulfillment of this prophecy either before, or soon after the exile. The oracle was clearly future to Zechariah's time, and closely tied to the coming messianic age.

One reason for the divergent opinions about this passage is it is never directly quoted in the New Testament, nor given a definitive interpretation by the apostles—although there are a number of allusions (echoes) from it, such as those mentioned previously (i.e., Revelation 6:12-14, and 2 Peter 3:10). This is especially true of the Book of Revelation which echoes Zechariah 14 in a number of places, yet not citing Zechariah directly.[6] We also find a number of allusions to prior events in Israel’s history.

Differing Interpretations

The opinions about how to interpret this passage are well established. Dispensationalists believe Zechariah’s prophetic oracle describes Christ’s second coming, and the establishment of the subsequent millennial kingdom on the earth.[7] John Walvoord believes that verses 16-21 specifically refer to the sacrifices made in Jerusalem during the future millennial kingdom.[8] J. D. Pentecost believes that these verses refer to Christ’s rule and punishment of any sin which may break out in the millennial age during Christ’s rule.[9] A more recent writer, Michael Vlach, contends that passage speaks of a future gathering of the nations and a restored national Israel.[10] Barry Horner concurs and says the prophecy refers to Israel’s national and territorial destiny.[11] Finally, Matt Waymeyer contends that the events depicted in Zechariah 14, fit best into the “intermediate kingdom of premillennialism.”[12] Despite their nuanced differences, all of these writers agree that the fulfillment of Zechariah’s oracle occurs after Christ’s return.

But in locating the fulfillment of this prophecy in a future millennial age, these writers overlook the pink elephant in the room created by their interpretation of Zechariah 14—evil persists throughout the millennial age after Christ has returned and judged all people and nations. This is a huge problem for dispensationalists and all forms of premillennialism, yet is glibly dismissed. Premillennarians of all stripes tell us that the final judgment (including the elimination of evil) and the new creation come after the one-thousand year millennium is over. Amillennarians, on the other hand, contend that Zechariah sees the final judgment (and the elimination of evil) and the new creation (the splitting of mountains and the upheaval of all land) as occurring when Jesus returns, not a full one-thousand years later as premillennarians contend.

The Reformed have offered a number of interpretations of this passage. John Calvin understood the chapter as tied to Israel’s future after the exile, the days immediately after Zechariah’s prophecy was given.[13] Puritan theologian John Owen saw this passage fulfilled in the end-times glory of the church.[14] Princeton’s Geerhardus Vos contends the passage reflects the redemptive-historical transition from the eschatological “coming of God” (in the Old Testament) now re-interpreted as the coming of the Messiah, especially in Paul’s letters where Jesus is identified as “Lord” (kurios).[15] Postmillennial author Gary DeMar, argues that this prophecy is fulfilled by the events of A.D. 70, when Jesus returns in the clouds to judge both Jerusalem and the temple.[16]

The difference of opinion stems from the difficulty in interpreting Zechariah’s apocalyptic images. That said, given the references to the dawn of the messianic age in the previous chapters—the Messiah enters his city humbly on a donkey (9:9-10); that he will be betrayed by

one of his own for 30 pieces of silver (11:13), that he would be crucified and as a result open a cleansing fountain in his own blood (12:10; 13:1)—the context points in the direction of a fulfillment of Zechariah’s prophecy at the climax of the messianic age.

Three Important Considerations

In addition to looking for allusions to the passage in the Book of Revelation in order to properly understand the passage, there are three other factors to consider which will help us make sense of this remarkable passage.[17]

First, the prophecy is clearly apocalyptic in terms of its genre and structure. The use of dramatic symbols and metaphors (the reference to the Mount of Olives splitting open forming a large valley, the mountains being leveled, “living water,” etc.) tells us that a literal interpretation is not in view, and that the prophecy will remain mysterious until the coming of the Messiah and the dawn of the messianic age, when we learn that the Messiah’s first advent necessitates a second.

Second, in previous chapters (especially chapter 13), Zechariah predicted what will happen when the messianic age dawns; the Messiah will be pierced (crucified), and a fountain will be opened for the cleansing of sin, a reference to Christ’s satisfaction for our sins upon the cross through his shedding of blood. By using images from Israel’s past (i.e., from the days of Uzziah) when YHWH defended his people, Zechariah is pointing ahead to the fact that although additional trials and tribulation will certainly come, God will continue to deliver his people in the most amazing of ways. Zechariah also foretells that YHWH will defeat his enemies on behalf of his people (v. 3), that he will reign over the entire cosmos (vv. 4-5), and that he will rule over the nations (vv. 12-15), so as to provide freedom for his people to worship (v. 16). He will restrain those who oppose his rule (v. 17-19). YHWH’s Spirit will sanctify all of life (vv. 20-21) which clearly anticipates the out-pouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. This sets the stage for Zechariah 14, which speaks of the survivors of YHWH’s coming judgment upon the wicked, while delivering his people from the final eschatological cataclysm.[18]

Meredith Kline takes this one step farther—which I think is very helpful. What is inaugurated by the Messiah (those blessings secured by the Messiah’s death, and the cleansing and sanctifying power which results) is ultimately brought to realization by the divine warrior (Jesus) who brings judgment to the nations, and establishes the new creation. According to Kline, “the saints will possess a holy and blessed world, purged of all of God’s enemies. The consummation of joy and glory typified by the Feast of Tabernacles will be realized. And echoing Zechariah 6:8; 14:9 characterizes that day as the time when Yahweh alone will be king over the whole world.”[19] What Zechariah foresees is that the Messiah inaugurates the messianic age, and he returns a second time to bring that age to final consummation, when Jesus raises the dead, judges all people, and ushers in a new heaven and earth.

Third, this is the final chapter of Zechariah’s prophecy and parallels chapter 9 in the chiasm which makes up chapters 9-14.[20] The parallel passage in the chiasm (A 9:9-10) speaks of the Messiah coming to Jerusalem in humility (Palm Sunday). As such, this passage (all of chapter

14 A~) is messianic, but depicts the Messiah coming in judgment (not the humility of Palm Sunday). The death of the Messiah on behalf of his people (depicted in chapter 12:10-13:6—the center of the chiasm C), secures the benefits God’s people will enjoy as enumerated in chapter 14. That YHWH the mighty warrior rules and subdues his enemies while protecting his people is the result of the Shepherd’s death and the cleaning fountain which results. Jesus’ death marks the dawn of the new creation and establishes the conditions depicted in chapter 14.

An Exposition of Zechariah 14

With this background in mind, we turn to the details of the passage, which opens with the declaration in verse 1, “behold, a day is coming for the Lord, when the spoil taken from you will be divided in your midst.” The oracle begins with a warning coming directly from YHWH. There is a day coming when the people of Judah and Jerusalem will be plundered. But this raises a question regarding the previous promises of Jerusalem’s peace and safety in earlier oracles. The exiles of Zechariah’s day could not possibly understand that the coming messianic age (still 500 years future) extends at least two thousand years beyond and ends in final judgment. Gaining the proper perspective on this is difficult given the fact that God’s people do not see themselves deserving of judgment, when they have always been deserving of such. But then, judgment begins in the house of YHWH.[21]

In verses 2-3, the horrific extent and terrible nature of the plunder of Jerusalem by her enemies is revealed. “For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city shall be taken and the houses plundered and the women raped. Half of the city shall go out into exile, but the rest of the people shall not be cut off from the city. Then the Lord will go out and fight against those nations as when he fights on a day of battle.” Jerusalem—a name which means “city of peace”—will be anything but peaceful on that terrible day. God will gather the nations against his chosen city, who surround and overwhelm Jerusalem. The city will be ransacked and its women will be assaulted. The graphic imagery is shocking to us, but lest we forget, such behavior was commonplace (and expected) throughout most of human history until quite recently. The victors get the spoils of war—in this case the wealth of Jerusalem. The horrible things which occur at this time bring down YHWH’s judgment, who goes out to fight against those who surround the city—sparing half of the city’s inhabitants.

The language recalls to mind Israel’s crossing of the Red Sea, when YHWH “went to fight for his people” against the armies of Pharaoh. This image also points to scenes of future judgment from Revelation 14:17-20 and 16:16-21 when YHWH’s judgment falls upon the nations at the time of the end. In fact, YHWH’s act of judgment ushers in the apocalyptic scene in verse 4. “On that day his feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives that lies before Jerusalem on the east, and the Mount of Olives shall be split in two from east to west by a very wide valley, so that one half of the Mount shall move northward, and the other half southward.” On the day of battle (the last day), the Lord will return. When he does, the earth is torn apart and vast tracts of land are displaced. As YHWH divided the Red Sea, so too he will divide the land around Jerusalem. There is little doubt that Jesus had this passage in mind when speaking to the disciples about his return on the last day. In Acts 1:11-12, Luke recounts the words of Jesus who asked, “Men of

Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven. Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem.”

YHWH will rescue his people, who are warned to flee the coming judgment. But there will be no such escape for those upon whom YHWH wages war. His people “shall flee to the valley of my mountains, for the valley of the mountains shall reach to Azal.” The meaning and/or location of Azal is unknown to us. We do know that a terrible earthquake occurred in the Kidron valley at some time in the 8th century B.C. It was such a great earthquake that it acquired legendary status in Israel and was still known and spoken of even centuries later. This is the context for the next clause, “and you shall flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah.” On this day of the great battle, the whole earth shakes, just as it did at Azal in the days of Uzziah. The great earthquake indicates that the day of judgment is at hand. “Then the Lord my God will come, and all the holy ones with him. On that day there shall be no light, cold, or frost. And there shall be a unique day, which is known to the Lord, neither day nor night, but at evening time there shall be light.” This is an Old Testament image of the second coming of a Messiah who had not yet appeared the first time in Zechariah’s day. In effect, Zechariah has jumped ahead from predictions of the Messiah’s first coming to that of his second. This is why Zechariah could foretell of peace for Israel (in the short term), while at the same time introducing a final cataclysm worse than anything Judah (or the world) has ever known (Christ’s second coming).

Jerusalem lies on an arid plateau. Finding sufficient water has always been a struggle. On this day, that will change. We read in verse 8, “on that day living waters shall flow out from Jerusalem, half of them to the eastern sea and half of them to the western sea. It shall continue in summer as in winter.” Ezekiel saw a similar thing in the first 12 verses of 47th chapter of his prophecy when he saw living water flowing from the temple to the east. Jeremiah identified YHWH as the source of this living water (Jeremiah 17:13). When this day comes as foreseen by Zechariah, living water will flow from Zion (the site of YHWH’s throne on the earth) both to the east and the west throughout the entire year.[22] No more drought—ever. No doubt, Jesus has this passage in mind in John 7:38, when he said, “whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, ‘Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’”

At that time, YHWH’s rule is manifest to all (v. 9). “And the Lord will be king over all the earth. On that day the Lord will be one and his name one.” In Zechariah’s day, YHWH’s rule was a reality among his people but not visible to his enemies or fully consummated when all opposition is crushed. YHWH’s enemies still threatened the people of Judah. The guilt and power of sin still held God’s people hostage. But on the day to come, not only will living water flow from YHWH’s throne on Zion, YHWH’s rule will extend over all the earth—not just the land promised to Abraham (from the River of Egypt to the Euphrates). The kingdom which Jesus announced had come (Mark 1:14) and will be apparent to all.

The extent of YHWH’s final victory becomes clear in verses 10-11. Jerusalem was protected by mountains which surround the city. These mountains will no longer be needed for the city’s

defense. Zechariah reveals that “the whole land shall be turned into a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem. But Jerusalem shall remain aloft on its site from the Gate of Benjamin to the place of the former gate, to the Corner Gate, and from the Tower of Hananel to the king’s winepresses. And it shall be inhabited, for there shall never again be a decree of utter destruction. Jerusalem shall dwell in security.” YHWH’s citadel will be secure and his people will dwell with him in safety. The city will never again come under YHWH’s curse. Again, the scene echoes Israel’s history. What the people of Israel failed to complete in the days of Joshua and the Conquest (Judges 1:27 ff.)—driving all the Canaanites from the promised land—will finally be complete. God’s people will finally possess the promised land—all of it.

But for those who oppose YHWH and his kingdom, there will be trouble and despair beyond human imagination. The imagery we are given by Zechariah has stirred many a Hollywood special effects creator to copy it. “And this shall be the plague with which the Lord will strike all the peoples that wage war against Jerusalem: their flesh will rot while they are still standing on their feet, their eyes will rot in their sockets, and their tongues will rot in their mouths.” This too comes from Israel’s history—it is drawn from 2 Kings 19:35, when a terrible plague struck Sennacherib’s army in the days of Hezekiah.[23] Death will overwhelm YHWH’s enemies—maybe the Bible does predict a zombie apocalypse!

YHWH sends a terrible plague of death as well as mass panic. In verse 13, we read, “and on that day a great panic from the Lord shall fall on them, so that each will seize the hand of another, and the hand of the one will be raised against the hand of the other.” Yet in verse 14, we are told that YHWH’s people—small, surrounded, and apparently defeated, will fight like King David’s famed warriors, collecting the spoil of defeated enemies. “Even Judah will fight at Jerusalem. And the wealth of all the surrounding nations shall be collected, gold, silver, and garments in great abundance.” As the Lord fights for his people, so too, they join his righteous cause. His judgment is so severe that even the draft animals of YHWH’s enemies (i.e. those animals which support the armies of the nations which have surrounded Jerusalem) will be struck by the plague YHWH sends. As when YHWH led his people to victory over Jericho, so too their destruction will be swift and final. This vision echoes Joshua 6:21 and the destruction of the walled city. “Then they devoted all in the city to destruction, both men and women, young and old, oxen, sheep, and donkeys, with the edge of the sword.”

But in verse 16, the scene shifts to the outcome of YHWH’s dramatic and final victory. “Then everyone who survives of all the nations that have come against Jerusalem shall go up year after year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Booths.” The survivors are those brought to faith and repentance through YHWH’s victory. Those who fail to do so, now find themselves without benefit of YHWH’s gracious provision, symbolized by water of life. Unbelieving nations will experience terrible drought—the absence of such life giving water. They are warned in the language of covenant curse in verse 17, “and if any of the families of the earth do not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, there will be no rain on them.” There will be no life sustaining water (living water)—an apocalyptic image of death and desolation. No life, no trees or crops, no animals.

Egypt symbolizes a nation well known for its cruel oppression of God's people, yet which has its own life giving supply of water—the Nile. But Egypt came under the ten plagues, bringing the powerful nation to its knees. In verses 18-19, with YHWH's victory over Pharaoh setting the scene, Egypt becomes an illustration of that judgment to which Zechariah is referring. "And if the family of Egypt does not go up and present themselves, then on them there shall be no rain; there shall be the plague with which the Lord afflicts the nations that do not go up to keep the Feast of Booths. This shall be the punishment to Egypt and the punishment to all the nations that do not go up to keep the Feast of Booths." What is threatened to Egypt is threatened to all the nations. Those who fail to worship YHWH as he has revealed himself in the Exodus (of which the Feast of Booths was annual reminder of what life during the exile in the Sinai was like) will face severe judgment. If YHWH could bring the mighty Pharaoh to his knees, he can and will do the same to all nations.

The final outcome will be evident to all. We read in verse 20, "and on that day there shall be inscribed on the bells of the horses, 'Holy to the Lord.'" This was the inscription worn by the high priest on his turban. On this day, the same will be true of all of YHWH's people who are now characterized not by their sin and rebellion, but by their holiness. This "set-apartness" unto the Lord will characterize everything from animals to cooking utensils. The war-horses will wear bells which are now used to take the pilgrims from the nations to YHWH's holy city.[24] Even the pots and pans will be set apart as though for holy use. "And the pots in the house of the Lord shall be as the bowls before the altar. And every pot in Jerusalem and Judah shall be holy to the Lord of hosts."

The sacrifices of all of God's people can now be offered with clear consciences, since these sacrifices are no longer tainted by the stain of human sin. We read in verse 21, "so that all who sacrifice may come and take of them and boil the meat of the sacrifice in them. And there shall no longer be a trader in the house of the Lord of hosts on that day." The sacrifices will be a blessing to all who offer them. No trader (literally a "Canaanite") shall be in the land. The promised inheritance has been accomplished.

Zechariah gives us a glimpse of the final consummation in the language of those prophets writing before the dawn of the messianic age. Before the coming of Jesus, the completion of his messianic mission, and his promise to return, the apocalyptic images given by Zechariah are necessarily mysterious—couched in the language of Israel's history and pointing ahead to something impossible to understand at this point in redemptive history, since the proper categories to make sense of this vision have not yet been revealed.

But with New Testament hindsight, what was mysterious to Zechariah and the exiles in Judah, becomes clear as the interpretive fog begins to lift and the light of the gospel begins to shine. It is not until Jesus came in humility on Palm Sunday, was betrayed by Judas for a mere thirty pieces of silver, was rejected by his people (Israel), was then crucified (pierced) by those who mourned at the sight of the terrible they have done, but who then opens a cleansing fountain in Jerusalem, that the oracle given in Zechariah 14 begins to make sense. We have in Zechariah 14, therefore, an image of the end of the age which requires the dawn of a messianic age to make

sense in light of the larger purposes of redemptive history.

Conclusion

Since this prophetic oracle points ahead to the time of the messianic age, this is where we ought to look for explanation and interpretation. As we have seen, there are several places in the New Testament (especially in the Book of Revelation) which echo Zechariah 14, but one such passage in particular is Revelation 22:1-21. Richard Bauckham points out that John utilizes the imagery of Zechariah 14:11 to make his point about the New Jerusalem as the site of God's throne and that place where he manifests both his glory and his victory over the nations.[25] John sees the same event as Zechariah, but in the greater light of the saving work of Jesus. We should not be surprised that many of the same images given us by Zechariah are found in John's vision of the new heaven and earth—starting with the opening verse of Revelation 22. “Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb through the middle of the street of the city; also, on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.” Here is the same living water seen by Zechariah. Here too are the nations who gather round the heavenly city—the New Jerusalem.

Zechariah saw purified sacrifices and worshipers gather to praise YHWH's name. So does John. In verses 3-5 of Revelation 22 we read, “no longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. And night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun, for the Lord God will be their light, and they will reign forever and ever.” After hearing John's description of this new and heavenly city we read the glorious words of Revelation 22:14, hinted at by Zechariah. “Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life and that they may enter the city by the gates.” To those who trust in Jesus, the water of flows without limit. “Come,’ and let the one who is thirsty come; let the one who desires take the water of life without price.”

And just as Zechariah cited YHWH's promise, “Then the Lord my God will come, and all the holy ones with him” (14:5) so too, John records the promise of Jesus, which closes out the Book of Revelation (22:20-21), “‘Surely I am coming soon.’ Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen.”

In the greater light of the New Testament revelation, it becomes clear that Zechariah is looking ahead to the messianic mission of Jesus and his two advents. Our premillennial friends are correct when they assert that the passage refers to a future millennial kingdom and temple sacrifices when viewed from Zechariah's pre-messianic place in the redemptive historical time line. But they err when they assign this to a future semi-consummated earthly millennial kingdom in which evil (sinful human conduct) remains after Jesus returns in judgment.

John understands the one-thousand years of Revelation 20 to refer to Christ's kingdom and the entirety inter-advental period, not to an earthly, national kingdom which Jesus supposedly

establishes after his return. What premillennarians miss then, is that the so-called millennial age is a present reality, characterized by the presence of evil, including a struggle between the people of God and the City of Man (Babylon the Great), all the while facing the deceit of Satan (heresy and false doctrine). The prophets of Israel foresaw Jesus is the true temple from whom the living water flows. His sacrifice for sin is said to be once for all (Romans 6:10; 1 Peter 3:18; Hebrews 9:28, 10:10).

Any attempt to understand a millennial kingdom with Christ physically ruling from an earthly Jerusalem, yet co-existing with evil, with animals being sacrificed (even as a memorial) in a rebuilt temple in Jerusalem, must overlook the fact that the New Testament reinterprets all of these things (including Zechariah's prophetic oracle in chapter 14 of his prophecy) as a present reality, the inter-advental period, with the types and shadows of the prophets giving way to the fulfillment and reality that is Jesus Christ.

Zechariah 14 does not support premillennialism, nor does it allow for the presence of evil after our Lord's return. To interpret Zechariah's prophecy in such light, seriously detracts from the reality and glory of Christ's saving work in his messianic mission.

[1] See, for example, Matt Waymeyer, Amillennialism and the Age to Come (NP: Kress Biblical Resources, 2016), 48.

[2] C. B. Caird, The Language and Imagery of the Bible (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1980), 256-260.

[3] John MacArthur disagrees and contends that any biblical interpreter who does not take the images in Zechariah 14 literally, is making God a liar—a bit of unfortunate hyperbole. See, John MacArthur and Richard Mayhue, eds. Christ's Prophetic Plans: A Futuristic Premillennial Primer, (Chicago: Moody Publishers, 2012), 77.

[4] A. Wolters, "Zechariah," in Boda and McConville eds., Dictionary of the Old Testament Prophets, (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2012), 896; and George L. Klein, Zechariah, vol. 21B, The New American Commentary (Nashville: B & H Publishing Group, 2008), Logos Bible Software, on 14:1-15.

[5] Cited in Klein, Zechariah, Logos Bible Software, on 14:1-15.

[6] See, for example, the Scripture index in Beale, The Book of Revelation, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 1196-1197.

[7] John Walvoord, Major Bible Prophecies, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1991), 94.

[8] John Walvoord, The Millennial Kingdom, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1958), 310-311.

- [9] J. Dwight Pentecost, Things to Come, (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978) 503.
- [10] Michael J. Vlach, Has the Church Replaced Israel? (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2010), 171, 203.
- [11] Barry Horner, Future Israel: Why Christian Anti-Judaism Must be Challenged (Nashville: B & H Academic, 2007), 182-183. Earlier in his volume, Horner speaks of amillennialism as a “sordid” and “disgraceful” eschatology (150).
- [12] Waymeyer, Amillennialism and the Age to Come, 57. Waymeyer’s depiction of an “intermediate millennial kingdom” makes much better sense as a description of the present inter-advental age, which, if anything, is properly understood as an “intermediate age.”
- [13] Calvin, Commentaries on the Twelve Minor Prophets: Zechariah & Malachi (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1986), 5:405.
- [14] See Iain Murray’s The Puritan Hope, (Banner of Truth, 1971), 38, where Murray cites Owen’s sermon “The Advantage of the Kingdom of Christ in the Shaking of the Kingdoms of the World.”
- [15] Geerhardus Vos, The Pauline Eschatology (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1982), 73.
- [16] Gary DeMar, Last Days Madness, (Atlanta: American Vision, 1999), 437-443.
- [17] Gerard Van Groningen, Messianic Revelation in the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1990), 911-913).
- [18] G. K. Beale and D. A. Carson, Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2007), 91, 881.
- [19] Kline, Glory in Our Midst, (Overland Park, KS: Two Age Press, 2001), 246 ff.
- [20] Kline, Glory in Our Midst, (Overland Park, KS: Two Age Press, 2001), 216.
- [21] Baldwin, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi, Logos Bible Software, on 14:1. G. K. Beale, A New Testament Theology: Understanding the Old Testament in the New (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017), 135.
- [22] Cited in Klein, Zechariah, Logos Bible Software, on 14:8.
- [23] Baldwin, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi, Logos Bible Software, on 14:12.
- [24] Baldwin, Haggai, Zechariah and Malachi, Logos Bible Software, on 14:20.

[25] Richard Bauckham, The Climax of Prophecy: Studies in the Theology of the Book of Revelation (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993), 317.