

THE ONE YEAR BIBLE Reading For December 29:

Zechariah 14:1-21:

This last chapter of the book, which closes out the second oracle (12-14), reveals that there will be great opposition against the people of God (decreed by God) and God will defeat these enemies in a time of His coming (14:1-5). This coming (5) comprises the second coming of the LORD spoken of in these two oracles, the first being His coming in humility (9:9). This coming will usher in a time when the world will be transformed (6-7), a time when living waters (suggesting God is the continual source of life) will flow out from Jerusalem (8 [which sets this in the time of the New Heaven and the New Earth, Revelation 21-22, esp. 22:1]), and the LORD will be king over all the earth (9).

The rest of the chapter (9-19) reveals in the language which would be understood by Israel in that day that the LORD will judge all peoples who oppose Him and His people and yet He will save many Gentiles and they will worship the true God and thus be part of this eternal reward (cf. Revelation 21:24).

What we have discovered, then, in the two oracles which comprise the second major section of Zechariah is that the hope of Israel toward the end of the 6th century B.C. is the coming of a divine King who would first come in humility (9:9) and bring salvation for a believing remnant (12:8-9) of both Israel (12:7-9) and Gentiles (14:16-19), a salvation which would be wrought by His being rejected and pierced (12:10), which would result in repentance and great transformation—to the point of reflecting the character and glory of God (12:7-14), as well as complete forgiveness and cleansing (13:1). Though there will be great opposition from those who do not believe, nevertheless, the LORD will defeat all enemies when He comes again, this time with wrath against the wicked and to reign (14:1-5). The LORD will be king over a transformed earth wherein only saints will experience His eternal blessing and all others will experience His wrath (14:9-19).

Revelation 20:1-15:

In chapter 20 John receives another vision, this time of an angel coming down from heaven with a key to the bottomless pit and a great chain (the fact that the vision includes a chain for a spirit being strongly suggests this is a figurative depiction). The dragon, Satan (cf. Revelation 12) is bound for a thousand years. Though interpreters have differed on this passage throughout the history of the Church (some see the 1,000 years as a literal thousand year reign of Christ on earth in the future or at least a literal reign of Christ for a long period of time and others see this long time of binding and reign of Christ as concurrent with the age of the Church), it seems best to understand that Satan's binding is His binding and the demons' binding through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Matthew 12:29; Luke 11:21-22; 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6), which is also understood as his being thrown down to earth and cast out of heaven (Revelation 12) so that his influence over and deception of the nations is so much less that relative to what it had been, it is as if he cannot deceive them (Revelation 20:3). Does this mean that Satan has no power during the Church age? Of course not, he is roaming around like a lion seeking people to devour (1 Peter 5:8), he and his demonic legions are waging battle against the people of God (Ephesians 6:10-18), and knowing his time is short and

influence limited, he is raging against the Church through world powers (Revelation 12). Yet, during the age of the Church, great multitudes from among the nations are coming to Jesus Christ as Savior and thus leaving the realm of Satan. The level of darkness the nations had been in and the deception they had experienced has been done away with and great light has come to them! Satan will be allowed at the end of this age to deceive nations and rally them against God one last time that He might defeat them, show to all the world He has conquered, and then cast Satan, demons, and all unbelievers forever into eternal judgment (3, 7-15).

If we have read this text correctly, then the reign of Christ and the saints with him (both those in heaven and those on earth) is also concurrent with the age of the Church. Those who “came to life” (4) are those who have been spiritually resurrected and who truly live with life eternal and, as such will never truly die (though their bodies will, see John 11:25-26 and also Revelation 20:6). They are those who have remained faithful to Christ and have been marked by Him and not by the beast. This picture is designed to pull back the curtains on the world and history to see heavenly realities and to show saints that Christ reigns, He is carrying out the redemptive plan and purpose of the Father, and they are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s treasured possession (1 Peter 2:9). These saints have been remade as princes and princesses who are crowned with glory and honor and who have dominion over the world (Psalm 8:5-6) and thus carry out the original purpose God had for mankind (Genesis 1:26-28). As such, what God has decreed and what He is orchestrating for this age of the Church is not just for His glory (Eph. 1:11-12), but also for their benefit (Romans 8:28). Though these realities will not always be fully seen, nonetheless, there will come a day when the true state of saints is fully revealed (1 John 3:2-3).

O Christian, understand the glorious place you have in Christ and the glorious future our Lord has for you. Take courage in this, regardless of what difficulties, trials, or persecutions you currently face!

Psalm 148:1-14:

The last five psalms in the entire Psalter focus primarily upon calling readers and everything to praise the LORD. That is certainly true of this psalm. Emphasis is placed upon the fact that all should praise the LORD by calling heaven to (1-6), the earth (7-12), and also His redeemed (13-14). Especially noteworthy is the verse 13 affirmation that the name or reputation (all He is) of the LORD is solely that which should be exalted in the ultimate way; His splendor is greater than all in the heaven and on earth.

Proverbs 31:8-9:

Here in Proverbs 31:1-7 we find the words of King Lemuel. The Reformation Study Bible provides a helpful overview: “Lemuel was not an Israelite king. The nature of this section (vv. 1-9) suggests an Egyptian or perhaps a Babylonian origin. Its intention is apparently vocational, the equipping of the ruler for his task. The form is similar to the instructions of chapters 1-9.... In this case, the teaching is given by the mother.... While the father may have been the principal teacher of the children, godly women also took that role...and there were in Israel noteworthy wise women (2 Samuel 14:2; 20:16).”