

raise the dead, judge the world, and usher in the eternal states of the glorified creation and the lake of fire.

Second, Zechariah 14 refers to the Lord coming with all His holy ones: “the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with thee” (5). This is the Christian hope: the return of the Lord Jesus Christ (“the LORD my God shall come”) accompanied by His holy angels and glorified believers (“all the saints with thee”). In His Olivet discourse, Christ spoke of “the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And he shall send his angels” (Matt. 24:30-31).

Third, Revelation 21-22 explains the fulfilment of three aspects of Zechariah 14 in the new heavens and the new earth. One, with regard to light, Zechariah says, “And it shall come to pass in that day, that the light shall not be clear, nor dark: But it shall be one day which shall be known to the LORD, not day, nor night: but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light” (6-7). John declares, “And the city had no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine in it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the Lamb is the light thereof” (Rev. 21:23). Two, concerning living water, we read, “And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem” (Zech. 14:8). In “the city” (Rev. 21:23), the “new Jerusalem” (2), “he shewed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb” (22:1). Three, both proclaim the removal of God’s curse: “there shall be no more utter destruction [i.e., curse]” (Zech. 14:11) and “there shall be no more curse” (Rev. 22:3).

Here we anticipate an objection: “You have made a good case for Zechariah 14’s predicting the end of the world, including its immediately preceding events and the new creation it ushers in, with your arguments from ‘the day of the LORD’ (1), the Lord’s coming with His holy ones (5), and Zechariah’s prophesies of light, living waters and no curse as fulfilled in Revelation 21-22. But maybe it is only parts of Zechariah 14:1-15 that refer to Christ’s second coming? Perhaps other sections deal with the Maccabees or AD 70 or the New Testament age?”

We observe that Zechariah 14:1-15 consists of six clearly identifiable units: 1-2, 3-5, 6-7, 8, 9-11 and 12-15. Note that there is a temporal indicator in each of the six portions. Verse 1 speaks of “the day of the LORD,” taking care of the first section (1-2). As for the next portion (3-5), it contains the phrase “in that day” (4), referring back to “the day of the LORD” (1), and it predicts the Lord’s coming with all His holy ones (5). The first verse of the next three sections (6-7, 8, 9-11) all include “in that day” (6, 8, 9). This same temporal indicator also occurs in verse 13 in the last unit (12-15).

Furthermore, we will see in our future instalments on Zechariah 14, DV, that everything in the passage fits with this interpretation and nothing opposes it. *Rev. Stewart*

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Zechariah’s Day of the Lord (1)

When a Christian reads Zechariah 14, his main exegetical question can be expressed in one word: when? When did or when will these things come to pass?

Some very deliberately try to make this chapter fit with their millennial systems. The various forms of premillennialism seek to make it compatible with their idea of the millennium, a literalistic 1,000 year reign of Christ on earth. Here one thinks of dispensational premillennialism (with its secret rapture and literal seven-year tribulation), historic Jewish premillennialism (without any secret rapture or literal seven-year tribulation) and historic non-Jewish premillennialism (like the former position only without its Jewish trappings). In fact, the various schools of premillennialism see Zechariah 14 as furnishing them with one of their best arguments for their millennium.

The distinguishing feature of postmillennialism is its claim that Jesus Christ will return to a Christianized world of great earthly peace and prosperity, in which most are believers. For them, Zechariah 14 must fit their eschatological scheme. However, the *Second Helvetic Confession* (1566) summarizes biblical and Reformed teaching: “we condemn the Jewish dreams that before the day of judgment there shall be a golden world in the earth; and that the godly shall possess the kingdoms of the world, their wicked enemies being trodden under foot: for the evangelical truth, Matthew 24 and 25, and Luke 21, and the apostolic doctrine in the second epistle to the Thessalonians 2, and in the second epistle to Timothy 3 and 4, are found to teach far otherwise” (11).

Others interpret Zechariah 14 as being fulfilled in events or ages that have happened or are happening or will happen. Some say that this chapter predicts the wars of the Maccabees in the middle of the intertestamental period. Others reckon that it prophesies the fall of Jerusalem to the Romans in AD 70 or the New Testament age between Pentecost and the end of the world or the Lord’s second coming. To complicate things further, some see Zechariah 14 as speaking of two or more of the above events or periods.

Here are three simple arguments proving that Zechariah 14—here we are especially thinking of its first 15 verses—predicts Christ’s bodily return, including events that immediately precede it, and the new heavens and the new earth that it ushers in.

First, the chapter begins, “Behold, the day of the LORD cometh” (1). An eschatological technical term, “the day of the LORD” in the Old Testament refers to a terrible divine judgment, such as the fall of Samaria or Jerusalem or Babylon, which pictures the end of the world (e.g., Isa. 2:12; 13:6; 34:8; Jer. 46:10; Lam. 2:22; Eze. 30:3; Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11; 3:14; Amos 5:18, 20; Obad. 15; Zeph. 1:7-8, 18; 2:2-3). The day of the Lord in the New Testament is the day of the *Lord Jesus Christ*: His second coming to

(continued on p. 4)

The Order of Regeneration and Faith

Galatians 3:2, 14 reads, “This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? ... That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.” A reader comments, “This would seem to suggest that faith comes before regeneration, but we believe that regeneration is immediate and faith the result. Could you please explain?”

The question of the place of faith in the order of salvation as applied to the elect has exercised the church for many years. This was especially true of the Reformed churches in the Netherlands. The great Dutch theologian, Herman Bavinck, even wrote a book entitled *Roeping en Wedergeborte* (English: *Saved by Grace: The Holy Spirit's Work in Calling and Regeneration*). I believe that the order of salvation is regeneration, calling, faith, justification, sanctification and glorification. But Bavinck placed calling before regeneration for he believed in mediate regeneration, that is, regeneration by means of the preaching of the gospel. He reckoned that God used the call of the preaching to regenerate the elect, but totally depraved, sinner and so give him faith.

That discussion especially concerned the relationship between regeneration and calling through the preaching of the gospel. The present question is the relation between faith and regeneration. Nevertheless, the two are closely related.

It seems to me that there is an assumption of the questioner, namely, that the faith referred to is the *conscious* faith of the believer whereby he looks to Christ as his only Saviour and Lord. But Galatians 3:2-5 is not referring to the *initial* work of the Spirit by which God saves the sinner but to the extraordinary signs of the Holy Ghost, such as performing miracles (cf. 5), etc. These gifts were the fruit of conscious faith in Christ.

Regeneration, in which God begins His work of salvation in the heart of the elect sinner, is the gift of the new life that Christ earned for His people by His cross and resurrection (I Pet. 1:3). This work of the Holy Spirit occurs below our consciousness and principally contains in it the whole of our salvation: faith, conversion, justification, sanctification and glorification (Eph. 1:3). The “seed” of regeneration (I Pet. 1:23; I John 3:9) develops into all the other blessings consciously received by the child of God. It develops as an acorn contains the entire oak in seed form but does not produce the whole oak until it grows into a tree.

It is my judgment that Galatians 3:2-5 teaches that the Holy Spirit gave some in the early church the power to do miracles, speak in other languages, etc. My ground for saying this is that Paul speaks of receiving the Spirit “by the hearing of faith.” The genitive “of faith” is a genitive of source, that is, hearing has its source in faith. One must have faith (as a power) before one can truly hear the gospel and lay hold on it (faith as an activity). One will only hear the gospel, in the sense of believing it to be the saving Word of Christ to him, if the Spirit has first worked faith in his heart.

There is the two-edged sword of the gospel. Jesus speaks of this in Matthew 13:13,

where He quotes Isaiah 6:9-10 to explain the (unbelieving) hearing of the gospel by those who do not have faith: “Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.” To those who believe, Christ proclaims, “But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear” (Matt. 13:16).

Now we need to say more about the order of salvation with regard to faith and regeneration. The Arminian heresy teaches that one must, by one’s own free will, ask for regeneration before one receives it. It was this carnal idea that faith precedes regeneration that prompted Billy Graham to write a book entitled, *How to Be Born Again*.

How foolish! One can no more give oneself the spiritual birth than one can give oneself a physical birth. Only those possessing spiritual life can manifest it in believing the gospel. Only those with a new heart can trust in Jesus Christ from the heart.

Without contradicting what has just been said and without falling into any form of Arminianism, there is a sense, however, in which regeneration and faith come logically and chronologically in exactly the same place in the order of salvation.

To explain, I need to distinguish more clearly two different aspects of faith: faith as a bond or a power and faith as an activity. Most are familiar with the latter so I will now set forth the former with the help of *Heidelberg Catechism*, Lord’s Day 7. The *Catechism* has spoken of the total depravity of those who are in the generations of Adam and Eve. The *Catechism* has said that the only way to be saved from this sinful state is by the Mediator, Jesus Christ. Then comes the inevitable question: “Are all men then, as they perished in Adam, saved by Christ?” The answer is most emphatic: NO!

If all men are not saved, who then is saved? The answer is “only those who are ingrafted into [Christ] ... by a true faith.” The figure of grafting, used here, comes from John 15. It is a technique practised in horticulture. The figure is this. Christ is the vine. He lives out of His own life, which He gained through His mighty resurrection from the dead. Of ourselves, we are dead branches with no life. But we are grafted into Christ. It is His life that we receive at regeneration. It is new life, life free from sin, life greater than Adam possessed, life of covenant fellowship with the Triune God.

This life comes to us only through the bond of faith which grafts us into Christ. This is faith: the graft that binds us to Christ. Out of this graft or bond of faith comes the activity of faith, our receiving as truth all that God has revealed in His Word and resting in Jesus Christ crucified for all of our salvation.

Like regeneration, the graft of faith is given us by God without our being conscious of it at the time. This bond of faith is given to some covenant children even before they are born physically, like Jacob (Gen. 25:22-26; Hos. 12:3; Rom. 9:11-13). This faith puts us into union with Christ, our life. One cannot graft a branch into another tree without the life of the mother tree flowing into the branch. We received the life of Christ, eternal life, when we were born again or grafted into Him by a true faith. Out of this flows our conscious trusting of Him—the activity of faith. Let us abide in Christ and His love, as John 15 teaches!

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