

of the book of Zechariah: “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. And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it. And the gates of it shall not be shut at all by day: for there shall be no night there ... And there shall be no night there; and they need no candle, neither light of the sun; for the Lord God giveth them light: and they shall reign for ever and ever” (Rev. 21:23-25; 22:5).

Regarding this endless day in the new heavens and the new earth in the eternal state, Rev. Ron Hanko explains that Zechariah 14:7 “has nothing to do with this present world but with that which is to come, for God has promised that day and night, summer and winter, seed time and harvest will not cease while the world lasts [Gen. 8:22]. Only in the new creation will these cease. It will be a new world in which righteousness dwells. Neither the death that winter brings nor night that so often becomes a covering for wickedness will last into the new world” (*The Coming of Zion’s Redeemer* [Jenison, MI: RFP, 2014], p. 397—available from the CPRC Bookstore for £24, inc. P&P in the UK).

We close with some brief words of application from our consideration of Zechariah 14:1-15 in these seven issues of the *News*. First, the right interpretation of the apocalyptic predictions of the Old Testament prophets is not literalism, the hermeneutic of Anabaptism in the sixteenth century and onwards. We hold to scripturalism, Scripture interprets Scripture—the great Reformation hermeneutic.

Second, the nature of the Christian hope is not that of an Old Testament Judaizing. We do not, and must not, look for an earthly kingdom for the Jews with the imposition of Mosaic and Ezekelian ceremonial and civil laws for a literal 1,000 years. Rather, ours is a New Testament, heavenly hope in our Lord Jesus.

Third, the content of our hope is the second coming of Christ (Titus 2:13), who is God the Son as to His Person (Zech. 14:1, 3, 5), with His holy angels and glorified saints (5). Through His holy warfare against the wicked (3, 12-15), He shall rescue His persecuted and beleaguered church (1-2). Out of the awesome earthquake (4-5, 10-11)—accompanied by a heaven quake (Isa. 13:13; 34:4; Rev. 6:12-14)—which He will send, will come the new heavens and the new earth (Rom. 8:17-25; II Pet. 3; Rev. 21-22).

As Jehovah’s elect, redeemed and glorified people, we will enjoy perfect satisfaction through the river of living waters (Zech. 14:8)—the Holy Spirit Himself—which flows from God’s throne through our Lord Jesus Christ, for “the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one” (9). Then we shall have no need for the illumination of sun, moon, stars, candles, bulbs or LEDs, for the crucified and risen Lamb will be our everlasting and blessed light (6-7)! *Rev. Stewart*

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Zechariah’s Day of the Lord (7)

In our seventh and last article on “Zechariah’s Day of the Lord” (Zech. 14:1-15), we come to the sixth and final main theme in the passage: the change in cosmic light (6-7). Thus Zechariah speaks not only of moving mountains and flowing rivers on earth (our fourth and fifth motifs), but also a transformation regarding light from heaven.

The prophet declares, “And it shall come to pass in that day [i.e., the day of the Lord], that the light shall not be clear, nor dark” (6). The idea of the original Hebrew is that “there will not be light; the glorious ones will diminish.”

Zechariah’s prediction is in accord with the other Old Testament prophets. However, whereas the son of Berechiah (1:1) especially speaks of the ceasing of natural light (the effect), they refer to the darkening of the heavenly sources of light (the cause). Joel mentions two, and then three, heavenly bodies: “The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the Lord come” (2:31); “The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining” (3:15). Isaiah even includes constellations of stars: “For the stars of heaven and the constellations thereof shall not give their light: the sun shall be darkened in his going forth, and the moon shall not cause her light to shine” (13:10).

In His Olivet discourse, our Lord Jesus Christ clearly identified the fulfilment of these prophecies as coming at His own bodily return: “Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken: And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory” (Matt. 24:29-30).

Zechariah states that only Jehovah knows when that day will come: “But it shall be one day which shall be known to the Lord” (14:7). Returning to the Mount of Olives, we have Christ’s own application and amplification of this Old Testament prophecy to His own second coming: “But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only” (Matt. 24:36).

Zechariah adds that, after the day of Christ’s return (which is unknown to all creatures), it will be “not day, nor night: but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light” (14:7). No longer will there be the cycle of day (and light) and night (and darkness), for there will be light at all times.

The last two chapters of the Bible identify and explain this verse from the last chapter

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The People in Ezekiel 18

A reader asks, “Are the people mentioned in Ezekiel 18 believers and unbelievers or, as I have understood it, believers who live a sinful life and believers who live a godly life? I do think so, because the chapter specifically mentions Israel, God’s people.”

While the question refers to the whole chapter, the heart of the issue lies in verse 23: “Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord GOD: and not that he should turn from his ways, and live?” It is well, however, for our readers to read the entire chapter of Ezekiel 18.

Many will recognize immediately that this was, and is, one of the texts quoted by defenders of the well-meant gospel offer. This heretical view claims that the omnipotent and unchangeable God desires the salvation of all men and makes it possible for everybody, by a work of common grace, to choose either for Jesus or the world.

I have written a book that shows that the church of Christ since the time of Augustine has repudiated this heresy: *Corrupting the Word of God: The History of the Well-Meant Offer*. It can be obtained from the CPRC Bookstore for £16.50 (inc. P&P in the UK) or from the RFPA in the US (www.rfpa.org).

These words of Ezekiel were spoken to all the nation of Israel, though only that part of it that was brought to Babylon in the first captivity under Jehoiakim (1:2). They are not spoken only to believing Israel.

Ezekiel’s words were addressed to the “visible church,” the church on earth as it manifests itself in established congregations. The visible church is composed of believers and unbelievers who hear the Word preached, whether in Old or New Testament days.

Hearing this preaching does not, however, express Jehovah’s desire to save all men head for head. Nor does it imply that God’s gift of grace enables everybody to make a choice either for or against the gospel.

In the early part of the seventeenth century, the Arminians taught that God loves all men, Christ died for all men and God expresses His desire to save all men in the preaching of the gospel. Our fathers at the Synod of Dordt (1618-1619) answered the Arminians by rejecting their dreadful heresy and also stating what the preaching was about and to whom it was addressed.

In the first important article on this subject, *Canons of Dordt* II:5, our fathers made several important biblical points. The gospel, they said, comes to the hearing of both the elect and the reprobate. It speaks to them of the fact that God’s promise is for those who believe in Christ crucified. It also speaks of judgment upon those who do not believe.

The preacher does not know who the elect and the reprobate are, for he cannot see men’s hearts. The Holy Spirit knows and He applies the truths of the gospel to those who truly believe and those who do not.

Understand what this means. There are elect who are walking in sin. God uses the preaching of the gospel, both of promise and warning, to them to bring them to faith in Christ. But God uses both the promise of the gospel to believers and the warning of

the gospel to unbelievers to harden the reprobate (II Cor. 2:15-16).

Canons III/IV:8-9 look at the preaching from an additional viewpoint, that of the utter seriousness of God in bringing to mankind the command to believe and repent. The elect trust in Christ and turn from their sin; the reprobate do not.

When God promises that those who believe will be saved and those who reject the gospel will be damned, He is utterly and totally serious (Mark 16:16). He is incapable of acting insincerely or in any way doing something that He does not mean to do. (The well-meant gospel offer teaches that God says something in the gospel which He does not mean to do: He says He loves all men and wants to save them, yet He does not actually do it.) When He promises life and blessing to those who believe, He will surely do that. When He threatens the wicked with eternal punishment, if they reject Christ proclaimed in the gospel, He will surely do that. That word is heard by all. The reprobate too hear God say to them, “I promise salvation to those who believe.”

When the Almighty proclaims the promise of the gospel so that the wicked also hear it, He is speaking also to them that He will bless with salvation all who repent of their evil ways and believe in Christ. He is not playing games with them or fooling them; He is not saying something He does not mean; He is serious in His call both to punish evil-doers and bless penitent sinners. This is the meaning of Ezekiel 18.

That immediately brings up another question, which Calvin already faced over 450 years ago. The question is: what about the doctrine of reprobation? God sovereignly and eternally determines to reveal His attributes of justice and holiness in punishing the sinner with everlasting punishment in hell. That is, He reprobates some of the human race.

Calvin carefully distinguished between the will of God’s command and the will of God’s decree. The former is His command that all men obey Him. The will of His decree includes both election and reprobation.

Calvin also taught that these two wills of God are not contrary to each other but rather that the will of God’s command serves the will of His decree. That is, God commands all men to believe, which command serves the decree of reprobation because God is not the author of sin, for man is responsible for his own sin.

Man was created good and upright. He fell by his own decision to serve Satan rather than obey God. Man did this in Adam, the head of the human race, and so all men sinned in Adam (Rom. 5:12-14).

This brings us to the age-old question: What is the relation between God’s sovereignty and man’s responsibility? Both are true: God is absolutely sovereign and man remains responsible for his sin because he wills to sin. God does not make him sin and He does not coerce man’s will.

I realize that this is not the whole answer but it is as far as Scripture will let us go. Here then, we do not pry curiously into the hidden will of God (Deut. 29:29; *Canons* I:14). The Triune God is so high above us and we are of so little understanding that His will is always far above our feeble and darkened minds. We rest in the infinite greatness of a holy God. Here we have peace.

Prof. Hanko