

DECEMBER 29

This is exciting. If you have been keeping up, you are on the verge of a major accomplishment. The struggle is worth it, and trust me - next year will be easier. I can also tell you, you will get more out of reading the Bible next year. Not only will you become more familiar with what God is saying, but you will understand His heart more and more each year. When you are filled with His Word, it becomes easier to trust Him. Also, your life changes and as it does, the Holy Spirit highlights things in different ways to teach, comfort and correct. More and more you will find that something you have read that day will be used to warn you from doing something, or it will be the truth you needed that day to keep you following Christ in the harvest.

Just a couple more days to go. In our reading today we are not at the end of history, but you can see it from here.

Zechariah 14

Vs. 1-3 We are at the very end of the Tribulation. As this army attacks Jerusalem, Zechariah recounts the gruesome scene. Apparently this will last a couple of days since there are people taken alive out of the city. At first, the attacking army will be victorious. This will be the reason the people will be crying out for the Messiah. It is in this devastation as Jesus returns and they visually see Him returning, that the tables are turned. Since Jesus said there would be an awesome sign in the sky like lightning that would herald His coming, it could be that the sign in the heavens is what terrifies this army. At the same time, the Jews in Jerusalem are given a supernatural courage and strength, and they turn the tide. As seen yesterday, apparently the people in the surrounding area see the change in the fighting in Jerusalem and join in to help. Then it looks like Jesus comes visibly and helps out.

Vs. 4-5 Notice the mentions of *on that day*. Apparently Jesus appears first and then everyone sees the army of *holy ones* we saw yesterday in Revelation.

Vs. 6-7 This will be different from the day of battle where Joshua asked for the sun to stand still.

V. 8 We have read about this river that will flow out from under the temple. Ezekiel only told us of the part that flows eastward to the Dead Sea. In Revelation 21:2 we will see that this river with its trees is for the nations to come and be healed during the Millennium.

V. 9 This is the beginning of the Millennial Kingdom and Jesus' eternal reign.

Vs. 10-11 We saw in Revelation 16:20 how at the seventh bowl there was a worldwide earthquake that leveled the mountains.

Vs. 12-15 It looks like amid the terror and confusion of the return of the Lord, the opposing armies are also hit with a plague. Apparently they will rot standing. According to Revelation 19, the birds are called in for clean-up. Although this is a plague, you have to think of what would happen to any of us if God took away His sustaining power from us for 10 seconds. All men are frail and live only by His power. God revoked His image, and Nebuchadnezzar, the great king, became an animal and lost everything. If God revoked His thought from us, we'd fall apart. When He revokes His breath, we die.

Vs. 16-19 This description is only with regard to the people of the nations that are allowed to go into the Millennial Kingdom and describes their submission to Jesus and their requirement to come to Jerusalem yearly. Although we don't have a lot of information about life in the Millennium, we know that there will be an initial judgment within days or weeks of Jesus' arrival separating the wicked from the righteous (weeds and wheat [Mat. 13:24-43], good fish-bad fish [Mat. 13:47-50], sheep and goats [Mat. 25:31-46]) so that these thousand years begin only with people who are believing and in submission to Christ. We know that there will be a need for healing and rebuilding in the world. We know that certain resurrected people will act as leaders,

governors, mayors, guiding the people and nations of the world. People will come to Jerusalem for the healing trees. We also know from Ezekiel that there will be memorial sacrifices, remembering the sacrifice of Christ; but these will be celebratory in their focus, not saving or substituting. As we saw in Ezekiel the Feast of Booths will be held, but not the Day of Atonement that accompanied it. Atonement has already been made.

As we are about to read in Revelation, even in a perfect world without Satan to deceive mankind, the sin of man will still grow and rebel against God. When Satan is released after 1000 years, he will find people all over the world who are willing to follow him and come against Israel and God.

Vs. 20-21 *The house of the Lord* will be a busy, festive place – a sign that all is well on the earth.

Revelation 20

And now for the rest of the story.

Vs. 1-3 Notice that Satan is thrown into a pit, not into hell. His angels are with him. I'll bet that'll be no party. Notice in v. 3 that he "must" be released. There is a plan and a purpose ordained in what God is doing.

Vs. 4-6 The Millennial Kingdom hasn't yet begun, but it is close. First, there is judgment.

V. 6 It is generally understood that everyone who is believing, not just the Tribulation saints, but all the OT believers, are resurrected here. (Those who believe in the pre-tribulation rapture of the church understand that the church on earth was transformed and that the "dead in Christ" were raised before the beginning of the Tribulation. 1 Cor. 15:51-52) This "first resurrection" mentioned here is only "first" in reference to the next resurrection at the end of the Millennial Kingdom. Note that only those who are resurrected now are not affected by the second death. This means that all those who are resurrected in the second resurrection experience the second death. This means that all the saved of all generations will be resurrected at the first resurrection and will enjoy the Millennial Kingdom. In fact, some of those who are raised will reign with Jesus as leaders in the world, directing countries, cities and many offices in governments. One of these will be King David. (Ezekiel 37:25) Again as I understand it, the church had already been resurrected at the rapture before the Tribulation began.

Vs. 7-10 The army that Satan is able to amass at the end of the Millennium is huge, like the sand of the sea. This means that even though people will see Jesus and speak with Him, they will still choose to hate Him. Sin trumps rationality. How do you hate the person who gives you life, who is the Creator of the very reality you choose to rebel against? This rebellion by mankind is the last piece of the puzzle that gives Jesus His right to cast rebellious mankind into hell. It is what sets up the final judgment before the white throne. We, not Satan, are responsible for our own sin. Sin is and always has been our problem. Faith in God and His Word has always been the solution. People born during the Millennium have now seen and not believed for a thousand years. Having rejected God's offer of help and salvation, they deserve to be cast from His presence into *the lake of fire*. This will lay to rest the saying, "The devil made me do it." It will also lay to rest every other argument. There will be a perfect world, and mankind will see God and they still won't like Him. God's judgment is absolutely righteous.

V. 10 Notice that there is torment in hell. There is no semblance of activity or life, or government or parties. It is only punishment. All those stories about the parties in hell and hell being where all the cool people are is utter baloney. Also, Satan will not be "ruling." He will also be in torment, humbled to the level of those he worked to corrupt.

Vs. 11-15 This is the resurrection to judgment. No believer will appear before the white throne. In Jesus' descriptions of judgment in John 5:28-29 and in the parable of the sheep and goats in Matthew 25:31-46, the righteous were resurrected first and the unrighteous were then judged and

sentenced. He just didn't say the different resurrections would be separated by a thousand years. Jesus will prove the righteousness of judgment by what is written in the books. The dead who are raised will be given an eternal body, but their spirit was never reborn, recreated in Christ. Their sinful nature, at death, was judged and became a permanent fixture of their being. Now, even in their new body, they are rebellious of heart. There is no second chance. They had their second, third, fourth...chances during their life on earth. What is interesting to me is that this judgment isn't given any drama. Earth's history has been tragic. The judgment is concluded. The end of that sad history deserves only a brief description.

V. 14 Notice that both *Death and Hades*, that place of waiting, are gone forever.

Praise God! We are here now to work in His harvest, knowing that we, and all those who believe, will be blessed forever in Christ.

Psalm 148

What better way to conclude the sad tragedy of fallen earthly history than with praise to God. This is one of those songs of worship that included the plan of redemption. Notice that in v. 11 all kings and nations are called upon to praise the Lord.

Vs. 1-2 As we've read, someday this will be totally true, and we'll be there to see it.

Vs. 3-10 Romans 8:19-22 says that the creation waits for our redemption.

Vs. 11-12 And there will come a time when all who are on the earth will praise the Lord.

Vs. 13-14 This is why they were to praise God. He *raised up a horn*, or as Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, prophesied in Luke 1:69, "*and has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David.*"

Jesus was that King, the King who has saved us and who will return and reign forever.

Proverbs 31:8-9

King Lemuel's mother also told him this, and God thought it was worth passing on. It is interesting when you read about what Jesus was sent to do, that one of those things was to preach good news to the poor and to bring justice to victory. (Matt. 12:20) Our Lord wants us to have a heart for the poor and those who need justice, but the most important thing we have to offer is the good news.

Luke 4:18-21 (Jesus reading Isaiah in the synagogue in Nazareth) "*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.*" And he closed the book, and gave it back to the attendant, and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him. And he began to say to them, "*Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.*"