

The Resurrection of the Saints-Through the Eyes of the World Sukkot Message - 5771

INTRO:

A. Sukkot = The Feast of Tabernacle,

Resurrection of Isaac = The Death and Resurrection of Yeshua = **Talks about His Sacrifice**

Resurrection of Jonah = The Death and Resurrection of Yeshua= **Talks about His Sign**

Resurrection of Saints = The Death and Resurrection of Yeshua=**Talks about His Saints**

During his 1960 presidential campaign, John F. Kennedy often closed his speeches with the story of Colonel Davenport, the Speaker of the Connecticut House of Representatives: On May 19th, 1780 the sky of Hartford darkened ominously, and some of the representatives, glancing out the windows, feared the end was at hand. Quelling a clamor for immediate adjournment, Davenport rose and said, "The Day of Judgment is either approaching or it is not. If it is not, there is no cause for adjournment. If it is, I choose to be found doing my duty. Therefore, I wish that candles be brought." Rather than fearing what is to come, we are to be faithful till Christ returns. Instead of fearing the dark, we're to be lights as we watch and wait.

The most significant event in Bible prophecy is the Second Coming of Jesus Christ. It is an event so important that there are over 300 separate prophecies relating to it in the Word of God, making it one of the most important doctrines in the Bible. It is the key that unlocks the door that leads to the future. No Christian can be said to have a well-rounded faith who does not understand the basic truth about the Second Coming of Christ. All the roads of history and prophecy converge at this point.

David Jeremiah notes that "for every biblical prophecy on the first coming of Christ, there are eight concerning his second coming." This ought to alert us to the importance of our topic. Christians have always believed that one day Christ will return to the earth. It is the climax of our creeds and the final proof of the sovereignty of God over human history. His coming will bring an end to this age and usher in the coming kingdom of Christ. His return will bring us the final stage of our redemption, the culmination of all that God has promised to those who love his Son.

I The Biblical Look at the Coming of the Messiah

Zechariah 14 – The Coming of the Lord

A. Israel attacked but defended by the Lord.

1. (1-2) Jerusalem under siege from the nations.

Behold, the day of the Lord is coming, and your spoil will be divided in your midst. For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem; the city shall be taken, the houses rifled, and the women ravished. Half of the city shall go into captivity, but the remnant of the people shall not be cut off from the city.

a. **I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem:** Zechariah seems to have the very end times in view, when Jerusalem will be surrounded and attacked by some type of international force. When the Romans came against Jerusalem in 70 a.d. they came with a multinational army and brought terrible destruction on the city and its people. Yet there was none of the deliverance that Zechariah will describe in the following verses, so it is difficult to say that this was fulfilled

in the Roman attack upon Jerusalem in 70 a.d.

b. **Half the city shall go into captivity:** This attack against Jerusalem will be severe, but the city itself will not be overthrown (**the remnant of the people shall not be cut off from the city**).

2. (3-5) The Messiah intervenes for His people.

Then the Lord will go forth and fight against those nations, as He fights in the day of battle. And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, from east to west, making a very large valley; half of the mountain shall move toward the north and half of it toward the south. Then you shall flee through My mountain valley, for the mountain valley shall reach to Azal. Yes, you shall flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Thus the Lord my God will come, and all the saints with You.

a. **Then the Lord will go forth and fight:** Just when it seems that all hope is gone for Jerusalem and the people of Israel, then the Lord will fight for His people.

i. “God is said to *go forth* when he manifests his power by delivering his people and punishing their enemies.” (Pulpit)

b. **His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives . . . And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, from east to west:** This speaks of the Lord - coming to a material earth and setting His feet on **the Mount of Olives**. At that time a great split will cut the Mount of Olives in two, and the persecuted people of Jerusalem will **flee through** the valley made by the split.

c. **Thus the Lord my God will come, and all the saints with You:** The Lord will touch His feet to the Mount of Olives when He returns in glory with **all the saints**, the *armies of heaven*

i. This was the type of arrival the Jews in Jesus’ day hoped for. Indeed, when the Roman armies surrounded Jerusalem in 70 a.d. a mistaken assurance from prophecies like this made the Jews utterly confident that the Messiah would come from heaven and wipe out the Roman armies surrounding Jerusalem. They could not see that the Messiah must first be rejected and the nation brought to repentance as Zechariah mentioned in 11:12-13 and 12:10.

ii. *All the Saints with Him: This little line has such a huge implication on the future.**

d. Not only does Zechariah lay out the End Times, he does it with precision:

- Jerusalem will be ravaged
- Half the city will go into hiding
- When all seems lost, The LORD comes and fights for His people
- He comes specifically placing his feet on the Mount of Olives
- The Lord comes with an army = The Resurrected Saints

B. The Kingdom of the Messiah.

1. (6-11) The Lord’s rule changes the earth.

It shall come to pass in that day that there will be no light; the lights will diminish. It shall be one day which is known to the Lord; neither day nor night. But at evening time it shall happen that it will be light. And in that day it shall be that living waters shall flow from Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea and half of them toward the western sea; in both summer and winter it shall occur. And the Lord shall be King over all the earth. In that day it shall be; “The Lord is one,” and His name one. All the land shall be turned into a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem.

Jerusalem shall be raised up and inhabited in her place from Benjamin's Gate to the place of the First Gate and the Corner Gate, and from the Tower of Hananeel to the king's winepresses. The people shall dwell in it; and no longer shall there be utter destruction, but Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited.

a. **At evening time it shall happen that it will be light:** Now Zechariah looks forward to the glory of Jerusalem in the Messiah's kingdom. The lights we guide our lives by **will diminish**, but God will bring His own light.

b. **Living waters shall flow from Jerusalem:** Jerusalem will no longer be a dry city, but a glorious river will flow from the city and branch off both east and west, and it will be a never ending flow (**in both summer and winter it shall occur**).

i. All over the world people want to know what will happen to Jerusalem. Zechariah knows the answer - God will gloriously save and restore Jerusalem, making it the capital city of the millennial earth.

ii. Ezekiel 47 records a vision that may describe this scene. Ezekiel saw a river flowing from the throne of God and down to the Dead Sea, bringing life and vitality everywhere.

d. *And The Lord shall be King over all the earth: This passage lays out an interesting premise that has always been known in Scripture, The LORD is King!**

iii. I Kings states the People didn't reject Samuel's sons but they rejected the Lord as King

iv. The idea of King implies the Lord could be the Messiah as well

c. **All the land shall be turned into a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem:** Since the mountains around Jerusalem are no longer needed as a defense, they can be flattened into a plain.

d. **Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited:** This will be the first time in a long time that Jerusalem will be a safe place to live.

2. (12-15) Enemies are forever plagued.

And this shall be the plague with which the Lord will strike all the people who fought against Jerusalem: Their flesh shall dissolve while they stand on their feet, their eyes shall dissolve in their sockets, and their tongues shall dissolve in their mouths. It shall come to pass in that day that a great panic from the Lord will be among them. Everyone will seize the hand of his neighbor, and raise his hand against his neighbor's hand; Judah also will fight at Jerusalem. And the wealth of all the surrounding nations shall be gathered together: Gold, silver, and apparel in great abundance. Such also shall be the plague on the horse and the mule, on the camel and the donkey, and on all the cattle that will be in those camps. So shall this plague be.

a. **Their flesh shall dissolve while they stand on their feet:** In the glorious deliverance the Messiah brings, the enemies of God and His people are destroyed by plague, mutual slaughter, and by the sword of Judah (**Judah also will fight at Jerusalem**).

i. The description of flesh dissolving makes some think that Zechariah is describing the effects of a neutron or nuclear bomb.

b. **The wealth of all the surrounding nations shall be gathered together:** In the glorious deliverance the Messiah brings, Jerusalem will become a wealthy and influential city again.

3. (16-19) All the nations come to Jerusalem to worship the Lord.

And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. And it shall be that whichever of the families of the earth do not come up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, on them there will be no rain. If the family of Egypt will not come up and enter in, they shall have no rain; they shall receive the plague with which the Lord strikes the nations who do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. This shall be the punishment of Egypt and the punishment of all the nations that do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.

a. **Shall go up from year to year to worship the King:** Instead of coming to Jerusalem for battle now the nations come to honor God and to remember His faithfulness to Israel in the wilderness by keeping the **Feast of Tabernacles**.

i. Jesus told us to go to the ends of the earth with the gospel but in the millennium the earth will come to Jerusalem to worship and honor God.

b. **Whichever of the families of the earth do not come up to Jerusalem . . . on them there will be no rain:** God won't *make* people worship Him during the millennium, but the advantages of worshipping and honoring God will be more evident than ever.

c. **If the family of Egypt will not come up and enter in, they shall have no rain:** Egypt is specifically mentioned because they were a nation not especially dependant on rain, yet they too would be punished if disobedient.

4. (20-21) The common is made holy.

In that day "Holiness to the Lord" shall be engraved on the bells of the horses. The pots in the Lord's house shall be like the bowls before the altar. Yes, every pot in Jerusalem and Judah shall be holiness to the Lord of hosts. Everyone who sacrifices shall come and take them and cook in them. In that day there shall no longer be a Canaanite in the house of the Lord of hosts.

a. **In that day "Holiness to the Lord" shall be engraved on the bells of the horses:** This was the great inscription on the metal band around the high priest's headpiece (Exodus 28:36). In the glory of the Messiah's kingdom horses won't be needed for war any longer - now even they can wear the emblems of **Holiness to the Lord**.

b. **The pots in the Lord's house:** These were the cooking utensils used by worshippers to cook for their own the sacrificial meat intended for them from the peace offerings. The **bowls before the altar** were used to gather and sprinkle sacrificial blood on the altar. These show that animal sacrifice will continue in the millennium, but *not as atonement for sin* - which was perfectly satisfied by the atoning work of Jesus. Sacrifice in the millennium will look back to the perfect work of Jesus.

c. **Every pot in Jerusalem and Judah shall be holiness to the Lord of hosts:** In the glory of the Messiah's kingdom, what was previously common is made holy; the holy is made holier; and the irreclaimably profane is forever shut out. At the end of it all, there is no longer any distinction between the holy and profane. All is set apart to God and His purposes.

i. "The point is that the people and the city will be so holy that even these insignificant things will be fully dedicated to the Lord." (Boice)

II The N.T look at the Death, Resurrection and Return of the Messiah

“The Sign of His Return”

As we approach the High Holy Days, I believe there is some important evidence that is often overlooked in regard to Messiah’s two-fold ministry. Sukkot (The Feast of Tabernacles), besides being a celebration of the fall harvest, is also understood to be a prophetic picture of the Kingdom of Messiah. We build our Sukkot/temporary huts to remind us of the great truth that the day is coming when Messiah will “dwell or tabernacle” in our midst and fulfill the promises as the son of David. This must be the reason that Prophets foretell of the kingdom celebration of this feast among all the redeemed, both Jew and non-Jew:

“Then it will come about that any who are left of all the nations that went against Jerusalem will go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles” (Zechariah 14:16).

Zechariah 14:16-17 And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations that came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, Jehovah of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles. And it shall be, that whoso of all the families of the earth goeth not up unto Jerusalem to worship the King, Jehovah of hosts, upon them there shall be no rain.

The God-ordained Feast of Tabernacles is a prophetic feast, and one which will be kept by all the people of the world in the coming age. In resurrected bodies, we will be celebrating this feast, year to year in Jerusalem during the millennial reign of Yeshua (Jesus)! Can you imagine it – celebrating with the King of Kings! If that’s not something to anticipate, I’m not sure what is!

A. Jesus Christ returns to a hostile earth with the saints

1. (11-16) Jesus returns to earth with an army from heaven.

Now I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. And He who sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and makes war. His eyes were like a flame of fire, and on His head were many crowns. He had a name written that no one knew except Himself. He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God. And the armies in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, followed Him on white horses. Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

a. **Now I saw heaven opened, and behold:** There is a sense in which all previous in Revelation has been an introduction to this *revelation* (unveiling) of Jesus Christ. Now He returns to earth in power and glory.

i. According to Zechariah 14:3-4, when Jesus returns He will come first the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem. The plea of Isaiah 64:1-2 is now fulfilled: *Oh, that You would rend the heavens! That You would come down! That the mountains might shake at Your presence; as fire burns brushwood, as fire causes water to boil; to make Your name known to Your adversaries, that the nations may tremble at Your presence!*

ii. This prayer for deliverance will be on the lips of the Jewish people surviving through the Great Tribulation. Unlikely as it may seem now, they will cry out to Jesus their Messiah for deliverance, and as a whole, they will embrace Him as

their Savior. As Jesus said in Matthew 23:39: *I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, "Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord!"* Hard pressed by the terrible persecution of the Antichrist, Israel as a whole will turn their hearts towards Jesus, and He will deliver them at this late hour.

iii. When Jesus comes, He comes on a **white horse**. In Biblical times, especially among Israel, most soldiers were *foot soldiers*. To have a **horse** in battle was a significant advantage. A horse spoke of *honor*, of *power*, and of *speed*; the color of this horse speaks of *victory*.

b. **Faithful and True**: This glorious title shows Jesus is the keeper of promises, including His promises of judgment.

c. **In righteousness He judges and makes war**: Jesus comes as a judge and a general, to make war. The world that rejected Him before rejects Him again, but this time Jesus judges those who reject Him.

i. "The world likes a complacent, reasonable religion, and so it is always ready to revere some pale Galilean image of Jesus, some meager anemic Messiah, and to give Him a moderate rational homage." (Torrance)

ii. "Any view of God which eliminates judgment and his hatred of sin in the interest of an emasculated doctrine of sentimental affection finds no support in the strong and virile realism of the Apocalypse." (Mounce)

iii. This is a Jesus we can't control. Here we see Jesus as someone who demands not only our attention, but also our submission.

iv. It's good for us to remember that this dramatic display of judgment comes *only at the end* of a long time of grace, patience, and mercy. This is no "rush to judgment." Jesus has *amply* displayed His nature of mercy, forgiveness and grace to this fallen world. He comes now to judge a world hardened and totally given over to their rebellion against Him.

v. "All of these passages point to the sad conclusion that in the day of judgment it is too late for men to expect the mercy of God. There is nothing more inflexible than divine judgment where grace has been spurned. The scene of awful judgment which comes from this background is in flat contradiction of the modern point of view that God is dominated entirely by His attribute of love." (Walvoord)

vi. Remember that He does it all in **righteousness**. "The wars which *he* wages are from no principle of ambition, lust of power, or extension of conquest and dominion; they are *righteous* in their *principle* and in their *object*. And this is perhaps what no earthly potentate could ever say." (Clarke)

vii. "Jesus is the only king who always wars in this fashion. There have been brilliant exceptions to the general rule, but war is usually as deceitful as it is bloody, and the words of diplomatists are a mass of lies. It seems impossible that men should deliberate about peace and war without straightway forgetting the meaning of words and the bonds of honesty: War still seems to be a piece of business in which truth would be out of place; it is a matter so accursed that falsehood is there most at home, and righteousness quits the plain. But as for our King, it is in righteousness that he doth judge and make war. Christ's kingdom needs no deception: the plainest speech and the clearest truth — these are the weapons of our warfare." (Spurgeon)

d. **His eyes were like a flame of fire:** “Why are they like flames of fire? Why, first, to discern the secrets of all hearts. There are no secrets here that Christ does not see. There is no lewd thought, there is no unbelieving scepticism, that Christ does not read. There is no hypocrisy, no formalism, no deceit, that he does not scan as easily as a man reads a page in a book. His eyes are like a flame of fire to read us through and through, and know us to our inmost soul.” (Spurgeon)

e. **On His head were many crowns:** The last time this earth saw Jesus He wore a crown of thorns, but not in Revelation 19. Now, He wears **many crowns**. The ancient Greek word used for crowns here is the *diadema*, the crown of royalty and authority, not the *stephanos*, the crown of achievement.

i. The fact that there are **many crowns** means that Jesus is the ultimate in royal authority and power. It is a visible manifestation of what we mean when we say **King of Kings**. It is an expression of unlimited sovereignty.

f. **He was clothed with a robe dipped in blood:** His robe is **dipped** (or, sprinkled) **in blood**. Bible students debate whether this is His own blood (reminding us of the cross) or the blood of His enemies. Either is quite possible.

g. **The armies in heaven:** These are God’s people (Revelation 17:14, Jude 1:14-15). There is little doubt that angels will also accompany Jesus and His people, but the main idea is that the Son of God leads the people of God from heaven against earth.

i. There is no mention of any kind of armor or weapon for any soldier in the great army that follows Jesus. The only armor or weapon they have is the only one they need: **clothed in fine linen, white and clean**.

h. **Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword:** The idea isn’t that Jesus holds a sword in his mouth like a buccaneer, or that He is “spitting swords.” This is a dramatic way of referring to the power of His Word. “Christ conquers by the power of His Word” (Johnson). Five times in the Book Revelation, John emphasizes that Jesus’ sword comes out of **His mouth**.

i. **And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron:** Jesus comes to rule and to reign in triumph, to rule the nations with a **rod of iron** as predicted in Psalm 2. He comes as **King of Kings** to displace every king reigning on this earth.

i. “It does not mean the leavening of existing governments with Christian principles, the spiritual conversion of countries and empires, leaving them in existence, and simply Christianizing them so as to exhibit something of Christ’s spirit in their administrations; but the total displacement of all this world’s sovereigns and governments, the taking of all dominion and authority out of their hands and putting it in the hands of Christ, as the true and only King of the world.” (Seiss)

j. **He has on His robe and on His thigh a name written: King of Kings and Lord of Lords.** The name is on His **thigh** for prominence, being easily visible when seated on a horse. At the same time, **no one knew** [the name] **except Himself** - that is, no one can comprehend Him perfectly.

i. Clarke is among those who believe that the **name written that no one knew except Himself** is actually the tetragrammaton, the four letters YHWH that make up the name *Yahweh*, the sacred and secret name of God.

2. (17-18) Invitation to the great supper.

Then I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the birds that fly in the midst of heaven, "Come and gather together for the supper of the great God, that you may eat the flesh of kings, the flesh of captains, the flesh of mighty men, the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them, and the flesh of all *people*, free and slave, both small and great."

- a. **An angel standing in the sun:** This shows how *bright* this angels shines with the glory of God. The angel can be seen, even though it stands before the sun. "The angel is standing in the light of the sun with the angel himself possibly shining with even greater brilliance." (Walvoord)
- b. **Saying to all the birds that fly:** This is a preparation for a great slaughter of Armageddon, "presented in a picture of almost repellent realism." (Erdman)
- c. **The flesh of kings, the flesh of captains:** The repetition of **flesh** (5 times) is revealing. "The race has walked in carnal enmity against God, living after the flesh, and now the day of His patience is at an end." (Barnhouse)
 - i. It also shows that men of *all stations* are judged. The high and the low together, if they remain hardened in their rejection of Jesus, will be judged. "The divine judgment upon the wicked is no respecter of persons or station, and is the great equalizer of all." (Walvoord)
- d. **Gather together for the supper of the great God:** Newell points to four different suppers described in the Bible.

- The supper of salvation, alluded to in Jesus' parable (Luke 14:16-24)
- The Lord's supper, a commemoration of Jesus' sacrifice
- The marriage supper of the Lamb
- The supper of the great God
 - i. If you reject the first supper, the second supper will mean nothing to you. Then you will not be present at the third supper, but will be present at the fourth supper. Everybody gets to attend at least one of these suppers, but some will eat and others are eaten at the suppers.

3. (19-21) War and the victory of Jesus Christ.

And I saw the beast, the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the horse and against His army. Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet who worked signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image. These two were cast alive into the lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the rest were killed with the sword which proceeded from the mouth of Him who sat on the horse. And all the birds were filled with their flesh.

- a. **Armies, gathered together to make war against Him who sat on the throne:** Some find it hard to understand how man could be so foolish to try and keep Jesus and this

heavenly army off the earth in a pitched battle. They suggest that these armies initially gather to battle against each other, and then turn their fury on the returning Jesus. This may be the case, but we should never underestimate man's folly and hatred of God.

i. "This is the *incurable insanity* of sin, which wars away in spite of defeat after defeat, against a holy God." (Newell)

ii. **To make war against Him:** This is just the logical extension of man's constant war against God since the fall. It is no more unbelievable than the idea that God came to earth and men murdered Him.

b. John says nothing about a battle. This is an entirely one-sided affair, more of a simple act of judgment than an actual war. "The battle of Armageddon is the laughter of God against the climax of man's arrogance." (Barnhouse)

c. **Then the beast was captured, and with him the false prophet:** The beast and the false prophet receive special treatment. They are cast alive into the lake of fire *before* the Great White Throne of judgment holds court (Revelation 20:11-15).

i. "A lake of burning brimstone would not only be intensely hot, but malodorous and fetid as well." (Mounce)

ii. The lake of fire is what we normally consider *Hell*. It is *real*, and there is nothing more important than avoiding it.

B. The Sign of His Coming

1. (1-2) Jesus predicts the destruction of the temple.

Then Jesus went out and departed from the temple, and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple. And Jesus said to them, "Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not *one* stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down."

a. **His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the temple:** This temple was originally rebuilt by Zerubbabel and Ezra ([Ezra 6:15](#)), but greatly expanded and improved by Herod. It was the center of Jewish life for almost a thousand years - so much so, that it was customary to swear by the temple ([Matthew 23:16](#)), and speaking against the temple could be considered blasphemy ([Acts 6:13](#)).

i. After Herod's work, the temple was huge - nearly 500 yards long and 400 yards wide. Herod's rebuilding work started in 19 b.c., and was only completed in 63 a.d., taking more than eighty years. The temple was finished only seven years before it was destroyed.

ii. But the temple wasn't just big, it was also beautiful. The Jewish historian Josephus says that the temple was covered on the outside with gold plates, that were so brilliant that when the sun shone on them, it was blinding to look at. Where there was no gold, there were blocks of marble of such a pure white that strangers, from a distance, thought there was snow on the temple.

c. **Not one stone shall be left here upon another:** Some 40 years after Jesus said this, there was a widespread Jewish revolution against the Romans in Palestine, and they enjoyed many early successes. But ultimately, Rome crushed the rebels. In 70

a.d. Jerusalem was leveled, including the temple - just as Jesus said.

i. It is said that at the fall of Jerusalem, the last surviving Jews of the city fled to the temple, because it was the strongest, most secure building in the city. Roman soldiers surrounded it, and one drunken soldier started a fire that soon engulfed the whole building. Ornate gold detail work in the roof melted down in the cracks between the stone walls of the temple, and to retrieve the gold, the Roman commander ordered that the temple be dismantled stone by stone. The destruction was so complete that today they have true difficulty learning exactly where the temple was.

d. **That shall not be thrown down:** This prophecy was fulfilled literally. There was a real temple, and it was really destroyed. The literal fulfillment of this prophecy establishes the tone for the rest of the prophecies in the chapter. We should expect a literal fulfillment for these as well.

2. (3) Jesus' prediction brings up two questions.

Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when will these things be? And what *will be* the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"

a. **When will these things be?** Jesus said the temple would be completely destroyed. It was logical that the disciples wanted to know when it would happen.

i. Matthew does not record Jesus' answer to this first question, but Luke does in [Luke 21:8-23](#).

b. **And what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?** The disciples may have thought they asked only one question. In their minds, the destruction of the temple and the **end of the age** might have been tied together. But really, they asked two questions, and this second question is answered in the remainder of the chapter.

i. It may also be that this second question was asked as they remembered the events surrounding the last temple's destruction: the temple was destroyed in the context of national judgment and exile.

3. As Jesus answers this important second question, He will make many specific comments and predictions about the end times. These predictions have been the source of tremendous disagreement among Christians who have tried to understand them. Why didn't Jesus simply say it so clearly that there was no possibility anyone could misunderstand Him?

a. One reason why prophecy may seem "vague" is because God wants every age to have reasons to be ready for Jesus' return. We should not think of Jesus' return as an event far off on a time line, but something we have been running parallel with since the day of Pentecost.

b. Others have suggested that God's intention was to keep the future somewhat vague and clouded to confound the Devil, even as the resurrection of the Messiah was vague in the Old Testament.

c. Though some prophetic interpretations are different, we are sure of this: *He is coming again*, and we must be ready.

b. The flow of history until Jesus' return.

1. (4-8) Jesus describes general world conditions during the period between His Ascension and the time immediately preceding His second coming.

And Jesus answered and said to them: "Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not troubled; for all *these things* must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be famines, pestilences, and earthquakes in various places. All these *are* the beginning of sorrows."

a. **Take heed that no one deceives you:** From the outset, Jesus warns the disciples that many will be deceived as they anticipate His return. There have been times in the history of the church when rash predictions were made and relied on, and resulted in tremendous disappointment, disillusionment, and falling way.

b. **See that you are not troubled; for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet:** The kind of things Jesus mentions in this section are *not* the things that specific signs of the end. Things like false messiahs, **wars, famines, pestilences, and earthquakes** have certainly marked man's history since the time of Jesus' Ascension - but were not specific signs of the end. In effect, Jesus says "Catastrophes will happen, but these will not signal the end."

i. In the midst of any great war or any great famine or any great earthquake, it is natural to believe that the world is coming to an end. But Jesus says there is a far more specific sign we should look for.

c. **All these are the beginning of sorrows:** Though none of those events are the specific sign of the end of the age, collectively they *are* a sign. When Jesus described these calamities as **the beginning of sorrows** He literally called them *the beginning of labor pains*. Just as is true with labor pains, we should expect that the things mentioned - **wars, famines, earthquakes**, and so on - would become *more frequent* and *more intense* before the return of Jesus.

2. (9-14) Jesus describes what His disciples must expect during the time between His Ascension and Second Coming.

"Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and kill you, and you will be hated by all nations for My name's sake. And then many will be offended, will betray one another, and will hate one another. Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. But he who endures to the end shall be saved. And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come."

a. **They will deliver you to tribulation and kill you:** In the period after Jesus ascends to heaven and before He comes again, His disciples should expect to be persecuted. But this is not the specific sign of His return.

b. **False prophets will arise and deceive many:** In the period after Jesus ascends to heaven and before He comes again, the disciples of Jesus will see many false prophets, and their success. But this is not the specific sign of His return.

c. **Lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold:** In the period after Jesus ascends to heaven and before He comes again, His disciples should expect to see

society become worse and worse. But this is not the specific sign of His return.

d. **This gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come:** But Jesus also promised that before the end, the gospel will go out to the whole world. The persecution, false prophets, and general downgrade of society will not prevent the spread of the gospel.

i. The church is to take this seriously as their duty. However, God assures that it *will* happen: *I saw another angel flying in the midst of heaven, having the everlasting gospel to preach to those who dwell on the earth - to every nation, tribe, tongue and people - saying with a loud voice. "Fear God and give glory to Him, for the hour of His judgment has come."* (Revelation 14:6-7)

c. Jesus describes the sign of His coming and the end of the age.

1. (15) The sign: the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel.

"Therefore when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place" (whoever reads, let him understand),

a. **When you see the "abomination of desolation":** Essentially, the **abomination of desolation** speaks of the ultimate desecration of a Jewish temple, the establishment of an idolatrous image in the **holy place** itself, which will inevitably result in the judgment of God. It is the **abomination** that brings desolation.

i. In the vocabulary of Judaism of that time, an **abomination** was an especially offensive form of idolatry. Jesus describes a gross form of idolatry, **standing in the holy place**, that will usher in great destruction (**desolation**).

b. **Standing in the holy place:** This means that the **abomination of desolation** takes place in the Jewish temple. This is the only plain meaning of the phrase **holy place**. Some believe it happened in a *prior* Jewish temple, before it was destroyed in 70 a.d. Others - more properly - believe it *will happen* in the **holy place** of a rebuilt temple.

i. For centuries, there was only a small Jewish presence in Judea and Jerusalem. Their presence in the region was definite, and continuous, but small. It is unthinkable that this weak Jewish presence could rebuild a temple. Therefore the fulfillment of this prophecy was highly unlikely until Israel was regathered as a nation in 1948. The restoration of a nation that the world had not seen for some 2,000 years is a remarkable event in the fulfillment and future fulfillment of prophecy.

c. **As spoken of by Daniel the prophet:** The mention of the **abomination of desolation** is taken from the book of Daniel. *They shall defile the sanctuary fortress; then they shall take away the daily sacrifices, and place there the abomination of desolation* (Daniel 11:31). This describes a complete desecration of the temple, prefigured by Antiochus Epiphanies in the period between the Old Testament and the New Testament.

i. Paul elaborates on the future fulfillment of this in **2 Thessalonians 2:3-4**: *That day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.*

ii. **Daniel 12:11** gives additional insight: *And from the time that the daily sacrifice is taken away, and the abomination of desolation is set up, there shall be 1,290 days* (until the end). When this sign is set up, the end may be determined - there will be almost three and one-half years to go.

d. **Whoever reads, let him understand**: In a sense, Jesus tells us nothing new here. He simply calls us back to what was prophesied in Daniel. The comment **whoever reads, let him understand** could have been said by Jesus Himself, instead of inserted by Matthew.

2. (21-28) The Sign of the Son of Man coming on the clouds.

"For then there will be great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time, no, nor ever shall be. And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake those days will be shortened. Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here *is* the Christ!' or 'There!' do not believe *it*. For false christs and false prophets will rise and show great signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. See, I have told you beforehand. Therefore if they say to you, 'Look, He is in the desert!' do not go out; *or* 'Look, *He is* in the inner rooms!' do not believe *it*. For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. For wherever the carcass is, there the eagles will be gathered together."

a. **Great tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the world until this time**: Jesus said that this will be the most awful time in all of human history. When we think of the terrible wars, plagues, famines, and genocide history has seen, this is a terribly sobering statement. When God pours out His wrath on a God rejecting world, it will be truly **great tribulation**.

b. **Look, here is the Christ**: No one should be deceived about the nature of Jesus' coming. It will not be secret or private, but as plain as **lightning** that **flashes** across the sky. But in the midst of such tribulation, there will be a temptation to look for false messiahs (**false christs and false prophets will rise**).

c. **For wherever the carcass is, there the eagles will be gathered together**: This is a difficult statement. It was probably a figure of speech with the idea, "when judgment is ripe, it will surely come."

4. (29-31) On the heels of great tribulation: the return of Jesus Christ.

"Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other."

a. **The sun will be darkened, the moon will not give its light**: Several prophetic passages describe the cosmic disturbances that will precede and surround the return of Jesus (**Joel 2:10; Revelation 6:12-14; Isaiah 34:4**).

b. Cryptically, Jesus says that **the sign of the Son of Man will appear in heaven**. It is difficult to say exactly what this sign is, since this seems to precede His return as described in **Revelation 19:11**. Perhaps this sign is somehow related to the incredible cosmic disturbances that will precede this.

c. **They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory:** This is the fulfillment of the end, indicated by the sign of *the abomination of desolation*. Since this has not happened yet, neither has the abomination of desolation.

III Rabbinic idea of this Coming battle of Messiah

A. A Messiah that dies in battle

Line 80 of the text begins with the words...(by three days), after which the editors read the letter het followed by three undecipherable letters and then the words...(I Gabriel). In my opinion, the word that the editors read only partially is completely legible and can clearly be read as [He-Alef-Yod-He...hayah, or "life" spelled with an inserted alef].

The context implies that the angel Gabriel addresses someone and tells him: "by three days, ... live / be resurrected!" (cf. Ezek. 16:6: "In your blood, Live...").

This spelling is well known to us from the Dead Sea Scrolls such as 1QIsa (30:39)...

Since the text is not preserved in its entirety, we cannot definitively identify the person whom the angel Gabriel orders to come to life by three days (however, see the appendix). As we saw above, the text mentions Ephraim, the Messiah son of Joseph who, according to the Jewish tradition, was killed in battle and is resurrected by the Messiah son of David.¹⁴ In light of this, we may suggest that the resurrected character in Hazon Gabriel is a messianic figure as well.

There are many indications that Hazon Gabriel was composed on the background of a bloody confrontation: lines 13–14 read: ...

1. This battle takes place in Jerusalem as per Zech 14:2

(Behold, all the nations . . . against Jerusalem),

a clear allusion to Zech. 14:2: "For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city shall be taken. The text in line 57:

(seal up the blood of the slaughtered of Jerusalem)

is reminiscent of Gabriel's order to Daniel (Dan. 8:26): "but seal up the vision." In our text, the recipient of the vision is commanded to "seal up" the blood of those who have been murdered in the city.

2. This dead messiah is resurrected and goes to heaven :Later (line 67) the text states:

(announce to him of the blood, this is their chariot).

The recipient of the vision is now asked to herald, and to explain, that the blood of some victims becomes the "chariot" that will carry them to heaven. Elijah's ascent to heaven in a "chariot of fire and horses of fire" (2 Kings 2:11) is obviously in the background.

B. Messiah ben Ephraim (Joseph) = Suffering Messiah

In Hazon Gabriel, we find our earliest reference to "Ephraim" as a messianic figure. In the Hebrew Bible there is no evidence of "Ephraim" as a Messiah. However, as I have noted above, I think that the figure of "Ephraim" in Hazon Gabriel is based on biblical verses that describe him as the suffering Son of God. The atmosphere of Hazon Gabriel contains elements of mourning and exile, death, and bloodshed...

It appears that "Ephraim" is a symbolic figure containing all these elements. Unlike the messianic figure of "David," which traditionally represents bravery, military skill, and triumph, the figure of "Ephraim" symbolizes a very different, new type of messianism. "Ephraim" is a Messiah of suffering and death. It should also be noted in this context that some books written at approximately the same time as Hazon Gabriel also have the image of Ephraim's father, Joseph, as a son of God and one who atones with his suffering for the sins of others: In the book entitled Joseph and Aseneth, Joseph is described as the "son of God."....

This book, probably written between 100 BC and 115 CE, also gives Joseph the title "God's firstborn son." While scholars are undecided whether these titles were originally intended to designate Joseph as a Messiah or redeemer,... readers of the book could obviously have gotten the impression that Joseph is a messianic figure. In another work of the second temple period, "Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs," we find a connection between Joseph and the figure of the "Suffering Servant." In the Testament of Benjamin (5:

{See Howard C. Kee, "Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs," in Charlesworth, Old Testament Pseudepigrapha, 1:826.}

Jacob says to Joseph: **"In you will be fulfilled the heavenly prophecy which says that the spotless one will be defiled by lawless men and the sinless one will die for the sake of impious men."** ...

The author of the testament had clearly identified Joseph with the

suffering servant of Isaiah 52–53. He was probably led to this idea by the fact that Joseph had himself been a suffering slave.... At the same time, one could say of Joseph as of Isaiah’s servant: “Behold my servant shall prosper, he shall be exalted and lifted up, and shall be very high” (Isa. 52:13).

Thus, it seems that the designation of the suffering Messiah as the “son of Joseph” extends back to sources from the second temple period, including Joseph and Aseneth, the Testament of Benjamin, and now Hazon Gabriel.... In light of these, we should also understand the tradition about Ephraim or the Messiah son of Joseph as the slain Messiah.

C. The Signs that point to him

1. Three days and then rise

Thus, Hazon Gabriel attests that the character of “Ephraim” as the “Messiah son of Joseph” was already known in the late first century BCE. From it we also learn of the contemporaneous fashioning of a belief in resurrection “after three days” and in the ascent to heaven of some people who were slaughtered. These conclusions are of decisive importance for understanding the messianic consciousness of “Jesus son of Joseph,” who was born around the time when this text was composed. In this context, I wish to compare the account of Ephraim in this apocalyptic text with the depiction of Jesus in Matt. 24:29–30:

2 The sun will be darkened

“Immediately after the suffering of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of heaven will be shaken.

3. The Son of Man will return on the clouds

Hazon Gabriel is written in two partially preserved columns. In the first column, we have a prophecy regarding the coming destruction of evil within three days:

[By three days you shall know that, thus said the Lord of Hosts, the God of Israel, the evil has been broken by righteousness.] (lines 19–21)

This announcement is followed by a promise that God will soon appear and that his revelation will cause the universe to tremble:

[My servant David, ask of Ephraim (that he) place the sign; (this) I ask of you.]

The Lord addresses David, asking him to request of Ephraim that he place a sign. The nature of the sign is not specified.

Two biblical characters are mentioned in this text: David and Ephraim. The expression “My servant David” also appears in the Bible as a term for an eschatological leader (see Ezek. 34:23, 24, 37:24, 25). As for Ephraim, the biblical Ephraim is the son of Joseph; consequently, “My servant David” and “Ephraim” in Hazon Gabriel are apparently parallel to the “Messiah son of David” and the “Messiah son of Joseph” mentioned in the Talmud. As Yardeni and Elitzur observe, “Ephraim” is the

name of the Messiah in Pesikta Rabbati, who suffers in order to atone for Israel.² In the Bible Ephraim refers to northern Israel. I do believe that some biblical references to Ephraim are the basis of the image of Ephraim as a suffering “Son of God” or a suffering messianic figure. In Jer. 31:18 we hear the words of Ephraim: “Thou hast chastened me, and I was chastened.” God answers Ephraim and says: “Truly, Ephraim is a dear son to Me. A child that is dandled!” { Jer. 31:20, according to the Jewish Publication Society translation. }

D. Two Messiah theory

A late 10th century commentary of Isaiah 53 reads:

"As for myself, I am inclined with Benjamin of Nehavend, to regard it as alluding to the Messiah ... In the first instance that the Messiah will only reach his highest degree of honor after long and severe trials; and secondly, that these trials will be sent upon him as a kind of sign, so that, if he finds himself under the yoke of misfortunes while remaining pious in his actions, he may know that he is the designated one." *(Yepheth ben Ali)*

Rabbi Moses Maimonides: What is the manner of Messiah’s advent...there shall rise up one of whom none have known before, and signs and wonders which they shall see performed by him will be the proofs of his true origin; for the Almighty, where he declares to us his mind upon this matter, says, “Behold a man whose name is the Branch, and he shall branch forth out of his place” (**Zech. 6:12**). And Isaiah speaks similarly of the time when he shall appear, without father or mother or family being known, *He came up as a sucker before him, and as a root out of dry earth, etc ...* in the words of Isaiah, when describing the manner in which kings will harken to him, *At him kings will shut their mouth; for that which had not been told them have they seen, and that which they had not heard they have perceived.* (From the Letter to the South (Yemen), quoted in The Fifty-third Chapter of Isaiah According to the Jewish Interpreters, Ktav Publishing House, 1969, Volume 2, pages 374-5.

"When the death of the Messiah became an established tenet in Talmudic times, this was felt to be irreconcilable with the belief in the Messiah as Redeemer who would usher in the blissful millennium of the Messianic Age. The dilemma was solved by splitting the person of the Messiah in two: one of them, called Messiah ben Joseph, was to raise the armies of Israel against their enemies, and, after many victories and miracles, would fall victim Gog and Magog. The other, Messiah ben David, will come after him (in some legends will bring him back to life, *which psychologically hints at the identity of the two*), and will lead Israel to the ultimate victory, the triumph, and the Messianic era of bliss."²

Illustration:

The Fallen Sukkah of David

Right now, there’s quite a bit of turmoil in the world, which is producing a level of uncertainty and anxiety that I’ve not witnessed as a believer. Yet despite all of these scary situations, we have something wonderful to look forward to — and if you’re like me, you can’t wait!

Don’t let the times we’re living in control your life; instead, use these turbulent times as an opportunity to display the goodness and grace of God in your life! As Yeshua (Jesus) said, when you see these things begin to take place – lift your heads high because your redemption draws near!

For most, it remains an enigma. We say it; it seems like it fits – but one suspects that we are essentially clueless (an admitted projection) to its Sukkos significance.

I refer to the strange recitation at the end of our *bentsching*, (grace after meals) where we customarily insert a special request throughout Sukkos:

Harachaman hu yakim lanu es sukkas David hanofeles-
May the Merciful One raise up for us the fallen sukkah of David

What pray tell, is that fallen sukkah of David? More pointedly, what relevance (other than the obvious *sukkah* word play), does it have to our Sukkos holiday?

It's a long story – but here is the short version:

First, the phrase *Sukkas David* is based on a verse in Amos:

On that day will I raise up the fallen Sukkah of David, close up its breaches, raise up his ruins, and build it as in the days of old.[\(1\)](#)

In effect, King David opens up Temple gates, composes its inaugural song and is the Temple's namesake, for even as he is physically constrained from building the Temple, that is where he always was.

Sukkos - that gateway between the rarefied purity of the Rosh Hashana/Yom Kippur world and the mundane ordinary of everyday life – reminds us: As we cross the portal, we dare not allow our minds and hearts to forget the extraordinary holiness of those awesome days.

No wonder that on the last day of Sukkos, we mystically (think *ushpizin*) invite King David in. Who better to teach us to never sleep without desiring, to not surrender to routine without infusing within it a yearning for sanctity?

With Sukkos as the gateway and with King David at our side, we are ready to confront our world through His world.

Let us take the leap!

IV Conclusion

A young lady busied herself getting ready for a blind date. This was not just dinner and a movie; her date had planned dinner at an exclusive downtown restaurant with live music and dancing. Wanting to make a good first impression she had taken the day off work. She cleaned her apartment; she went out that afternoon to have her hair done and get a manicure. When she got home she did her makeup, put on her best dress and was ready for her date's arrival. His expected arrival came and went, but she continued to wait patiently. Finally after waiting over an hour she decided she had been stood up, so she took off her dress, let down her hair put on her pajamas, gathered all her favorite junk food and sat down to watch TV with her dog. Sometime later there was a knock at the door; it was her date. He looked at her surprised and said, "What I gave you an extra two hours and you're still not ready to go!"

Jesus is coming again. Will you be ready for His return, or will He catch you unprepared? (D. Greg Ebie, "Ready or Not," SermonCentral newsletter)

- 1. How did this effect them back at Jesus' day?**
- 2. How does this effect us today?**
- 3. How does this effect people in the future?**