

# To Have and To Hope

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[ 0 : 0 0 ]     So Zechariah chapter 14. Behold, a day is coming for the Lord. When the spoil taken from you will be divided in your midst. For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle.

! On that day his feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives that lies before Jerusalem on the east.

And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two from east to west by a very wide valley. So that one half of the mountain shall move northward and the other half southward.

And you shall flee to the valley of my mountains. For the valley of the mountains shall reach to Azal. And you shall flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah.

Then the Lord my God will come and all the holy ones with him. On that day there shall be no light, cold or frost. And there shall be a unique day which is known to the Lord.

[ 1 : 1 7 ]     Neither day nor night but at evening time there shall be light. On that day living waters shall flow out from Jerusalem. Half of them to the eastern sea and half of them to the western sea.

It shall continue in summer as in winter. And the Lord will be king over all the earth. On that day the Lord will be one and his name one.

The whole land shall be turned into a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem. But from the gate of Benjamin to the place of the former gate. To the corner gate and from the tower of Hananel to the king's wine presses.

And it shall be inhabited. For there shall never again be a decree of utter destruction. Jerusalem shall dwell in security. And this shall be the plague with which the Lord will strike all the peoples that wage war against Jerusalem.

Their flesh will rot while they are still standing on their feet. Their eyes will rot in their sockets and their tongues will rot in their mouths. And on that day a great panic from the Lord shall fall on them.

[ 2 : 2 4 ]     So that each will seize the hand of another. And the hand of the one will be raised against the hand of the other. Even Judah will fight at Jerusalem. And the wealth of all the surrounding nations shall be collected.

Gold, silver and garments in great abundance. And a plague like this plague shall fall on the horses, the mules, the camels, the donkeys. And whatever beasts may be in those camps. Then everyone who survives of all the nations that have come up against Jerusalem shall go up year after year to worship the king, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of booths.

And if any of the families of the earth do not go up to Jerusalem to worship the king, the Lord of hosts, there will be no rain on them. And if the family of Egypt does not go up and present themselves, then on them there shall be no rain.

There shall be the plague with which the Lord afflicts the nations that do not go up to keep the feast of booths. This shall be the punishment to Egypt and the punishment to all the nations that do not go up to keep the feast of booths.

And on that day there shall be inscribed on the bells of the horses, Holy to the Lord. And the pots in the house of the Lord shall be as the bowls before the altar. And every pot in Jerusalem and Judah shall be holy to the Lord of hosts, so that all who sacrifice may come and take of them and boil the meat of the sacrifice in them.

[ 3 : 45 ] And there shall no longer be a trader in the house of the Lord of hosts on that day. Right. Well, we're not having a question time today.

So we've got communion. So thank goodness for that. There are some atheists like Friedrich Nietzsche who really want a sort of honest atheism.

I don't know if you could call it that. Famously, Nietzsche said that God is dead and we killed him. And his point was not just that there is no God and never has been, but that now, having killed God in Western thinking, in Western philosophy, we should begin to free ourselves from the constraints of the Christian God.

And we should live out our atheism boldly. But then there are atheists like Richard Dawkins, who even though he has done his very best to champion atheism and rid us of any silly notions about God or the gods, and yet he made headlines last year, I think it was, because he wants to call himself a cultural Christian.

And he says, I'm not a believer. You know, things like the virgin birth and the resurrection and nonsense. But culturally, I feel at home in Christianity. If I had to choose between Christianity and Islam, I would choose Christianity every time, because Christianity seems like a fundamentally decent religion.

[ 5 : 12 ] What a good chap. See, what Richard Dawkins is worried about is that having taken the plug out of Western society, namely the belief in the Christian God, Jesus and the resurrection and all that stuff, well, Dawkins is now worried that the bathwater is all going to drain out too, and perhaps be replaced by something much worse, namely Islam.

In a similar vein, someone like Douglas Murray, he's a journalist, an author, and a gay man, he describes himself as an uncomfortable agnostic who recognizes the values and the virtues that the Christian faith has brought.

He says that our ethics and morality are not self-evident, but are gifts from the Christian faith. He says that he wishes Christianity were true, and that he wishes the church would preach the gospel, and he finds himself disappointed in the Church of England for giving up on the gospel and the Bible.

And then finally, just to mention one more bloke, I have a book at home called Religion for Atheists by Alain de Botton. Let me read you a quote from the opening chapter.

He says, The most boring and unproductive question one can ask of any religion is whether or not it is true, in terms of being handed down from heaven to the sound of trumpets and supernaturally governed by prophets and celestial beings.

[ 6 : 42 ] To save time, and at the risk of losing readers painfully early on in this project, let us bluntly state that of course no religions are true in any God-given sense. This is a book for people who are unable to believe in miracles, spirits, or tales of burning shrubbery, etc., etc.

We can then recognize that we invented religions to serve two central needs which continue to this day, and which secular society has not been able to solve with any particular skill.

First, the need to live together in communities in harmony, despite our deeply rooted selfish and violent impulses. And second, the need to cope with terrifying degrees of pain, which arise from our vulnerability to professional failure, to troubled relationships, to the death of loved ones, and to our decay and demise.

God may be dead, but the urgent issues which impelled us to make him up still stir and demand resolution. Now, does all that make sense?

And I think that captures it. Basically, Alain de Botton and many other people are saying religions, especially Christianity, are full of many wise things that humans have learned and made up over the years.

[ 8 : 04 ] Things like morality, community, justice, kindness, singing together, sitting together. These things enable us to live together in harmony and cope with pain and so on.

They would argue that Christianity has demonstrably changed the world for the better, even if all the God stuff isn't really true. So now, having rightly dispensed with the God stuff, we shouldn't necessarily dispense with all that came with it.

But surely, that begs the question, doesn't it? Can the two things be separated? Can we somehow take the plug out of the bath, but retain all the bath water?

It's not a hard question. But anyway, and particularly, I want to think about two big things, power and hope. Okay, power and hope. Because essentially, I think what these Christianized atheists are arguing, and some of them, unfortunately as well, remain in churches and keep being pastors.

But anyway, essentially, what these Christianized atheists are arguing is that the Christian life can, and even should, be lived without power and without hope.

[ 9 : 19 ] You know what I mean? They're saying, it doesn't really matter if there really is a God at work in our lives or not. You can still live the Christian way. And it doesn't really matter if all that happily ever after stuff is nonsense.

The Christian life still makes sense. But is that actually true? No, it isn't. Which, of course, brings us to the book of Zechariah. Because I think, in a sense, a good way of summarizing Zechariah, what we've been looking at over the last couple of months, is a book really all about power and hope.

The power of the Holy Spirit, the power of having God's presence dwell among us. Remember in the first half of the book, God comes to live in the temple.

And what does that do to transform and restore the nation? Zechariah is a book about power, coming to live among God's people, God himself coming to live among his people.

And then about hope, the hope of total renewal and restoration of the nation by that power. And, of course, if you've been here for the last couple of weeks, you'll remember in Zechariah's last oracle, the emphasis has been on the coming day of the Lord.

[ 10 : 33 ] And the kind of radical, powerful destruction and salvation that is going to happen on that day, on that day, on that day, on that day, and that we should keep putting our hope in and keep waiting for.

So, there are lots of details, and they're pretty complicated, and I'm still sure I don't get all of them, but we'll try and race through them and give a good summary, and we'll come back to this stuff at the end.

Okay, so take... Don't keep your eyes off Zechariah 14. Right? We'll look at all the details. And we'll see more of what Zechariah says about this day of God's power that he wants us to put our hope in.

Now, the funny thing about the day, this day of hope, is actually that it's not going to get off to a good start. See, Zechariah says, verse 1, Behold, a day is coming for the Lord when the spoil taken from you will be divided in your midst.

For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city shall be taken, and the houses plundered, and the women raped. Now, the key thing here is to think back over Israel's history again.

[ 11 : 40 ] You remember Zechariah keeps using images from Israel's history, and what Zechariah is describing here is Babylon 2.0. Okay, in 586 BC, when Nebuchadnezzar attacked Jerusalem, he plundered the city and then burned it to the ground, and he took almost all the inhabitants off into exile.

But here, you see, even though the same kind of basic thing is going to happen, it's going to be a terrible day for Jerusalem, as Zechariah continues, he says, This time only half of the city shall go out into exile, but the rest of the people shall not be cut off from the city.

Then the Lord will go out and fight against those nations as when he fights on a day of battle. So this is actually going to be quite different from 586 BC, because apparently on that day, in this future day, half of the city are going to be protected.

This will be a day of division, not of complete conquest or annihilation, a day of division, of distinction. And Zechariah alerts us to the fact that half of the city will be protected because the Lord is going to fight for them on that day, just like all of those occasions you see in the scriptures where the Lord goes out and fights for his people.

Then in verse 4, On that day, his feet, that is the Lord's feet, Yahweh's feet, shall stand on the Mount of Olives that lies before Jerusalem on the east.

[ 13 : 14 ] And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two from east to west by a very wide valley, so that one half of the mount shall move northward and the other half southward, and you shall flee to the valley of the mountains, for the valley of the mountains shall reach to Azal.

And you shall flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah, king of Judah. Then the Lord my God will come and all the holy ones with him. Now again, thinking back to 586 BC when Nebuchadnezzar besieged Jerusalem, the king at that time, Zedekiah, tried to flee.

Zedekiah and his army tried to flee against what Jeremiah had told them to do. But the Babylonians caught up with them and in fact slaughtered the sons of Zedekiah before his eyes and then gouged out his eyes and bound him in chains and took him to Babylon.

But this time, you see, on that day, it's going to be different. First, because the Mount of Olives is going to split in two so that the remnant of Jerusalem can have an easy escape route.

Now, I don't think I've got a map for you of Jerusalem, but essentially, the Mount of Olives is the thing blocking the way, the problem, blocking the way to escape.

[ 14 : 33 ] It's blocking the way to Jericho, which is exactly where the route that Zedekiah took when he tried to escape. But this time, a bit like the parting of the Red Sea, God is going to split the Mount of Olives in two so that his people can walk through the rock and the dirt on both sides just as they once walked through the water.

It's really an extraordinary idea, isn't it? Now, in verse 6, on that day, Zechariah promises, there shall be no light, cold or frost, and there shall be a unique day which is known to the Lord, either day nor night.

But at evening time, there shall be light. Now, I think it's best to understand these verses in terms of a sequence of events rather than all happening at the same time. And the point is that whatever is happening on that day is going to start off bad, unusually dark and cold, actually, in kind of frosty darkness.

But then, in the evening, it's going to become light. And Michael Stead, one of the commentators, points out, the phrase translated a unique day is literally day one.

It's exactly the same phrase as is used in Genesis, chapter 1, verse 5. This point is that the day of the Lord will be day one of the new creation.

[ 16 : 00 ] This day will be a day of perpetual light as promised in Isaiah, chapter 60. And the sun will, this is Isaiah, chapter 60, verse 19. I don't, I think I've got it on the screen if you can find it, Simon.

Is that right? Maybe not. Doesn't matter, I'll read it to you. Isaiah, chapter 60, verse 19. The sun will no more be your light by day, nor will the brightness of the moon shine on you, for the Lord will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory.

In other words, what Zechariah is promising is a day that will start off deeply troubling. Jerusalem will be attacked and plundered, a day of darkness and cold.

But in the end, the Lord's plan is to fight for his people and turn this day of doom into a day of glory and everlasting glory. This will be day one of the new creation, which will be a kind of whole new quality of living the new creation, symbolically speaking, or at least symbolically speaking, will not be a place where days give way to nights, no, because the everlasting light of the Lord will just keep shining and shining and shining.

And verse 8. On that day, living waters shall flow out from Jerusalem, half of them to the eastern sea and half of them to the western sea.

[ 17 : 35 ] It shall continue in summer as in winter. So in other words, just as days and nights are going to be radically interrupted by the new creation, by a new and better order, so the seasons are no longer going to be what they used to be.

In the new creation, there will never be a river that runs dry or freezes over. And of course, again, it's symbolic language. The point is not to give us a geographical kind of lesson about the new creation, but to show us the character of the place.

It's going to be flowing with eternal life. And Zechariah is again picking up on the prophets that went before him. One of my favorite passages from Ezekiel is Ezekiel chapter 47, where Ezekiel sees water flowing out of the new temple that God is going to build.

And just as the water starts off just as a little trickle and then it gets ankle deep and then knee deep and eventually it's too deep to swim in. And then Ezekiel says, I saw on the bank of the river very many trees on the one side and on the other.

And the angel, he said to me, this water flows toward the eastern region and goes down into the Arabah and enters the sea. When the water flows into the sea, the water will become fresh.

[ 18 : 56 ] And wherever the river goes, every living creature that swarms will live. And there will be very many fish. For this water goes there that the waters of the sea may become fresh. So everything will live where the river goes.

Fishermen will stand beside the sea. Roy, I can see Roy there. From En Gedi to Eneglaim, it will be a place for the spreading of nets. Its fish will be of very many kinds like the fish of the great sea.

But its swamps and marshes will not become fresh. They are to be left for salt. And on the banks on both sides of the river there will grow all kinds of trees for food. Their leaves will not wither nor their fruit fail.

But they will bear fresh fruit every month because the water for them flows from the sanctuary. Their fruit will be for food and their leaves for healing. I mean, it's absolutely just beautiful, isn't it?

So that's what Zechariah is picking up here, you see. And of course, the picture wouldn't be complete without the king at the very centre of it. In verse 9, Zechariah says, And the Lord will be king over all the earth.

[ 20 : 01 ] On that day, the Lord will be one and his name one. The living water flows from the throne room of God in the temple. the real power that is bringing life to this whole creation is flowing from God himself.

The Lord is one. Of course, the Lord has always been one. But this is talking about a day when God's rule over his people will be uncontested. No one will be calling upon the names of any other gods or acknowledging any other gods, giving glory to other gods.

God alone will rule over his people, providing the life and safety and the joy that he's been promising them throughout the Bible. And then in verse 10, the key concept is safety.

See, Zechariah says, The whole land shall be turned into a plain from Geba to Rimmon, south of Jerusalem, but Jerusalem shall remain aloft on its site from the gate of Benjamin to the place of the former gate to the corner gate and the tower of Hananel to the king's wine presses and it shall be inhabited for there shall never again be a decree of utter destruction Jerusalem shall dwell in security.

So again, we're getting just lots of images thrown at us, but now Jerusalem, we're supposed to be picturing Jerusalem as an exalted fortress, secure from all her enemies. The region from Geba to Rimmon basically refers to the whole territory of Judah, the whole surrounding region around Jerusalem.

[ 21 : 28 ] At present, geographically, it is a very hilly mountainous region, but Zechariah is looking forward to a day when all the mountains are going to be flattened so that Jerusalem alone will be lifted up.

And then Zechariah describes all her towers and gates as well, securing her perimeter as if she would need them. And then meanwhile on the outside, so she's, you know, total flat plain, Jerusalem is exalted, she's surrounded by towers, and then everyone outside is suffering from terrible plagues.

So look at verse 12, and this shall be the plague with which the Lord will strike the peoples that wage war against Jerusalem. Their flesh will rot while they are still standing on their feet. Now, they don't sound like very fearsome warriors.

Their eyes will rot in their sockets and their tongues will rot in their mouths. Jerusalem is perfectly safe. And here then, there is a clear distinction being made, isn't there, between those who are dwelling in Jerusalem and enjoying safety and the nations who surround her who might attack her, who have attacked her.

Although living in Jerusalem is going to be a pleasant experience, those who have sought to wage war against her will find themselves devastated by these ghastly plagues. This distinction is then picked up in the last two sections of the book.

[ 22 : 49 ] With verses 13 to 19 focusing on the outsiders and then verses 20 to 21 focusing on the insiders. So, we're up to point five on your outline.

I've called this section A Day of Victory at Egypt 2.0 because again, a lot of the language is borrowed from the book of Exodus and Egypt is even singled out by name.

In the book of Exodus, God sent terrible plagues upon the Egyptians. Here, the same kind of thing is promised for all the nations that refuse to worship Yahweh. In the book of Exodus, the people of Israel walked out with all of Egypt's wealth.

Here, all the wealth of all the nations is going to accumulate in Jerusalem in verse 14. In the book of Exodus, the people of Israel wandered around the wilderness in tents. So, here, all the nations of the earth are going to have to come up to Jerusalem every year and celebrate the Feast of Booths.

And if they don't come, they will face God's punishments. To put it another way, those who bless Israel will be blessed and those who dishonor her will be cursed. Zechariah is seeing the fulfillment of all the promises to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

[ 24 : 02 ] He sees a day when finally Jerusalem will be the center of blessing for all the nations of the whole world. And the dividing line between all the people on earth, those who come up and worship God with the people of Israel and celebrate the new Exodus will be blessed and those who don't will be cursed and afflicted with plagues.

So, finally, in verses 20 to 21, let me read it out for us. And on that day, there shall be inscribed on the bells of the horses holy to the Lord and the pots in the house of the Lord shall be as the bowls before the altar and every pot in Jerusalem and Judah shall be holy to the Lord of hosts so that all who sacrifice may come and take of them and boil the meat of the sacrifice in them and there shall no longer be a trader in the house of the Lord of hosts on that day.

Now, in this last section, I don't know if this imagery seems a bit strange to you. I must admit that the first time I read it, I thought this is a bit of an anti-climax to such a glorious book.

I mean, why are we talking about bells on horses and bowls and pots? But actually, of course, I was wrong. And the more you think about it, the more wonderful and fitting you realize this conclusion really is.

See, in the Old Testament, if you can imagine, there were sort of concentric circles of holiness. You remember in the temple, there was the most holy place and then the holy place and then the courtyards and so on.

[ 25 : 34 ] And this was all about keeping the very special things separate and untainted by the world around. Right? So all the bowls and bells and implements used in the temple had to be super sacred and set apart.

They weren't for everyday use. They had to be special. But what's being described here is a day when the whole city of Jerusalem is going to be holy and every pot and bowl in the place is going to be sacred.

And even the bells on the horses are going to be inscribed with the words holy to the Lord. So in the book of Exodus in chapter 28, that phrase we're told, holy to the Lord, was supposed to be inscribed on the golden plate on the turban of the high priest.

Now it's just going to be on the bells of horses. It's on these sort of very common objects. You know, it's going to be on the horn of your car. Ordinary cooking pots will be like the sacred bowls before the altar.

Holiness, in other words, is no longer going to be limited to the temple courts. All of Jerusalem will be a holy zone. Everyday life will be sanctified. Every activity will be priestly worship.

[ 26 : 52 ] Okay, and that brings us to the end of the passage and to the end of the book. Time to wrap up and think a little bit about what these things mean for us. And I want to come back to those two issues that we began with, power and hope.

See, when we come into the New Testament, as we've said before in this series, we find two things. Number one, the fulfillment of Zachariah's vision in our own day already.

We really do live on that day that Zachariah was looking forward to. So take, for example, what Jesus says at the end of Matthew's Gospel. In Matthew 21, he says to his disciples, truly I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what has been done to the fig tree, but even if you say to this mountain, be taken up and thrown into the sea, it will happen.

Now I think sometimes we can rip this verse out of context and sort of just talk about how faith can move mountains, etc., which is sort of true, and God can do anything he likes, and we can ask him for mountains to be moved, but actually the geography in Matthew 21 I think is very important.

Jesus is walking from Bethany to Jerusalem, which means he is standing on the Mount of Olives. And you'll notice he doesn't just say, if you have enough faith, you'll be able to move mountains.

[ 28 : 17 ] He says you'll be able to say to this mountain, not that mountain, not a mountain, this mountain, be taken up and thrown into the sea. In other words, I think he's alluding to Zechariah chapter 14.

What we're supposed to realize is that the day of the Lord is beginning to happen right then and there as Yahweh, God, is standing with his feet on the Mount of Olives.

And the great day of distress is about to come upon the city of Jerusalem, but the way of escape is going to be provided and Jesus is the one who is going to stand in the way and defend his people from their attackers so that they can embark on a new exodus out of the land of slavery and into his kingdom.

Does that make sense? See, Jesus and his cross, that is day one of the new creation. It started off dark and cold. It started off as a day of defeat.

It looked pretty bad when our king was hanging on that cross. But it will end gloriously as a day of everlasting light. Likewise, what Zechariah says about the living waters flowing out of Jerusalem and the temple worship being expanded so that the whole city is holy.

[ 29 : 37 ] We are experiencing all of these things now. Jesus is the temple and the living water is flowing out of him. So, remember when Jesus is having that conversation with the Samaritan woman in John chapter 4 and she is all concerned about whether people should be worshipping at the temple in Jerusalem or in Mount Gerizim.

But Jesus said to her, Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem you will worship the Father. But the hour is coming and is now here when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth.

For the Father is seeking such people to worship him. God is spirit and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth. Likewise, in John chapter 7 we read, On the last day of the feast, that is, the feast of booths, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink.

Whoever believes in me, as the scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water. Now this he said about the spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive.

For as yet, the spirit had not been given because Jesus was not yet glorified. But in other words, in the age of the spirit, which is now here, even though it's also coming, worship will no longer be limited to certain places or special buildings.

[ 31 : 11 ] Not, not like the Old Testament. So we're not trying to set up churches that mirror the temple because Jesus is our temple and the whole earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof.

His presence is not meant to be confined to one small part of it. The Old Testament temple was never more than a temporary beachhead, pointing beyond itself.

to the time when the whole universe would be filled with God's presence and God's people would be worshipping him on every square inch of land in it. See, what Zechariah was really envisioning was not a physical kind of river city like Brisbane, but more importantly, a spirit-filled city, the church.

because as the spirit flows through us from our Lord Jesus being nourished by our head, he brings us new life and abundant fruit wherever he goes.

Friends, it is important that we think carefully about what we have now and why we have it because in contrast to those Christianized atheists, Zechariah cannot envision a day of renewal without God's power to enact it.

[ 32 : 32 ] No amount of secular admiration for Christian ethics can actually substitute for the real born-again Christian faith that transforms someone and has transformed so many lives and families and societies.



So, the atheists will say, of course, being born again is nothing more than a sort of psychological trick. You know, a powerful way to talk about turning over a new leaf.

We all need a fresh start and so on. But we know that that's not what's happening. Don't we? The scriptures are clear. Being born again is a work of God's spirit.

Many of us in this room have been radically transformed, haven't we? And being in church is not just like belonging to any old sort of support group or a club, right?

It's about being gathered by Christ to be fed and nourished and ruled by His Word. It's a cosmic spiritual reality.

[ 33 : 39 ] Even sermons, as ordinary as they may seem, sermons are not merely, thank goodness, human lectures or pep talks or I'm trying to gee you all up, you know, depending on the vibe.

We're not just here for a bunch of naturalistic reasons, are we? We're here participating in spiritual realities, cosmic realities. God Himself is addressing us and saving us and working in us by His Spirit-empowered Word.

God. But secondly, of course, the fullness of all of Zachariah's promises have not yet been realized yet and that's also important to get a hold of, which means that the Christian life must be also a life of hope, right?

Paul talks about we have the first fruits of the Spirit but not the full harvest. Transformation at the moment is painfully slow, isn't it? So we must continue waiting in hope and actually, solid hope is the only way to deal with the pain and disappointment of the Christian life.

In fact, I would say it's the only decent answer to all the pain and suffering in our lives, in everyone's life. Remember, again, Alain de Botton, he said, secular society has not been able to deal with the problem of pain and suffering with any particular skill.

[ 35 : 03 ] Now, how true that is. I have absolutely no idea what to say. In the end, actually, as good as the Christian life is now, in some ways, hope is the only thing that keeps us going, isn't it?

In fact, Paul says in 1 Corinthians chapter 15, if in Christ we have hope in this life only, we are of all people most to be pitied because of all the persecution that comes with the Christian life, all the pain of struggling against sin that we used not to care about, just used to do whatever you like, all of the stress over the cause of the gospel and how the gospel is going, whether it's flourishing, whether we're promoting it in our city, we would be free of all of that and we all feel from time to time, don't we, the temptation to give up.

Without hope, it would be impossible to keep going. But there really is hope, solid hope, hope that motivates the Christian life, that gets us through all the struggles and the sacrifices, which is what I must say, I do, I feel, I feel profoundly sorry for the atheists, you know, who I've been quoting, who seem to me in some ways to be just caught in a bind because they see so clearly the great blessings of the Christian life, but they have no way of holding on to them.

But brothers and sisters, there really is hope, solid hope, a glorious future, a good future that God will establish by his mighty power that he has displayed time and time again throughout history.

So let me read Revelation chapter 22 to finish. I'm just going to leave this hanging in the air because it's so beautiful and any comment I make would ruin it.

[ 36 : 50 ] So speaking of the new Jerusalem, John says, Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, bright as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb, through the middle of the street of the city, also on either side of the river, the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit each month.

The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it and his servants will worship him.

They will see his face and his name will be on their foreheads and night will be no more. They will need no light of lamp or sun for the Lord God will be their light and they will reign forever and ever.

Amen. Amen.