

# 16. ZECHARIAH

520 to early 5<sup>th</sup> century BC

Zechariah was a prophet during the time the second temple was built. Eschatological references are scattered throughout the book and at least eighty verses or phrases are alluded to in the book of Revelation.

## **Foreigners will join themselves to the Lord on that day** (Zech 2:10-13)

In this vision, Zechariah refers to Israeli exiles returning from Babylon but he sees a future Jerusalem with so many inhabitants that it cannot be walled. The Lord said he would be as a wall of fire all around it to protect it, and he would be the glory in its midst (vv. 4-5). In other words, when the Messiah comes, his glory will be visible in Jerusalem and he will be present in the temple there. Many nations will join themselves to the Lord in that day and they will be his people (vs. 11). Isaiah uses this same expression of foreigners *joining themselves to the Lord*, to minister to him, to love the name of the Lord, and to be his servants (Isa 56:3-8). The latter chapters of Isaiah major on the end-time events. The Lord will bring them to his holy mountain and make them joyful in his house of prayer which will be called a house of prayer for all peoples.

The Lord will inherit Judah as his portion (vs. 12). They will be converted and will know that the Lord has sent the Messiah to them. Zechariah prophesied that the Lord will take possession of Judah in the holy land and will once again choose Jerusalem and dwell there in their midst. This, of course, has not happened since Zechariah made his prophecy. Israel has now returned to the holy land, but they only possess part of the promised land, and they don't have full control over the Holy City. When Jesus returns, he will live there. There is an added warning to all mankind to be silent before the Lord because he has roused himself and will soon come in judgment to punish the ungodly. Compare the reaction after the seventh seal is opened: There was

silence in heaven for half an hour (Rev 8:1). This, in anticipation of God's final judgment.

The armies that come against the Lord and his Messiah at Armageddon will be annihilated, but there will be survivors of this present age who will continue into the Messianic age as subjects during the millennium. Are they being given a second chance? Salvation includes forgiveness of sins, eternal life, and inheriting the kingdom. When the door is shut (Mt 25:11–12, Lk 13:25-27), the Church age is over, but in every age, there is the opportunity for people to believe. They and their descendants, however, cannot inherit the kingdom. The whole nation of Israel will believe, but they also forfeited the kingdom and will now be subjects, not rulers. At the last judgment, after the thousand years are over, all those who were not resurrected or raptured at the first resurrection will be judged according to what they have done. The unbelievers will then be consigned to hell, while those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life will join their fellow saints in New Jerusalem.

The many nations who will be joined with the Lord on that day as his people are not to be interpreted as the Church. This is the Messianic era when the Lord is dwelling in Jerusalem. And we are talking about nations, not individuals, probably peoples who are absorbed into greater Israel. Even today Israel is multicultural with citizens from over 100 countries.

### **Restoration of Israel as a kingdom of priests** (Zech 3:1-10)

The high priest Joshua represents Israel in their God-given role as priests (Exod 19:6). But Israel's unbelief and idolatry have made her filthy and Satan accuses her of being ineligible for the job. But God, through Jesus, will take away Israel's sin, dress her in righteousness, and crown her for her future role. In rejecting Jesus as her Messiah, Israel forfeited her right to reign with Christ over the renewed Earth from New Jerusalem, but by God's grace, she will retain her right to be God's people on Earth and to guide the nations in worshipping at his temple in Jerusalem.

Joshua, the burning stick, has been snatched from the fire of Babylonian captivity and Israel will again be saved after suffering during the Great Tribulation (13:8-9). During the millennium God will

continue to choose Jerusalem and give Israel the glorious role of administering the temple.

As for you, you will be called priests of the Lord, you will be named ministers of our God. You will feed on the wealth of nations, you will boast in their abundance (Isa 61:6).

In this way, Joshua is symbolic of things to come (vs. 8). When God's servant, the Branch, the Messiah, comes, he will remove the sin of the land in a single day, based on his substitutionary death. Israel will experience their salvation: On that day a fountain will be opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness (Zech 13:1). They will look on the returning Messiah whom they pierced, and all the tribes of the land will mourn for him and grieve bitterly for him, remembering how their ancestors had rejected him and betrayed him (Zech 12:10-13, Rev 1:7).

The Deliverer will come from Zion and turn godlessness away from Jacob. This is my covenant with them when I take away their sins (Rom 11:26-27).

### **The lampstand and two olive trees (Zech 4:1-8)**

Zechariah has another vision of a lampstand and two olive trees that pour oil into the lampstand's bowl. He is told that the olive trees represent two men who are anointed to serve the Lord of all the Earth (4:14), presumably Joshua the high priest, and Zerubbabel the governor, leaders who were responsible for building the second temple. The message to Zerubbabel is: "Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit" says the Lord Almighty.

The two witnesses of Revelation 11, who preach during the final 3 ½ years of this era, are described as the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand "before the Lord of the Earth" (Rev 11:4). The context of Revelation 11, as that in Zerubbabel and Joshua's day, is the building of the temple. This suggests that the two powerful witnesses in Jerusalem (the city where their Lord was crucified) during the Great Tribulation will be a high priest and a politician and that they will be Messianic Jews. In Zechariah "they are anointed to serve the Lord of all the Earth." In Revelation "they stand before the Lord of the Earth." What are you, O mighty mountain (Zech 11:7) refers to the enemy, who in the tribulation period is the Antichrist.

Before ‘Zerubbabel’ he is not a mountain, he will be reduced to level ground.

## **Millennial Jerusalem**

*Zechariah 8:1-8*

The Lord will return to Zion and dwell in Jerusalem. This will only happen when the Messiah arrives. Jerusalem will be called the faithful city, and Mount Zion will be called the holy mountain. Old people of great age and many children will play in the streets. The Lord will save his people from the East and the West and they will live as the Lord’s people in faithfulness and righteousness. The people spoken about here are Jews in Jerusalem, a word of hope for Israel.

### **Millennial nations will seek the Lord (Zech 8:20-23)**

During the Messianic reign, people will come from every language and nation to entreat the favor of the Lord at Jerusalem. These are the survivors of the Great Tribulation, who along with Israel, are the subjects of the Messianic reign. But Israel is now converted, the Holy Spirit has been poured out them (Zech 12:10) and they are worshipping the Lord and celebrating his festivals. The first generation of the nations are unbelievers who submitted to the Antichrist, but their descendants will recognize that God is with Israel and they will honor and respect them.

The nations who come to Jerusalem to seek the Lord are described as “many peoples and powerful nations.” Ten men (large groups) from every nation and tongue will apprehend Jews and ask to go with them to Jerusalem. People from every nation and language group (vs. 23) will go to Jerusalem to seek the Lord. They are not believers, but they have heard that God is with the Jews. Communications during the millennium may not be as technological as they are in the twenty-first century. The Messiah will proclaim peace to the nations and his rule will extend to the ends of the earth (Zech 9:10), but we are given few details of millennial society.

### **The Messiah’s triumphal entry (Zech 9:9-10, 16)**

These verses are very compact. In vs. 9 the inhabitants of Jerusalem are told to rejoice and shout aloud, because their victorious king is coming, humble and mounted on a donkey. This verse is Messianic and was fulfilled when Jesus entered Jerusalem on a donkey (Mt 21:1-11). At his first coming, Jesus lived as a perfect human being, humble and full of love, as symbolized by his riding a donkey into Jerusalem rather than a horse. He came to Jerusalem as a righteous man bringing salvation for his people. The crowds recognized this, and the gospel writers tell us that Jesus' triumphant entry on a donkey was a fulfillment of Zechariah's prophecy. However, although Jesus was born king of the Jews, he never became a king during his lifetime. That awaits his return.

Zechariah sees the two comings of the Messiah combined in one vision. Verse 9 belongs to the first coming, verse 10 belongs to his return. At his second coming, he is often portrayed as a victorious warrior wreaking vengeance on the wicked and conquering Israel's enemies, including the Antichrist and Satan. But here the emphasis is on peace. He will remove the weapons of war from his people because they won't need them anymore. He will speak peace to the nations because he will rule the whole world as the Prince of Peace. The nations will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. What was a prayer in Ps 72:8 is now stated as a sure prophecy; the Messiah's rule will extend from sea to sea, from the Euphrates River to the ends of the earth. His reign will be centered in Jerusalem and will extend over the whole Earth: China, India, the US, Europe, Africa, Australia, and all the oceanic islands.

On that day, during the Messianic era, the Lord will save his people, Israel, as a shepherd saves his flock. They will be glorious, sparkling in his land like jewels in a crown. How attractive they will be! Grain will make the young men thrive, and new wine the young women.

### **Victory for Israel at the siege of Jerusalem (Zech 12:1-9)**

The Lord who stretches out the heavens,  
lays the foundation of the Earth,  
and who forms the spirit it man, declares:  
Listen! I will make Jerusalem a cup  
that makes all the surrounding peoples stagger  
when they lay siege to Jerusalem and Judah.

The phrase “on that day” occurs sixteen times in Zechariah 12-14. It is the Day of the Lord’s visitation when the Messiah comes to judge rebellious mankind and reign over the Earth (Zech 14:9).

The chapter begins with a solemn declaration from the Lord who stretches out the heavens and lays the foundation of the Earth, and who made man a conscious being. God is about to create a new world order ruled over by the only perfect man that ever lived, Jesus the Messiah. But before his rule is established, a final confrontation occurs at the Holy City of Jerusalem besieged by *all* the nations of the Earth. It is the showdown between good and evil, between Christ and the Antichrist, between God and Satan. Mankind will be polarised; the righteous and the wicked, the sheep and the goats, the children of God and the children of the devil. However, Satan and the Antichrist are not mentioned here. Zechariah is an OT prophet prophesying about the final fate of Israel, Jerusalem, and the rebellious nations. Unbeknown to him the Church is mentioned in 14:5b: “Then the Lord my God will come, and all the holy ones with him.”

The earthly activities of the Lord here describe the coming of the Messiah as described in Revelation. It is the Messiah who will make Jerusalem a cup that sends all the surrounding peoples reeling, an immovable rock for all the nations. It is the sharp sword coming out of the mouth of the Messiah that strikes down the nations. His word is enough, but Zechariah makes it clear that Israel’s forces are empowered to win the battle.

The armies that come against Jerusalem represent all the nations of the earth (verse 3), but the Messiah will make it a heavy stone and all who try and lift it will injure themselves. The Messiah will fight for his people and protect them.

The Israeli army, navy, and airforce, finding encouragement in the Lord’s support of Jerusalem, will devour the armies invading their land. The Lord will not fight himself. John saw the Messiah coming on a white horse with the armies of heaven following. These are resurrected people who don’t fight physical battles. Nevertheless, the Messiah will be very active:

He will strike horses and their riders with panic and insanity.

He will keep his eyes on the house of Judah (all of Isarel).

He will blind every horse of the invading armies.

He will make Israel like a fire in a woodpile or among sheaves.

He will deliver the Israel's countryside first.

He will defend those who live in Jerusalem.

He will search out and destroy all of the nations who have come against Jerusalem.

The Day of the Lord is a Messianic event. The Lord in these verses is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ, the Word of God. He only needs to speak the word. The name written on his robe and thigh is "King of kings and Lord of lords." For the next thousand years, he will rule the world with a rod of iron.

### **All Israel will be saved** (*Zech 12:10 – 13:1*)

"I will pour out my Spirit on the descendants of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem so that they understand my grace and pray to me. They will look at me, the one they have pierced" (*Zech 12:10*). Cf. *Rev 1:7* Look! He is coming with the clouds, and every eye will see him, that is, those who pierced him. (*καὶ* in Greek is often explicative, meaning 'that is' or 'namely')

The Lord will pour out his Spirit on Israel as prophesied through Ezekiel and Joel. On that day, a fountain will be opened for Israel to cleanse them from their sin and impurity (*13:1*). The fountain is of course the cleansing blood of Jesus, shed for the forgiveness of the sins of those who believe. William Cowper penned the words:

There is a fountain filled with blood drawn from Emmanuel's veins,  
and sinners plunged beneath that flood lose all their guilty stains.

The spiritual salvation of Israel will occur upon Jesus' return after he defeats Israel's enemies. It couldn't very well happen while war raged around Jerusalem. This will be just as Paul predicted (*Rom 11:26*):

In this way all Israel will be saved as it is written: The deliverer will come from Zion and turn godlessness away from Jacob.

All Christians need to recognize that God still has, and always has had, a glorious plan for his people Israel as prophesied by the OT prophets.

The Lord said, "They will look on me whom they have pierced." This would have been a difficult concept for the Jews to understand; it is the LORD who is speaking. How could he be pierced? Piercing is an expression meaning putting to death. Cf. *Zech 13:7* where a sword is mentioned as the instrument. Some scholars have tried to avoid the obvious translation for this reason. As Christians, we understand it as

the Messiah who was pierced, because we believe in the incarnation, the crucifixion, and the second coming of Jesus. John said the crucifixion took place so that this Scripture might be fulfilled (Jn 19:37), and again in Revelation he says: Every eye will see him, namely those who pierced him"; and "all the tribes of the land will mourn because of him" (Rev 1:7). John is alluding to verse Zechariah 12:10. When the Jews see him, they will mourn greatly for him. It is all the tribes (or clans) of the land of Israel (verse 12) who will mourn, not the tribes of the Earth who will only curse him (Rev 16:8, 11, 21). Israel will mourn for the Messiah whom their ancestors crucified because he is pouring out his Spirit on them. It is vital to note that their conversion does not occur until *after* the Messiah's arrival. If Israel was converted before Jesus' return, they would be resurrected with the Church. As it is, their conversion is too late. Through unbelief, their ancestors forfeited the kingdom so that they would not rule with Christ from New Jerusalem during the millennium. However, they will be converted and live on Earth during the millennium as the Messiah's redeemed nation.

### **Israel scattered and only a remnant saved** (Zech 13:2-9)

On this same future Day of the Lord, the Messiah will put an end to idolatry and false prophecy which result in immorality and ungodliness. Genuine Jewish prophecy ended with John the Baptist. Jesus said that the prophets and the Law prophesied until John and since then the good news of the kingdom of God was being preached (Lk 16:16). If anyone prophesies after Jesus' return, he will be condemned to death; the punishment for false prophets in the Law. When Jesus returns, he will rule as the Wonderful Counselor. All people will be taught by God (Isa 54:13), so there will be no need for prophets.

Idolatry in the sense of idol worship is rife in our day, especially among Hindus and Buddhists, and also among many people influenced by animistic religion. Idolatry is putting things before God or in place of him. In the Western world, idolatry is rife in the form of materialism, covetousness, lust, and pride. Many put science before God and end up living secular lives; they are not concerned with God or religious belief. Some put their work before anything else, others the environment. Those who promote these ideas are the false prophets of our day. During the Messianic reign, they will no longer exist.

The Lord's shepherd who is struck down is, of course, the Lord Jesus Christ, the one who was spoken of as having been pierced (Zech 12:10). He is the only person whom the Lord would call, the man who is my companion or partner. It was the Lord's will that he should be killed, so that God's people might be saved. The sword is mentioned metaphorically as a weapon for killing. At his crucifixion Jesus was pierced with nails and afterwards he was pierced with a spear (Jn 19:34).

After the institution of the Lord's Supper (Mt 26:31), Jesus and his disciples went out to the Mount of Olives. He told them that they would fall away because it was written, "I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered." Jesus interpreted the sheep to be his disciples. After his arrest, they all fled.

That was a partial fulfillment of the prophecy, but not the one that would affect Israel as a nation during the final period of this age which included the battle of Armageddon (Zech 12:2-3). For Zechariah, the nation of Israel was his flock (Zech 11:4). So the prophecy has two fulfillments; the disciples were scattered, and then forty years later, the whole nation of Israel was scattered among the nations for over 1800 years.

Mention is made of Christ's death at this time because it was Israel's rejection of the Messiah that led to the overthrow of Jerusalem and their temple by the Romans in 70 AD, resulting in the dispersion of the Jews throughout the world. God would turn his hand against them, and two-thirds of them would perish and one-third left alive. The surviving third are those who have returned to Israel today. Even there in their land, the remnant will be put through the fire and refined: "How awful that day will be! No other will be like it. It will be a time of trouble for Jacob, but he will be saved out of it" (Jer 30:7). When the Good Shepherd returns, they will call on his name. He will say, "They are my people," and they will respond, "The Lord is our God." This is the conversion of Israel. The relationship between God and Israel will be restored.

## **The Great Day of the Lord (Zech 14)**

This day belongs to the Lord. It is the day of his visitation to Earth in salvation for the righteous and in judgment for the wicked. He will manifest his glory, and the arrogance of man will be humbled. It begins with calamity for Israel, but it is the end of an era and the

beginning of the Messianic reign. The enemies of God and his people will be destroyed and God, in the person of his regent, the Messiah, will reign on Earth.

**14:1-2 War** This is the end-time battle when the Lord gathers *all* the nations to do battle against Jerusalem. The city will be taken, houses plundered, women raped, and half the city will be taken into exile. The other half of the population will remain in the city. This is Armageddon (Rev 16:16-19).

**14:3-4 Theophany** At this critical juncture the Messiah descends from heaven, intervenes to fight against the nations, defeats them, and takes over the rule of the Earth. He returns visibly and physically and stands on the Mount of Olives to the east of Jerusalem, the same place from which he ascended to heaven (Acts 1:11-12). The immediate effect of this theophany is a great earthquake that splits the mountain in two and provides a way of escape for the survivors in Jerusalem, via a very wide valley. This massive earthquake at the time of the Messiah's return is referred to many times by the prophets (Isa 29:6, 40:4, Ezek 38:19-20, Joel 2:10, Hag 2:6) and the apostle John (Rev 6:12, 11:13, 19, 16:18). It will be felt worldwide by all of creation, and all the cities of the world will collapse.

**14:5b The holy ones** The Lord comes with all the holy ones, who include both angels and saints; they all belong to the Lord. The holy city is descending from heaven to Earth, so all the angels accompany Jesus (Mt 25:31), and then the resurrection occurs and the righteous meet the Lord in the air. Their 'fine linen, bright and pure' is the clothing of the bride, the Church, and is symbolic of the righteous deeds of the saints (Rev 19:8, 14). The conjunction connecting the last sentence of Zechariah 14:5 with what precedes would be better translated as 'thus' as the Lord's return has already been described in vv 3-4. This is not a second coming, but an indication of purpose, the Messiah has returned to Earth with all his angels (Mt 16:27) and saints (1 Thess 4:14-17) who met him in the air before he descended to the Mount of Olives.

The Bible everywhere gives the impression that the second coming of Jesus will be a physical event, visible to those on earth and especially to those in Jerusalem. But as with Jesus' post-resurrection appearances in the Gospels, he can appear and disappear at will. There is little evidence that he will continue to be visible on earth. Ezekiel saw a vision of the Lord's return from the east gate of the temple. He

saw the glory of the Lord coming from the East and the earth shone with his glory which entered Jerusalem via this east gate and filled the temple. He told Ezekiel that he would dwell there amid Israel forever.

**14:6-7 Meteorological change** This is a unique day, known only to the Lord. There is darkness resulting from the preceding warfare and earthquakes, and there is light emanating from the glory of God. It is dark, neither like day nor night, and it is warm; there is no cold or frost. The sun is darkened, the moon does not give its light, and the stars lose their brightness (Isa 13:10, Joel 3:15, Mt 24:29, Rev 6:12-13). In the evening, there will be light, especially over Jerusalem, because of the descent of the Holy City. Everything will become new and the old order of things will pass away (Rev 21:1-3).

**14:8 Living waters** will flow from Jerusalem as it becomes the center of world restoration. Half of the water will flow to the eastern sea (the Dead Sea) and half to the western sea (the Mediterranean), flowing all year round, in both summer and winter. Many interpret this water as symbolic of Messianic blessings, like the river of the water of life that the angel showed John in the New Jerusalem (Rev 22:1-2) but the prophets link it with geographical features so it is likely to be literal, on Earth at least. Joel said all the streambeds of Judah will flow with water and a fountain will come forth from the house of the Lord and water the Valley of Acacias (Joel 3:18). Ezekiel took twelve verses to describe it (Ezek 47:1-12) and gives details of the water flowing into the Dead Sea producing swarms of wildlife. With all these details, there is no reason to doubt that this will not be a beautiful physical feature of Messianic Jerusalem in stark contrast to its past aridity. The east-west valley caused by the earthquake would be an ideal course for the waters to flow to the Mediterranean and Dead Seas.

**14:9 Only one name** The Messiah will reign over the Earth from the temple in Jerusalem There will be no rivals. His name will be the only name, the Father and the Son are one. There will be no more idolatry. Hindus and Buddhists will destroy their idols, and Muslims will accept that Jesus is more than a prophet and greater than Mohammed. No longer will indigenous peoples seek power and guidance from the spirits. This is the kingdom of God that Jesus spoke about so frequently. It is the first time that God will rule the world directly in the person of his Son, the Messiah, Jesus, who will rule as God's regent. He will sit on David's throne as king of Israel, as well as being King of kings and Lord of lords throughout the entire Earth.

**14:10-11 Topological change** As a result of the earthquake, Jerusalem will be raised and remain aloft on its site above a vast plain that stretches from Geba in the north to Rimmon in the south. These towns were on the northern and southern borders of ancient Judah. It will now be forever secure. Micah and Isaiah say that in the latter days, the mountain of the house of the Lord will be established as the highest of the mountains and will be raised above the surrounding hills (Mic 4:1). Isaiah tells Jerusalem to shine, because her light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon her. The Lord will arise upon you and his glory will be seen upon you (Isa 60:1).

**14:12-of 13 The rebel armies** that surrounded Jerusalem will be destroyed partly by the Jews fighting against them, partly by panic and mutual destruction, and partly by being struck with a plague from the Lord. Their bodies will rot while they are standing, which may result from nuclear radiation.

**14:14-15 Wealth** The wealth of the surrounding nations will be appropriated by Israel. The plague afflicting the animals left in the enemy camps is no doubt a result of nuclear radiation.

**14:16-17 The survivors** There will be survivors from the destruction that occurs during this great time of world tribulation. Years of warfare, worldwide earthquakes, and cosmic disturbances may well decimate the world's population, but it results in the end of an age, not the end of the world. The survivors of all the nations that came against God, his Messiah, and Jerusalem, will live in Earth and submit to the king, Jesus the Messiah. They will make yearly pilgrimages to acknowledge the king and submit to him. Their worship may not be from the heart, as we have no evidence of the conversion of these survivors of the wicked, and there is the threat that there will be no rain for them if they don't go to Jerusalem to worship. They will be ruled with a rod of iron. The leaders of the nations will bring their splendor to the Holy City (Rev 21:23-25).

**14:20-21 Glorified Jerusalem** The land of Israel will be holy to the Lord in that day and nothing there will be regarded as profane. The Levites will organize worship and sacrifices. There will be no 'Canaanites' in the millennium temple, whether they be interpreted as traders or unbelievers. All Israel will be converted and the law of God will be written on their hearts. The Spirit of God will turn them away from ungodly activity.

