

Zechariah

Author

Zechariah the prophet was the son of Berekiah and the grandson of Iddo the priest. (Zech 1:1; 12:4, 16; Ezra 5:1; 6:14) He was born in Babylon. (Neh 12:1, 16) Being the grandson of a priest, it is very probable that he still was trained in the priestly role even though the temple was in ruins and he was not living anywhere near where it had been. It is likely that he had some role in the synagogue system that was started by the captives as a replacement for temple worship. He would have been a contemporary of the prophet Haggai, Zerubbabel, and Joshua, the high priest. (Zech 3:1; 6:6; 6:11; Ezra 5:1-2) He was probably a young man when he prophesied. (Zech 2:4) His name means “Yahweh remembers.”

Date

The first date given is the eighth month of the second year of Darius. (1:1) That would be Oct 520 BC. The second date is the 24th day of eleventh month of the second year of Darius. (1:7) That would be 15 Feb 519 BC. The third date is the fourth day of the ninth month of the fourth year of Darius. (7:1) That would be 7 Dec 518 BC. The messages of chapters 9 thru 14 are not specifically dated so they probably occurred around the last date given.

Historical Background

The first return of captives from the Babylonian exile was under Zerubbabel in 538 BC when Cyrus was King (539-530). (Ezra 1--6) Both Haggai and Zechariah would have been part of this first return because they prophesied about the rebuilding of the temple which was completed in 516 BC, during the reign of Darius I (521-486 BC). (Ezra 5 – 6)

The second return of captives from the Babylonian exile was under Ezra in 458/57 BC while Artaxerxes I Longimanus was King. (Ezra 7 – 10)

The third return of captives from the Babylonian exile was under Nehemiah in 445/444 BC also while Artaxerxes I Longimanus was king. (Neh 1 – 13) Nehemiah was in Jerusalem from the 20th year of king Artaxerxes but returned to Babylon during the 32nd year. Nehemiah 13:6 – 7 indicates that he returned to Jerusalem after that but the date is uncertain.

Basic outline of the book

Opening Exhortation: 1:2 – 6

Eight prophetic dream visions: 1:7 – 6:8

Historical Messages: 7 – 8

Two Prophetic Oracles: 9 – 14

Themes of the book

A. Glimpses of reality for the postexilic community from a heavenly standpoint, namely, that God is working out his eternal purpose for Judah and Jerusalem, equipping his covenant people to fulfill the spiritual role for which he chose them (Zech 1:7--6:15)

B. Describe the quality of life which the postexilic community is to display (Zech 7:1--8:32)

C. Demonstrate that the Lord will establish his kingdom through struggle and tension

D. Urge Israel to return to Yahweh so that he would return to them and continue to fulfill his word

E. Promise that in spite of the nation's lowly position and its spiritual insensitivity, a Deliverer will bring a time of ultimate blessing

Opening Exhortation

Verses 1:2 – 3. Return to God. God has had his prophets speak this message for him for years previously and it continues to today. If man expects God to be responsive to his needs, it is essential for man to turn from disobeying God's way of living. (Isaiah 55:6,7; Jer. 3:12,13; Joel 2:12-13; Amos 5:4,6; Hos. 7:10; Mal. 3:7)

Verses 4 – 6. Warning from history about disobeying God. The example of the Jews, especially during the time of the judges and after the division into two kingdoms, was one of disobedience and it is used as a severe warning not to be like them and neglect the messages of the former prophets.

Visions

Verses 1:7 – 17. This vision came on the 24th day of the 11th month, two months before Haggai preached his last message (Hag 2:10, 20), and five months before the work on the Temple had begun (Haggai 1:15). He saw a man riding a red horse, standing among the myrtle trees, and behind him were red, brown, and white horses. The man is identified in verse 11 as the angel of the Lord. That is an OT reference to a pre-incarnate appearance of Jesus. When Zechariah asks what these are, he is told they are the ones the Lord has sent to go throughout the earth. They report that they have found the whole world at rest and in peace. Then the angel of the Lord (Jesus) asks the Lord Almighty (God, the Father) how long he will withhold mercy from Jerusalem and the towns of Judah with which he has been angry for the past 70 years (the time of the captivity.) After the angel of the Lord hears from the Lord Almighty, he tells Zechariah that the Lord Almighty is jealous for Jerusalem and Zion, but that he is angry with the nations that feel secure. Therefore he will return to Jerusalem with mercy and there his house will be rebuilt. That finally happened in 516 BC. And a measuring line will be stretched out over Jerusalem. That shows it will once again be prosperous and built up. It is further explained that Jerusalem will again overflow with prosperity and God will comfort Zion and choose Jerusalem. The walls were finally rebuilt in 445 BC but Jerusalem did not become prosperous like it was under David and Solomon. Jerusalem is more prosperous today than it has even been since the walls were rebuilt, but it is still not as prosperous as it was under David and Solomon. So this prophecy is still waiting to be fulfilled.

Verses 18 – 21. Zechariah then looks up and sees four horns. Horns are used to indicate power, so Zechariah asks what they are. The angel says they are the horns (nations) that scattered Judah, Israel and Jerusalem. When he is shown four craftsmen, he asks what they are coming to do. He is told that the craftsmen are coming to terrify the horns and throw them down. The identity of the horns (nations) is not given, but comparing with the vision of the future given in a statue to Nebuchadnezzar in the book of Daniel, they would be Babylon, the combined nation of the Medes and Persians, Greece, and Rome. If you take the craftsmen as being what destroyed each nation, then the Medo-Persian nation destroyed Babylon, Greece destroyed the Medo-Persians, and the Romans destroyed the Greeks. What is left is for the fourth craftsman to destroy the Roman empire which still exists in a weakened form (as shown by the iron mixed with clay in Nebuchadnezzar's statue). The statue in Nebuchadnezzar's vision is destroyed by the mountain of the Lord so that would indicate the Roman empire will be destroyed by God's kingdom sometime in the yet to be determined future.

Verses 2:1-13. Zechariah then looks and sees a man with a measuring line and learns that he is going to measure Jerusalem's length and breadth. The man is told by an angel that "Jerusalem will be a city without walls because of the great number of men and livestock in it. And I myself will be a wall of fire around it, declares the Lord, and I will be its glory within." Then the Lord says to flee from the land of the north for he has scattered you to the four winds of heaven. Then the Lord says for Zion living in the daughter of Babylon to escape because after he has gone against the nations that have plundered Zion, he will raise his hand against them so that their slaves will plunder them. Then he says to be glad because he is coming and will live among you and many nations will be joined with the Lord and will become his people. Then he says the Lord will

inherit Judah and will again choose Jerusalem. So all creation should be quiet because he has roused himself from his holy dwelling.

Jerusalem is promised that she will be at peace and prosperous because God will provide her protection and be her glory. This is a good description of the time of the Millennium when Jesus has taken control of the world and establishes Jerusalem in charge of his kingdom.

Over the years, the Jewish people were scattered throughout nations all over the world. They are told to come out, especially from the nation to the north. For years now, Jewish people have been leaving the nations where they have lived and returning to Israel as their new homes. Jews from Russia, to the north, have been returning in great numbers to Israel.

Jerusalem can't really have the prosperity and glory that God wants it to have as long as there are still nations coming against it and touching it with their disobedience of God. So he will deal with those nations at the end of the Tribulation so Jerusalem can receive and become what he has promised she will be.

Many nations being joined with the Lord and becoming his people seems a clear reference to Gentiles from nations around the world becoming followers of Jesus. This is a perfect prophecy of what has happened during the Church age.

That the Lord has roused himself from his dwelling place should be a warning to everyone that the Lord will accomplish all that he has said.

Verses 3:1-10. Then Zechariah is shown Joshua, the high priest, standing before the angel of the Lord (Jesus) with Satan standing there to accuse him. But the Lord rebukes Satan saying this man is a burning stick snatched from the fire. Joshua was dressed in filthy clothes, but the Lord tells angels to remove his filthy clothes and put rich garments on him because he has taken away Joshua's sin. Then the angel of the Lord (Jesus) tells Joshua that if he will walk in his ways and keep his requirements that he will govern the Lord's house, be in charge of his courts, and have a place among those standing there. The Lord tells Joshua and those with him that they are symbolic of things to come. The Lord says he is going to bring his servant, the Branch, that he will set a stone before Joshua with seven eyes on it, that he will write an inscription on the stone, and remove the sin of the land in a single day. In that day, Joshua is told each of them will invite his neighbor to sit under their vine and fig tree.

Joshua was the high priest at the time of the rebuilding of the temple and as such was a burning stick snatched from the fire that was the Babylonian captivity. But he also represents the world-wide suffering of the Jewish people that will continue until Jesus deals with them at the end of the Tribulation and restores them as a nation to their rightful place in his kingdom. Jews of that time will recognize Jesus as the long-awaited Messiah, walk in his ways and keep his requirements.

Jeremiah prophesied about the Branch and identifies him as from David and that he will be called "The Lord Our Righteousness." (Jer 23:5-6) That is Jesus. Jeremiah continues that the people will change from referring to the Lord bringing his people up out of Egypt to his bringing the descendants of Israel up out of the land of the north and out of all the countries where he had banished them and they will live in their own land. (Jer 23:7-8) This obviously is the return of Jews to the Promised Land at the end of the Tribulation to live in safety and prosperity.

The stone would be the one Peter and John referred to as they spoke before the Sanhedrin. They referred to Jesus as "the stone you builders rejected, which has become the capstone." (Acts 4:11) Then they said, "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is not other name under heaven given to men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12) Peter later wrote that in Scripture it says, "See I lay a stone in Zion, a chosen and precious

cornerstone, and the one who trusts in him will never be put to shame.” (1 Pet 2:6 quoting Isa 28:16) So the stone is Jesus and the seven eyes on the stone speak of his omniscience in knowing everything.

Verses 4:1-14. Then Zechariah is awakened like a man coming out of sleep and asked what he sees. He sees a solid gold lampstand with a bowl at the top and seven lights with a channel to each of them. He also sees two olive trees, one on the right and one on the left. When Zechariah doesn't know what they are, he is told this is the word of God to Zerubbabel: “Not by might nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the Lord Almighty.” Zechariah is told that Zerubbabel will complete rebuilding the temple in spite of difficulties (the mountain becoming level ground) and men will rejoice. Then Zechariah is told that “These seven are the eyes of the Lord, which range throughout the earth.” When he asks about the two olive trees and the two gold pipes that pour out golden oil, Zechariah is told that, “These are the two who are anointed to serve the Lord of all the earth.”

The lampstand symbolizes Israel in complete fellowship with God being the light bearer to the nations that she was always to be.

The message to Zerubbabel is an encouragement to complete the rebuilding of the temple which is what Haggai and Zechariah have been commissioned by God to tell Zerubbabel and the people.

Historically, the two olive trees or branches would have been Joshua (the high priest) and Zerubbabel (the governor of the returnees), but they represent the two offices of priest and king which were separate but are joined together in Jesus, the Branch, who intercedes with God, the Father, for people (Heb 7:23-25) and who will rule over all people forever after the end of the Tribulation. Revelation 11 says that during the Tribulation there will be two witnesses who are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Lord of the earth. So during that time, there will again be two witnesses to the work of Jesus as priest and king.

Verses 5:1-4. Next Zechariah is shown a flying scroll that is 30 feet long and 15 feet wide. This vision is quite a change from the previous visions. This is a warning instead of an encouragement. The warning is that God is going to judge. The scroll is God's word so it is a curse against liars and thieves because they disobey God's word. God is holy and cannot tolerate evil forever. So, eventually, it will be punished and destroyed. In chapter 4 of his prophetic book, Malachi says that the Day of the Lord will come and burn like a furnace. He says to remember the law given to Moses at Mt. Horeb (Sinai). Then he says he will send the prophet Elijah before that great and dreadful day to turn the hearts of fathers to their children and the hearts of children to their fathers, or else he will come and strike the land with a curse. Perhaps this is the curse that is shown to Zechariah and that will make its presence known during the Tribulation because of the willful disobeying of God.

Verses 5:5-11. Then Zechariah is told to look up and see what is appearing. He looks and sees a basket with a lead cover. Then the cover is raised and he sees a woman sitting in the basket. Then the angel (Jesus) said, “This is wickedness.” Then he pushed the woman back into the basket and put the cover back in place. Zechariah watches while two women with wings like a stork lift up the basket and take it away. When Zechariah asks where they are taking the basket, he is told “to the country of Babylonia to build a house for it. When it is ready, the basket will be set there in its place.” Here we see the sin of the people is measured and wickedness is the cause. When compared with Revelation 17 and the woman there who has the title “mother of prostitutes and of the abomination of the earth,” this would foretell the establishing of the one-world religion and its joining with the one-world government that will be established somewhere in the land of Babylonia (Shinar) in the last days.

Verses 6:1-8. Zechariah looks again and sees four chariots coming out from between two mountains of bronze. The chariots are each pulled by different colored horses – red, black, white, and dappled (spotted). Zechariah is told that these are the four spirits (winds) of heaven going out from the presence of the Lord. The chariot with black horses goes north, the one with white horses goes west, and the one with dappled horses goes south. Note that the one with red horses stays where it is. Then we learn that the chariot going north has given God’s Spirit rest in the land of the north.

It is quite possible that the two mountains pictured are Mt. Zion and Mt. Olivet, since the valley between these two hills is elsewhere set forth as the theatre of divine judgment. (Zech 14:4; Joel 3:2) Brass is commonly used as a symbol of divine judgment upon sin. The brass serpent set up in the wilderness (Num 21:9) prefigures Christ crucified as a sin offering and symbolizes sin judged. Jesus said, “Just as Moses lifted up the snake in the desert, so the Son of Man must be lifted up.” (John 3:14) Thus, it appears that the divine judgment upon the nations of the earth proceeds from Jerusalem’s vicinity. That the red horses do not go from the area of the two bronze mountains may indicate judgment on that area.

Although some scholars try to equate these horses with the horses in Revelation 6, they should not be taken as the same because there is no dappled (spotted) horse in Revelation 6. The horses of Revelation 6 indicate a flow of events – white (peace from aggressive diplomacy), red (war), black (famine because of measuring scales with it), pale (plagues as a result of war and famine that brings death, the named rider). The reason for the color of the horses here is not indicated. Why the chariot going north brings rest to God’s Spirit there is not indicated.

Historical Messages

Verses 6:9-15. At this point the vision ends and Zechariah is given instructions to perform something that has prophetic implications. Three recent returnees from Babylon have arrived and Zechariah is to go to them and get gold and silver which Josiah, the son of Zephaniah (who may be the author of the book by his name) is to make into a crown. The crown is to be taken and placed on the head of the high priest, Joshua, the son of Jehozadak, and he is to be told: “Here is the man whose name is the Branch, and he will branch out from his place and build the temple of the Lord.” It is also said that he will be clothed with majesty and will sit and rule on his throne and that he will be a priest on his throne. The crown is then to be placed in the completed temple as a memorial to the three returnees and Josiah.

The crowning of Joshua is obviously symbolic of future events because at this time the offices of priest and king are not combined. This indicates that, in the future, the one called the Branch (Isa 11; 53; Jer 33:15, 16) will hold both offices and sit on the throne as priest and king. This is a reference to Jesus. “Jesus” is the English transliteration of the Greek (Iesous) which is the name used to translate the Hebrew “Yehoshua” (Joshua) and the Aramaic “Yeshua.” The name Joshua means “Yahweh is salvation.”

The temple that the Branch is to build may be a reference to a temple that is used during the Millennium, or it may be a reference to the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in believers that occurs during the Church age as Paul writes in 1 Cor 6:19, “Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; you were bought at a price. Therefore honor God with your body.”

Most scholars agree that when Pilate said, "Behold, the man" (John 19:5), he was unknowingly announcing that Jesus was the Branch promised in these verses and that the Jews should have recognized that fact.

Verses 7:1-14. Approximately 1 2/3 years have passed since the night visions were given describing the future of the nation Israel, including the subjugation of her enemies, the regathering of the people to the land, cleansing of sin for the people, joining of the roles of the high priest and king, and establishment of a theocracy.

The result of these apocalyptic visions was that the people heeded the warnings and encouragements of Zechariah and Haggai, and had begun to build the temple. It was probably more than half completed by now.

“Although the walls of Jerusalem were still in ruins and some quarters of the town still in utter desolation, the city began to take on a prosperous look as private homes began to be erected and some fine residences completed (Haggai 1:4). With this new upsurge of prosperity, the question pressed to the fore whether it was necessary or not to observe the solemn seasons of mourning by which the people had commemorated the calamitous events of their former history, especially the anniversary of the burning of the city and the temple by the Babylonians on the tenth day of the fifth month. Accordingly a message of inquiry was sent to the priests and the prophets at Jerusalem to which the Lord through Zechariah granted a full and satisfying answer.”
(Merrill F. Unger)

The people wanted to know if they still needed to fast as they had for many years (70 + years since captivity and destruction of the temple). God’s reply through Zechariah was to ask whether they had really fasted and feasted for him during all that time or had they done it for themselves. The question was their motive. God reminded them of all he had commanded them in the past that they hadn’t obeyed. It was because of that disobedience that the nation had gone into captivity and the pleasant land made desolate. Would the people now change their ways?

They were commanded to put the word of God into practice by executing true judgment (Isa 1:17; Jer 21:12), show mercy and compassion (Mic 6:8), don’t oppress the widow, fatherless, stranger or poor (Ex 22:21; Prov 22:22), and don’t think evil of each other (Ex 20:16). Here’s how the people had obeyed. They turned their backs (Neh 9:29) indicates they turned away from God but God had not turned away (Isa 59:1). They stopped their ears (Jer 7:24, 26) means they didn’t listen to God’s word. They made their hearts as stone (Eze 3:7-9) means they were following what they wanted to do regardless of what God wanted. The result of their disobedience was that God didn’t respond to their prayers, he scattered them like a whirlwind among the nations, and the once pleasant land was made desolate.

Verses 8:1-13. After giving the people the negative side of what had happened because the people had disobeyed, God gives them the positive. He says he is jealous for the people and the land and will return to dwell in Jerusalem. Then the city will be called the City of Truth and the mountain upon which it sits will be called the Holy Mountain. Once again people of old age will sit in the streets and children will play there. God says that might seem marvelous to the people right now but not to him. God says he will save his people from the countries and bring them back to live in Jerusalem and he will be faithful and righteous to them as their God. God then encourages the people to complete the rebuilding of the temple and says that he will not deal with the remnant of this people as he did in the past. He even promises that the ground will produce abundantly and the sky will give rain. He says he will give these things to that remnant and they will be a blessing.

Verses 8:14-23. God says just as he determined to bring disaster upon the people because they and their father’s had disobeyed, so now he is determined to do good again to Jerusalem and Judah. So he tells them to speak the truth to each other, render true and sound judgment in their courts, not plot evil against their neighbor, and not swear falsely. God says the fasts the people have been observing will become glad, happy festivals. So people should love truth and peace. When all this happens in the land, people from many nations will come to the city to seek the Lord. The blessing of the Lord living in Jerusalem will be that people from around the world will plead with a Jew to let them go to Jerusalem with him because they have heard that God is there with the Jews.

The series of visions from chapter 1 through 8 shows God’s dealing with Israel from Zechariah’s time to the establishment of the kingdom over Israel. The symbolic crowning of the high priest Joshua is a climactic act illustrating the joining of the King – Priest offices in the Messiah (Jesus) who will rule over the established

kingdom and be its high priest. The question about whether the fasts should be continued has its answer that the fasts will become feasts in the millennial blessings.

Oracles

Chapters 9 – 14.

These chapters cover the same time period as chapters 1 through 8, but they show the overthrow of Gentile world powers and the establishment of Messiah's kingdom. This prophecy of the future is given in two oracles. The first oracle covers the time up to the first advent and rejection of Jesus as the Messiah (chapters 9-11) with some prophecies that extend into the Millennium. The second oracle deals with the second advent and acceptance of Jesus as the Messiah (chapters 12-14) and continues into the Millennium.

First Oracle

Verses 9:1-8. At the battle of Issus in southeastern Asia Minor on October, 333 BC, Alexander the Great defeated Darius and the Persians. This made Syria and Palestine open for his conquest. That made it possible for him to overcome Egypt. This oracle predicts the defeat of Damascus and Hamath, historic enemies of Israel. It also shows the downfall of the cities of the Syrian interior, and then the cities along the Mediterranean coast. The prophecies against Tyre and Sidon are well established in Scripture (Ezekiel 26:3-5; 28:22, 23). They were guilty of selling Israel's children to Greeks (Joel 3:1-10) and in spite of this and other atrocities seemed to prosper. Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Tyre but some of the inhabitants escaped to an island one half mile off shore and built a city fortress with walls 150 feet high. It appeared to be totally invincible until Alexander appeared 250 years later, took the rubble of the old city of Tyre on the mainland and built a causeway to the island so he could destroy the island city of Tyre. Although the army under Alexander causes these downfalls, it is actually the Lord using Alexander to accomplish his will.

His final statement is that the time is coming when no oppressor will overrun his people.

This has a partial fulfillment in the advance of Alexander against Palestine. According to Josephus (Antiquities of the Jews XI 8:3), Alexander demanded of the Jewish high priest Jaddua the payment of tribute which the Jews had customarily paid to the king of Persia. The high priest refused to break his agreement of loyalty with Darius. Alexander, in a rage, threatened to inflict a severe punishment on Jerusalem as soon as Tyre had fallen and he had reduced the Philistine strongholds.

Having taken Gaza, Alexander planned to go to Jerusalem. The high priest ordered the Jerusalem population to make sacrifices to God and pray for deliverance. God gave the high priest a dream, instructing him that he should take courage and go out of the city to welcome Alexander. While Alexander was not far from the city, the high priest led a large procession to meet the Macedonian. When the conqueror saw the Jewish high priest arrayed in purple and scarlet, having a golden plate with the name of God engraved upon it, and attended by priests in white robes, he saluted the high priest. Alexander said he had seen such a person in a dream at Dios in Macedonia. As a result of this experience, Alexander treated the Jews kindly. The city, the temple, and the people were granted a marvelous deliverance. But this prophecy goes much more than the mere survival of Israel. It says an oppressor shall not again overrun them, but both the Seleucids and later the Romans did that, so the prophecy can only have its fulfillment in the second coming of Messiah (Jesus) at the end of the Tribulation as he reestablishes the people in the land in peace for 1000 years (Millennium).

Verses 9:9-13. The individual presented here is not merely a human conqueror, but the divine king who is infinitely just and righteous in his ruling, not slaying his foes but bringing salvation with him. Rather than appear riding upon a highly spirited stallion, he comes riding a donkey. It is easy to understand why the majority of those who saw him did not recognize him as the Messiah. Verse 9 is what Jesus was fulfilling when he rode into Jerusalem the week before his crucifixion and people shouted "Hosanna. Blessed is the king who

comes in the name of the Lord.” (Luke 9:38) Notice that his rule will extend from sea to sea and from the River (Euphrates) to the ends of the earth. That will finally occur in the Millennium.

Verses 9:14-17. The Lord is presented here as appearing over them, protecting them, and shepherding his people so that they will sparkle in his land like jewels in a crown. This could be referring to his supernatural protection of the nation of Israel during the battle of Gog and Magog spoken of through the prophet Ezekiel (chapters 38 & 39) or it could be referring to his protection of the people at the end of the Tribulation and going into the Millennium. Since only the Lord does battle at the end of the Tribulation, it would seem most likely that this is a reference to the Gog and Magog battle. But the people of the nation sparkling like jewels and thriving on grain and new wine would have to have it fulfillment in the Millennium.

In chapter 9 the Messiah is shown as the King (v 9), the Prince of Peace (v 10-11), Judge (v 12-13), Protecting Warrior (v 14-15), and Shepherd (v 16-17).

Verses 10:1-3. This section begins by telling people to ask God for the rain that brings good into their lives. An idol is anything in a person’s or nation’s life that takes a more prominent place than God. The nation of Israel had a long problem with this. (Gen 31:19, 84; 1 Sam 15:23; 2 Kings 23:24) A diviner is someone who tries to obtain knowledge of the future by any method other than asking God and following how he says to live. All other methods are part of pagan religions, are completely occult in nature, and are expressly forbidden by God. (Num 23:23; Deut 18:10; 2 Kings 17:17) The nation of Israel had some problems with seeking guidance from sources other than God like when Saul asked the witch of Endor to get information from Samuel’s spirit.

The people wandered like sheep without a shepherd because the leaders were not leading the nation to put God first and allowing these practices. So God announced that his anger burns against such leaders and he will lead the people himself. In his first advent, Jesus begins fulfilling this.

Verses 10:4-12. Here God promises to be with his people, empower them, and restore them because he has compassion on them. He will bring them back from all the lands where they have been scattered and protect them as they return. Then they will be like he had never rejected them. He will strengthen them and they will walk in his name. This will be fulfilled in the Millennium.

Verses 11:1-3. Then Zechariah announces a destruction starting with Lebanon and moving to Bashan and the then the Jordan areas. No reason is given in these verses for the destruction but we are told that the shepherds are wailing and the lions are roaring. These are the three land borders of the nation: Lebanon (north), Bashan (south), and Jordan are (east). That these areas are destroyed indicates a breakdown of the nation’s protection which will allow them to be overrun by other nations.

Verses 11:4-6. Now the Lord tells Zechariah to pasture the flock that is marked for slaughter. Those who buy them slaughter them and are not punished for their action. The shepherds of the flock don’t spare them. Then God says he will not have pity on them any longer and will hand them over to their neighbors and their king who will oppress them, but he will not rescue them. The flock represents the nation of Israel whose religious leaders (their shepherds) are not taking care of the people. So God will let the people of the nation be oppressed by another nation. This is what happened to the people and nation during the Greek and then Roman conquests of the land.

Verses 11:7-8a. So, Zechariah acts out the drama God wants to use to reveal the future to the people. He takes two staves (Favor and Union) and pastures (cares for) the flock and in one month gets rid of the three shepherds. In Deut 28, God told the people through Moses that if they obeyed their covenant with him, he would have favor on them and make them a great, unified nation in the world. But, if they disobeyed the covenant, he would bring disaster upon them and allow them to be conquered by surrounding nations. So Zechariah is portraying what God had done for the nation. We don’t know who the three shepherds are. Some think it is the offices of prophet, priest, and king, but that can’t be correct because there were prophets after Zechariah and

there were priests until the temple was destroyed in 70 AD. So this is probably three religious leaders who opposed Zechariah.

Verses 11:8b-11. The flock detested Zechariah's shepherding and he grew weary of them so he stopped caring for them. He breaks the staff named Favor, revoking his covenant with them and the people recognize that it is the word of God. That is a picture of how the people treated God's leadership. They refused to let God shepherd them so that broke their covenant with God, and just as he promised in Deut 28, he brought other nations against them. Assyria conquered and devastated the northern ten tribes which were called Israel. Nebuchadnezzar conquered the southern two tribes which were called Judah and took the people captive to Babylon.

Verses 11:12-13. Zechariah tells the people to give him his pay and they respond with 30 pieces of silver. An ancient text called "the curse of Agade," was found in the old land of Sumer which includes Babylon and Nineveh. That text shows it was a sign of contempt to be paid 30 pieces of silver. The Lord says to Zechariah: "Throw it to the potter" – the handsome price at which they priced me!" God says "the price at which they priced me" because it was their contempt of him, not Zechariah, which was being displayed. So Zechariah throws the 30 pieces of silver into the house of the Lord (temple) for the potter. These actions are fulfilled in Matt 27 when Judas is paid 30 pieces of silver to betray Jesus. In remorse for what he has done, he takes the money to the temple and tries to give it back to the priests, but when they refuse to accept it, Judas throws it into the temple. The priests then take the money and buy the potter's field to use as a place to bury strangers.

Verses 11:14. Zechariah then takes his second staff, called Union, and breaks it, breaking the brotherhood between Judah and Israel. This action shows what happened after Solomon's death as the nation was divided into a northern kingdom called Israel and a southern kingdom called Judah. Since it happens here after the people have rejected the shepherd which represents the Messiah, this more accurately shows the breakup of the Jewish people into factions quarreling among themselves following Jesus' death and extending all the way to the present.

So verses 1 to 14 show God's people refusing to follow his leadership even though he was caring for them. As a result God allowed them to be divided into two kingdoms and conquered by other nations. When God sent Jesus as their Messiah that he had promised, they rejected him and showed contempt by paying 30 pieces of silver for his betrayal. Then the people were split into even smaller groups disagreeing with each other and were scattered throughout the world.

Verses 11:15-17. Now God tells Zechariah to be the model of a foolish shepherd because he is going to raise up a shepherd over the land who will not care for the lost, or seek the young, or heal the injured, or feel the healthy. This shepherd will eat the best of the sheep. Then God gives a woeful warning to that worthless shepherd about what will happen to him for not caring for the flock. This would seem to imply that the leaders of Judaism to this day are foolish shepherds who don't really take care of their flock. But this speaks of a single shepherd who will be accepted and followed and this has not happened yet. So, this appears to be a prophecy about the false prophet of the End Time who will be the leader of a one-world religion that even Jews will be drawn into accepting. He will not care for the sheep but lead them to worship the Antichrist.

Second Oracle

Verses 12:1-9. In the first part of this oracle, God shows Zechariah that he will finally deliver Israel from all her enemies. Five times in these verses he uses the phrase "on that day," so this is a prophecy of God's protection of Israel as a nation. After the 70 AD destruction of Jerusalem and the scattering of the people, there has not been a nation of Israel until Nov 29, 1947 when the United Nations General Assembly gave a portion of land to be a new nation for the Jewish people. Prior to that time, this prophecy could not be completed.

God says he will make the nation of Israel something that causes the people of surrounding nations reel. On that day, when the nations of the earth are gathered against Israel, he will make Jerusalem an immovable rock that causes everyone to injure themselves if they try to move it. Also on that day he will strike every horse with panic and blindness. On that day he will make the leaders of Judah like a firepot among the surrounding peoples, consuming them, but the dwellings of Judah will remain safe and Jerusalem will be intact. On that day, God will shield those in Jerusalem so that the feeblest of them will be strong like David in trusting the Lord. Finally, on that day, God will set out to destroy all the nations that attack Jerusalem. All of this description sounds similar to Ezekiel's chapter 38 – 39 prophecy of nations coming against Israel and having their weapons fall harmless to the ground or turned against them. With all the nations of the Mideast currently voicing displeasure or hatred against Israel, Ezekiel's prophecy could be fulfilled at any time.

(Newsweek, 7-5-82) "Periscope, Israel's SAM Killers: Double Drones" - According to Western military experts, Israel used a sophisticated electronic one-two punch to knock out Syria's surface-to-air missile (SAM) batteries in the Bekaa Valley when it invaded Lebanon. The Israelis first sent a drone-a small, pilotless aircraft-buzzing over a SAM installation to detect the radio frequency the site was using for missile guidance. A second drone followed, equipped with a high-explosive warhead and a device that enabled it to hone in on its target precisely by guiding itself along the site's own radar beam, The killer drone can also circle the area for up to an hour when the radar is shut down to disguise the location. When Syria used that tactic, Israel sent manned aircraft over the SAM site to trick the Syrians into turning the radar back on. The deadly double- drone system was originally a joint project of the Israeli, West German and United States air forces The Soviets, troubled by the SAM's vulnerability, are believed to have shipped a number of their damaged units home for postmortem examinations.

In addition they have repatriated a crippled T-72 tank to discover why the Israelis were successful in destroying so many of the state-of-the-art vehicles. Moscow was inordinately proud of the super tank's sturdy armor plating and is puzzled how Israeli weapons pierce it with such impunity. Israel has invented a new hollow-charge missile of its meticulous design which zeroes in on a weak spot detected in the T-72's modern panoply. Prime Minister Begin asserted on June 20, 1982, that Israel has new secret weapons possessed only by Israel and no other nation. These Russian SAM's and T-72 tanks "...fall upon the open field" (Eze. 39:5), in this case, the Bekaa Valley in Lebanon. That classical battle passage goes on to declare: "the heathen (Hebrew nations) shall know that I am the LORD, the Holy One in Israel" (Eze. 39:7).

Verses 12:10-14. God continues by saying he will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. Then he says they will look on me, the one they pierced, and they will mourn and grieve bitterly. The weeping like that of Hadad Rimmon is a reference to the sorrow of the people because of the mortal wounding of the godly king Josiah in a clash with Pharaoh Necho of Egypt near Megiddo in the plain of Esdraelon in 609 BC. (2 Chron 35:20-24)

After Jesus' first advent, we know that the one pierced is him, the Messiah that had been promised, for whom they were longing, and the shepherd whom they rejected. Since they will look on him, this has to be at his second advent when he comes back and set his foot on the Mount of Olives. God says that one that day all people of Jewish descent will mourn and grieve because they have rejected their Messiah. Recognizing that Jesus is the Messiah and mourning that he was rejected is the first step in the restoration of God's chosen people to have a right relationship with God again.

Verses 13:1-6. This chapter focuses on the restoration of the Jewish people as a nation. God says on that day he will open a fountain to cleanse them from sin and impurity. On that day, he will banish the names of idols from the land so they will be remembered no more and that both prophets and the spirit of impurity will be removed from the land. Therefore prophets (someone who claims to speak for God) will be so despised that they will be ashamed to be called one. This is a fulfillment of the vision given to Daniel of the 70th week which

would finish transgression, put an end to sin, atone for wickedness, bring in everlasting righteousness, seal up vision and prophecy, and anoint the most holy. (Dan 9:24)

Verses 13:7-9. Zechariah now uses a poem to recount the events from the Messiah's first coming to his second coming. The shepherd, the man close to the Lord Almighty would obviously be Jesus. Striking the shepherd refers to his beating and death on the cross. Jesus refers to the scattering of the sheep when the shepherd is struck in reference to his death and the scattering of the disciples. (Matt 26:31, 56; Mark 14:27, 49) Then he says God's hand will be turned against his little ones. This happened to the Jews with the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem and their being scattered and no longer a nation. Zechariah says the Lord declares that there will be a remnant of Jews which he will take through the refining fire and that they will proclaim their allegiance to him as their God. This would be what happens to the Jewish people through the Tribulation and shows that a third of them will finally get right with God and follow him as they enter the Millennium.

Verses 14:1-3. In chapters 12 and 13 God reveals that he will finally deliver Israel from those who oppose his chosen nation. And he recounts the events from the Messiah's first to his second coming. Now he describes he describes the events of the Messiah's second coming and his establishing of his Millennial kingdom. All the nations of the world will be against Israel during the last 3 ½ years of the Tribulation. And many of the people (⅓ of the nation according to 13:9 and ½ of the city of Jerusalem in this passage) will be spared from destruction by the nations. Jerusalem will be taken by the Antichrist and he will set himself up as god in the Tribulation Temple. But at the end of the 3 ½ years, God will have the armies of the nations gather for battle and it is at this time that Messiah will go out and fight against the nations, defeating them.

Verses 14:4-5. On the day that he fights against the nations, the Messiah will set his feet on the Mount of Olives (this is where Jesus ascended into heaven in the sight of his disciples) and the mountain will split in two parts with a valley running from east to west. Geologically, there is a fault line running from north to south through the Mount of Olives, but this splitting will not be along a natural feature so that it demonstrates God's supernatural power. The valley will extend to Azel which is an unknown location. God says the people will flee like people did from an earthquake during the reign of Uzziah, king of Judah. That event was mentioned by Amos (1:1), but not in the books of 2 Kings and 2 Chronicles. (Uzziah is called Azariah in 2 Kings 15.)

Verses 14:6-9. Now God describes the day of the Messiah's coming and setting foot on the Mount of Olives as a very unique day. There will be no light, no cold, and no frost. It will be a day without daytime or nighttime. And when evening comes, when the sun would normally set and darkness fall of the area, there will be light. Living water will begin flowing out from Jerusalem, half to the eastern sea (Dead Sea) and half to the western sea (Mediterranean Sea). This is also prophesied by Ezekiel (47:1-12). This is not the same as the River of Life in the New Jerusalem on the New Earth (Rev 22:1-2) but a precursor to it for the Millennium. On that day, Jesus will take control of the entire world and be king over it.

Verses 14:10-11. Now God says that the land surrounding Jerusalem will be like the Arabah. This doesn't mean it will be dry and deserted, but that it will be flat and lower so that Jerusalem, the residence of the King, will be higher. This may have been accomplished during the 7th bowl judgment of Rev 16:17-20, or it could happen as a part of the earthquake that splits the Mount of Olives. The intent here is to show that Jerusalem will be raised up, inhabited, and secure.

Verses 14:12-15. This plague that strikes the nations that fight against Jerusalem sounds a little like the battle of Armageddon (rotting of flesh where the people stand), but goes beyond it to include panic and fighting between nations and individuals. The result is that the wealth of the nations will be gathered.

Verses 14:16-21. Beginning at that time, the people who remain will go to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. The Feast of Tabernacles (also called the Feast of Booths) is described in Lev 23 along with the other times of sacred assembly. It began on the 15 day of the seventh month of the Jewish year (Tisri - Oct), and lasted for seven days. It is a celebration of God coming to dwell with his people and that he led them as

they lived in tents (booths) in the wilderness. If any of the people do not come to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles, they will not have rain on their land. There will be so many people coming to Jerusalem that all the cooking pots in the city will be designated as sacred to the Lord at that time as they cook for all the people. There will be no Canaanite (merchant) making a living trading in the worship of God like when Jesus drove the merchants from the temple grounds in Matt 21:12-13; Mark 11:15-17; Luke 19:45-46; and John 2:14-16.