

YAHWEH REMEMBERS HIS PEOPLE:  
AN EXPOSITION OF ZECHARIAH 12-14  
WITH SPECIAL EMPHASIS ON ITS THEOLOGICAL THEMES

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A SEMESTER PROJECT

Submitted to Dr. Engle (OT-2)  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY  
at Baptist Bible Seminary

Clarks Summit, Pennsylvania  
Fall, 2007

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Zechariah is located in that portion of the English canon commonly called “The Minor Prophets,” a collection of 12 prophetic books known in the Hebrew canon as “The Twelve.”<sup>1</sup> Zechariah is one of the most fascinating books of the Bible and certainly one of the most messianic of all books in the Old Testament, abounding references to the coming Messiah.<sup>2</sup> Zechariah is also one of the most frequently quoted books in the New Testament with some 71 quotations or allusions.<sup>3</sup> Unfortunately, even though it is “one of the most quoted and alluded to Old Testament works” it is also “one of the most overlooked and least studied of the Old Testament books.”<sup>4</sup>

The last portion of this prophecy (chs. 12-14), which is the special focus of this paper, lays heavy emphasis upon the eschatological work of the Messiah in restoring the nation of Israel from ages of sin and apostasy.

#### *Nature of the Study*

This paper will focus on providing an exegetical and theological analysis of Zechariah chapters 12-14. The goal is to produce a contextual exegesis of the text as well

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<sup>1</sup> Feinberg Laments the fact that the Minor Prophets have “come in for undeservedly scant attention” in comparison to other portions of the Bible. There certainly is nothing insignificant about the messages in these twelve books. Charles Feinberg, “Exegetical Studies in Zechariah, Part 1,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 97:386 (April 1940): 189.

<sup>2</sup> Fred Hartman, *Zechariah: Israel's Messenger of the Messiah's Triumph* (Bellmawr: The Friend's of Israel Gospel Ministry, 1994), 11. As Hartman puts it, “Allusions to His person, work, and future glorious reign abound throughout the Book of Zechariah.”

<sup>3</sup> Walter Kaiser, *Mastering the Old Testament, vol. 21: Micah, Nahum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, Lloyd Ogilvie, gen. ed. (Dallas: Word, 1992), 285.

<sup>4</sup> Stephen C. Ger, “Zechariah: Minor Prophet With A Major Message,” *Conservative Theological Journal* 3:8 (April 1999): 89.

as to identify the various theological themes (i.e., the biblical theology) that rightly come from within the passage. In this process, the paper will emphasize key Hebrew terms as well as other key theological themes and motifs.

From these observations, this paper will seek to show how Zechariah 12-14 makes its own unique contribution to the message of the Old Testament and also how these exegetical findings and theological themes relate to the unfolding message of the entire Christian Bible.

### *Presuppositions of the Study*

This paper is being written on the basis of certain presuppositions that the writer held prior to ever coming to the text. One of these presuppositions seems so basic that it would almost seem redundant to state it were it not for the fact that there are so many “theologians” who might not even agree to it. First of all, this writer believes that the God who is described in the Christian Bible exists exactly as Scripture portrays Him. He is the eternal, uncreated being who brought creation into existence by the exercise of His own free will. This personal God is self-sufficient in Himself and is entirely independent of His creation, although He does desire fellowship with mankind whom He created. This God is perfect in all attributes and fully capable of revealing Himself and making His will and purpose known to man.

A second noteworthy presupposition is the idea that God has spoken, and that His message for man is contained in the Christian Bible. The Bible was given over many centuries by God’s Holy Spirit through selected prophets. These writings, that came largely through the nation of Israel, were preserved, copied and circulated, and now remain as the 66 books of the Christian Bible. God’s message was communicated in

verbal form (i.e., the words themselves were given by God through the prophet) but this message came through the agency of human beings in such a way that it was also fully a product of the human author, too. Due to the work of the Holy Spirit, the Bible was given without error in any way. By God's providence and the meticulous care of many scribes over the ages, the Bible has been transmitted from generation to generation with only a minor proportion of textual issues affecting it.

A third presupposition relates to the former two. Because God is capable of rational communication and because of the fact that God has given rational communication in the Bible, this writer believes that the Bible should be interpreted according to normal rules of communication and interpretation, i.e., the Bible should be handled according to a literal, grammatical, historical method of hermeneutics. The normal rules of language and grammar should govern the interpretation of the Bible.

A fourth and final presupposition is that the Bible, as God's revelation to mankind, has purpose and unity in its message. Not only was each individual book written with divine purpose, but each one of them also has relationship to each other and to the whole. The Bible has a unified message. Therefore, when the theologian comes to the task of interpretation, he should begin by doing his work at an exegetical level to find (1) the interpretation of that text in its own context and (2) the biblical theology that comes from within the text itself. Secondly, the theologian needs to see how this biblical theology relates in a wider sense to the rest of the Scripture (a transition from a narrowly focused biblical theology to the broader tasks involving systematic theology, exposition, and application). The Bible has meaning and purpose and it is the job of the theologian

to skillfully show the meaning of each passage, and how that passage relates to the entire canon, and how these truths apply to the lives of God's people.

### *Methods of the Study*

In accordance with these stated presupposition, the writer will seek to employ certain particular methods in accomplishing the goals.

### Hermeneutical Considerations

As noted earlier, this paper will be written based on a commitment to literal, grammatical, historical hermeneutics as commonly understood in evangelical theological circles. Such a commitment does not preclude the recognition of literary devices such as metaphor, simile, hyperbole or other non-literal figures of speech. Certainly the Bible does employ these kinds of literary devices, and it tends to do so more in certain literary forms (genres) than in others (e.g., poetic portions of Scripture will tend to use more figurative language than narrative).

Thus, genre considerations surely are an important part of the exegetical process; however, this writer does not believe that there is good warrant for the holding to the concept of "apocalyptic" as a form of genre in biblical writings.<sup>5</sup> The reader should take

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<sup>5</sup> Apocalyptic is a genre classification of ascribed to various prophetic kinds of writings. There is no general consensus as to what constitutes this genre. Common ideas associated with apocalyptic, though, would include concepts like (1) pseudonymity, (2) angelic mediation or explanation of the message, (3) pessimism concerning the present world, (4) hope based upon a coming age, (5) the use of symbols, dreams or visions, (6) a soon approaching age of great conflict that ushers in a new age. The reader is urged to remember that these kinds of features are simply the kinds of features that have often characterized biblical prophecy. Furthermore, this writer objects to the idea that an extra-biblical label should be used to create an interpretive grid for the Scripture, especially when most of these apocalyptic writings (non-inspired) that are appealed to are dated after the prophetic writings of the Old Testament. The writers who bring these literary presuppositions to the text (i.e., that many of these biblical prophecies should be considered as "apocalyptic genre" and treated with special hermeneutics) usually end up with radically different interpretations than what expositors have produced using literal, grammatical, historical hermeneutics.

note that when writers like F. M. Cross categorize Bible passages like Haggai 2 and Zechariah 9-14 as apocalyptic (because, for example, these passages speak of things like future earthquakes and God as a warrior), they do so based upon the unfounded presuppositions of other writers, many of whom certainly are not evangelical in conviction. Commenting on the apocalyptic views that some hold in Haggai and Zechariah, Kessler points out that these views can be traced back to the idea that “it is generally agreed [by critical scholars, that is] that Haggai is rooted in Jerusalem Zion theology” and that writers like von Rad are good sources for defining the actual meaning of Zion theology.<sup>6</sup> In other words, non evangelicals (e.g., von Rad) are often the kinds of scholars who are creating and defining the rules of the interpretive game. In short, the theological conviction of those defining the rules of the game are often non evangelical, but it seems that their rules end up getting perpetuated by the masses and accepted by the entire evangelical community as legitimate exegetical practices.

It is unfortunate that these literary assumptions also end up becoming the justification for new sets of hermeneutical rules—rules that usually include some kind of non-literal understanding of the text.<sup>7</sup> The Bible books that many scholars label as being apocalyptic (e.g., much of Daniel and Revelation and portions of books like Joel, Ezekiel, Isaiah and Zechariah) should not be in handled with a special set of apocalyptic

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<sup>6</sup> John A. Kessler, “The Shaking of the Nations: An Eschatological View,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 30:2 (June 1987): 164. This discussion in Kessler’s article comes under the point labeled “Eschatological Traditions in Zion Theology.” Just what does this term “traditions” signify, especially when one considers what people like von Rad mean by it? Von Rad’s intent is not to say that it is the result of a God-breathed text. Von Rad’s intent is to say that a religious tradition developed in Israel over many centuries and that these traditions eventually got articulated in books that became the Bible of the Jews. Thus (many would assert), a literal, prophetic idea and fulfillment should not be pressed into the earthquake imagery in Zechariah 14, for this portion of Scripture is “apocalyptic genre.” This writer utterly rejects these preconceived ideas.

<sup>7</sup> The end result of these methods is that many writers come to deny the plain declarations of the text based upon the genre presuppositions they have brought into the exegetical process.



hermeneutics.<sup>8</sup> Rather, they should be understood simply for what they are—books of prophecy given by the Holy Spirit.<sup>9</sup> Baldwin, commenting on definitions of apocalyptic, says, “apocalyptic is best defined in terms of the content of [the Apocalypse],” i.e., the Book of Revelation itself is the best illustration of how to define apocalyptic.<sup>10</sup>

Verhoef on the other hand, echoing the idea that apocalyptic is a distinct kind of genre with its own special distinctions, says that Jewish apocalyptic works (listing Daniel an example) are “distinguished from prophecy by their other worldliness” (note: God and His coming kingdom certainly are other worldly), and that other features like “pseudonymity, eschatological impatience and exact calculations about the last things . . . visions . . . and hope of the afterlife” are other marks of apocalyptic.<sup>11</sup> In the opinion of this writer (and other skeptics of these genre claims), the former descriptions are all simply characteristics of biblical prophecy. As Feinberg put it, “The messages of the prophecy are given sometimes in direct prophetic speech, sometimes in the narration of

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<sup>8</sup> Osborne exemplifies this kind of erroneous assumption when he writes, “I consider the Apocalypse to be a combination of prophetic, apocalyptic, and epistolary material, and therefore a complex hermeneutic must be utilized in unpacking the many themes.” Osborne here gives implicit acceptance to the idea that “the book relates both to the situation of the original readers of John and to future events . . . so there is no need to dichotomize the relationship between Rome and the final empire of the Beast/Antichrist. One must combine historicist, idealist, and futurist perspectives in interpreting the book.” Thus, Osborne (in the context where he is defining what he calls “my definition of apocalyptic”) makes it clear that his apocalyptic genre convictions call for an abandoning of consistent literal hermeneutics when dealing with what scholars might label apocalyptic. Grant Osborne, “Theodicy in the Apocalypse,” *Trinity Journal* 14:1 (Spring 1993): 65.

<sup>9</sup> Patterson points out that none of the Bible books that are claimed to be apocalyptic “would appear to qualify as apocalyptic in the strictest sense.” That is, some of these books may match some of the labels and categorical definitions that get assigned to apocalyptic, but there is no consensus, no precision, and always there is a huge amount of arbitrariness. Richard Patterson, “Wonders In The Heavens And On The Earth,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 43:3 (September 2000): 393.

<sup>10</sup> Joyce Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1972), 70. According to this kind of statement, then, there really is no unique category of literature called apocalyptic that carries its own set of interpretive principles that need to be imposed upon prophetic books of Scripture.

<sup>11</sup> P. A. Verhoef, “Prophecy,” in *NIDOTTE*, vol. 4, Willem VanGemeren, gen. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 1076.

visions, and sometimes in the setting forth of symbolic acts.”<sup>12</sup> None of this means, though, that the book is anything other than a prophetic message from God.

Writers who abandon the use of literal, grammatical, historical hermeneutics create an open door for themselves to interpret prophetic writings according to their own personal theological systems—regardless of the plain meaning of the text. Thomas points to the way that Gentry (who comes to the Book of Revelation with a predetermined, Postmillennial [similar to Preterist] slant) regularly abandons a literal meaning of the text.<sup>13</sup> The result of Gentry’s approach is a view that says that Jesus Christ returned in the first century and that His coming consisted of (1) judgment against Israel with the Roman destruction of A. D. 66-70, (2) persecution by Rome against the church from A. D. 64-68, and (3) internal strife in the Roman Empire in A. D. 68-69.<sup>14</sup> Unfortunately, writers like Gentry never tell the reader what the text actually says and means because they have already come to the text with a different theology, justifying their views with their own hermeneutical systems (often ones that gain the admiration of the scholarly world) to justify their denial of the text. As Khoo put it, it is imperative for

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<sup>12</sup> Feinberg, “Exegetical Studies in Zechariah, Part 1,” 191.

<sup>13</sup> Robert Thomas, “Theonomy and the Dating of Revelation,” *The Master’s Seminary Journal* 5:2 (Fall 1994): 185-202.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 192. On the one hand Preterism lacks external support for its position since its demand for a date for Revelation of between A. D. 54-68 stands in direct contradiction to all external evidence that says it was written in A. D. 95. Irenaeus, who lived in the second century and had studied under the Apostle John’s disciple Polycarp, said, “We will not however, incur the risk of pronouncing positively as to the name of Antichrist; for if it were necessary that his name should be distinctly revealed in the present time, it would have been announced by him who beheld the apocalyptic vision. For that was seen no very long time since, but almost in our day, towards the end of Domitian’s reign” (Adv. Her., 5.30.3). Preterism also lacks internal, exegetical support as well. As Bigalke notes, passages like Zechariah 12-14 and Revelation 19 are most naturally understood as referring to future events of Daniel’s seventieth week, and statements like “when you see” (Matt. 24:15) can easily refer to a yet future generation. Ron J. Bigalke, Jr. “The Olivet Discourse: A Resolution of Time,” *Chafer Theological Seminary Journal* 9:1 (Spring 2003): 108, 124.

the Bible scholar to allow language to have its plain meaning otherwise “there is an end of all significance in language, and Scripture is wiped out as a definite testimony to anything.”<sup>15</sup> On occasion, some of these writers who reject a literal future for Israel will actually admit that the most natural understanding of eschatological prophecy (i.e., prophecy interpreted with literal, grammatical, historical hermeneutics) points to a future restoration of the nation of Israel. Poythress serves as an example when he writes, “Zechariah 14, if read in a straightforward manner, is particularly difficult for an amillennialist.”<sup>16</sup> Unfortunately, two sentences later Poythress says, “On the other hand, the fact that Zechariah is *apocalyptic* (emphasis by present writer) means that it presents hermeneutical challenges. I am reluctant to put much weight on it.”<sup>17</sup> Exegetical cop-outs like this under the guise of literary genre considerations should be exposed and rejected as utterly unacceptable.

In summary, this writer will employ literal, grammatical, historical hermeneutics in this present study without appealing to the special hermeneutical principles that some claim are necessary due to assumptions from apocalyptic genre theories. Throughout the paper, the writer will also seek to highlight the exegetical and theological significance of a consistent use of literal hermeneutics so that the reader might have a clear reminder of the importance of sound exegetical and theological methodologies.

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<sup>15</sup> Jeffrey Khoo, “Dispensational Premillennialism in Reformed Theology: The Contribution of J. O. Buswell to the Millennial Debate,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 44:4 (December 2001): 705.

<sup>16</sup> Vern Poythress, “Response to Robert L. Saucy’s Paper,” *Grace Theological Journal* 10:2 (Fall 1989): 158.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

## Considerations of Theological Center

As noted, this writer believes that the Bible does have purpose and unity. One of the ways that the Bible shows its purpose and unity is by the fact that it has major, interconnected theological themes within it. Some writers believe that the Old Testament should be understood as having one central theme or Center (*Mitte*). Whether or not one believes in one single Center, some of the major theological themes of the Bible would certainly include ideas like (1) God's sovereignty as Creator and Sustainer of all things, (2) God's desire to bless His creation with productivity and fruitfulness, (3) God's desire for His creatures to live according to His revealed will, (4) God's punishment of sin, and (5) God's promise to destroy Satan and to remove the curse of sin and death. This paper is being written under the presupposition that these kinds of theological themes (among others) truly flow throughout the Old Testament; however, this writer hesitates to define any single theological theme as that which should define the meaning of the entire Old Testament.

## Flow of the Paper

Chapter two of this paper will present some basic background to the book as a whole including a concise synthesis of the prophecy. Chapter three will begin the actual exegetical process by discussing specific Hebrew terms and their theological relevance to the interpretation of chapters 12-14. In addition to this, this chapter will also consider the theological motifs that are contained within this section—theological ideas and concepts that are not necessarily identified by any particular Hebrew term. Finally, this chapter will synthesize these findings to show their exegetical and theological significance. Chapter four will deal with the concept of exposition, proclamation, and application.

That is, this chapter will discuss the way that the ethical themes and principles in Zechariah have relevance for the people of God today. Finally, chapter five will close the paper with some summarizing thoughts and conclusions.

## CHAPTER 2

### BACKGROUND TO ZECHARIAH

Good exegesis should always take into consideration relevant background issues. This chapter will first consider some basic introductory issues and then provide a concise synthesis of Zechariah to help give the reader a fresh perspective on the main flow and general message of the prophecy.

#### *Introductory Issues*

In terms of authorship, as the text itself notes, the author of this book was Zechariah (one of at least 20 persons with this name in the OT), the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo. Like the prophets Ezekiel and Jeremiah, Zechariah, too, was of priestly descent as well as being one called by God as a prophet (1:1, 7; cf. Neh. 12:12-16; Ezra 5:1; 6:14).<sup>18</sup> As these other texts tell, and his name suggests (lit. “seed of Babel”), Zechariah was born in Babylon, probably not too much earlier since he is called a “young man” in 2:8 (perhaps now being somewhere between 12 and 30 years of age). Zechariah was among the first Jews to begin returning back to Israel after the Babylonian captivity had come to a close.

Liberal scholars who attempt to argue for multiple authors (e.g., one author for 1-8 and another for 9-14) usually do so on the basis of (1) differences in style, (2) differences in content, (3) the absence of Zechariah’s name in 9-14, (4) the diverse historical background in each pericope of 9-14, and (5) the “more apocalyptic style” of 9-

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<sup>18</sup> Feinberg, “Exegetical Studies in Zechariah, Part 1,” 189.

14.<sup>19</sup> Hartle demonstrates that none of these assumptions stand up under scrutiny. Thus, there is no basis (neither from arguments of external, textual evidence nor from internal, literary evidence) that there was more than one author, for “the literary unity of Zechariah can be demonstrated based upon the grammatical elements,”<sup>20</sup> and the four major themes of covenant restoration, divine judgment, cleansing, and blessings of God occur throughout the entire prophecy in both 1-8 and 9-14.<sup>21</sup>

Laetsch makes note of the fact that for more than 2,000 years Zechariah was universally regarded as written by one single prophet, but that it was Hugo Grotius, “one of the forerunners of rationalism” (ca. 1644), who put forth the theory that chapters 9-14 were written by a different and later writer.<sup>22</sup> There is no evidence on any grounds to suggest that chapters 9-14 were written by a different author. No manuscript evidence or any other form of textual evidence supports the idea of a different author. Those who have taken these positions (a view that has not a few adherents) have done so based upon liberal presuppositions and not because of biblical evidence. Furthermore, even through the subject matter of 9-14—especially 12-14—has a more eschatological focus, there is

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<sup>19</sup> James Hartle, “The Literary Unity of Zechariah,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 35:2 (June 1992): 145.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 147.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, 157. This writer did not find Ronald W. Pierce’s view persuasive when he argued that “the oracles of Zechariah 9-11; 12-14; and Malachi 1-4 were connected to Haggai and Zechariah 1-8” for the purpose of preserving them by attaching them to the larger corpus of a famous person. Ronald Pierce, “Literary Connectors And A Haggai/Zechariah/Malachi Corpus,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 27:3 (September 1984): 287.

<sup>22</sup> Theodore Laetsch, *Minor Prophets* (Saint Louis: Concordia, 1956), 403.

no basis from that internal evidence to suggest that these portions were written by a different author.<sup>23</sup>

With reference to the date of the prophecy, several specific dates are given for Zechariah's messages, making it possible to at least pinpoint the beginning of Zechariah's ministry. The date given in the first verse corresponds to October/November 520 B.C. This date places the beginning of Zechariah's ministry in between the second and third vision that God gave to the prophet Haggai (in between Haggai 2:9 and 2:10). Thus, it is clear that the two prophets had a direct overlap in portions of their ministry. The clear textual evidence for dates has Zechariah beginning his ministry in 520 B. C. and prophesying into at least 518 B. C.<sup>24</sup>

The recipients of this message consisted of Jews who had recently (within the last 16-18 years) returned from exile in Babylon. Shortly after the Persian king, Cyrus, overthrew Babylon, he made a decree giving the Jews permission to return back to their ancestral homeland (cf. 2 Chron. 36:21-23; Ezra 1:1-4; 6:3-5). Cyrus even gave Israel the command to rebuild the Jerusalem temple and offer sacrifices to Yahweh on his behalf. Beyond all of this, Cyrus even told the Jews that he would fund reconstruction of this second temple out of the Persian treasury. Reconstruction on this temple began quickly in 536 (Ezra 3:8-13 describes the completion of the foundation in 536), but

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<sup>23</sup> Feinberg, "Exegetical Studies in Zechariah, Part 1," 197. Feinberg points out that the critical position, i.e., the view that there is more than one author, sometimes rests on the fact that Matthew 27:9, 10 assigns Zechariah 11:12 to Jeremiah rather than to Zechariah. Feinberg points out that the Talmud (Baba Bathra) states that Jeremiah had been arranged by the Jews in their canon as the first of all the prophets and that one common way of referring to the prophetic books was to simply refer to "Jeremiah." Other internal arguments like differences in style or content are extremely subjective and come down to bare assertions lacking credible support.

<sup>24</sup> Eugene Merrill, *An Exegetical Commentary: Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi* (Chicago: Moody, 1994), 61. Merrill says that the certain date for the beginning of his ministry is October/November 520 B. C. and that the last known date is December 7, 518 B. C. as seen in 7:1. It is possible that latter portions of the prophecy came to Zechariah at a date later than this.



enemy opposition and discouragement among the Jews resulted in and end to construction in 536 (Ezra 4:1-5, 24). Over the next 16 years sin, spiritual apathy, and preoccupation with personal affairs resulted in the temple project being abandoned.

It is in this background that God raised up Zechariah to speak to the people. In the previous months Haggai had already rebuked the people very sharply about their neglect of the temple for the sake of personal agendas (cf. e.g., Hag. 1:4-11). Haggai also made it clear, however, that the people were beginning to respond to the divine rebuke through Haggai. Zechariah's focus, though similar to Haggai, is less upon the temple but more upon wrong heart attitudes themselves. House notes that

a clearer, more succinct digest of the whole canon from Deuteronomy 27 through Zephaniah 3 would hardly be written. The thrust of this view of history is that the Lord has always been just in all dealings with the chosen people. Jerusalem's devastated condition stands as a testimony to the sins of the past.<sup>25</sup>

As passages like Ezra 3:8-13, Haggai 2:1-3 and Zechariah 4:10 suggest, one of the wrong attitudes was that the people were despising God's present work as being something small and insignificant. In general, spiritual apathy was causing great harm among this small remnant of returnees.<sup>26</sup> As Feinberg put it, "Zechariah goes farther, beginning where his older contemporary had left off, to bring about a complete spiritual return of the people to the Lord."<sup>27</sup>

In terms of basic purpose, as already alluded to, the basic purpose of Zechariah was to call the people of God to zealous faith and covenant loyalty. This task included

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<sup>25</sup> Paul R. House, *Old Testament Theology* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1998), 387.

<sup>26</sup> Ger notes that "this pervasive discouragement and passivity is the ambiance which links all the post exilic works together and especially permeates the work of Zechariah and his contemporary, the prophet Haggai" (90).

<sup>27</sup> Feinberg, "Exegetical Studies in Zechariah, Part 1," 191.

rebuke for sin, but it also included a huge amount of promise and encouragement. As House as noted, both Haggai and Zechariah knew that they were living “in a new age marked by God’s blessing” and that the mark of God’s blessing was “God’s presence” and that His promise of restoration (including a rebuilt temple) meant that they could accomplish the things He had called them to accomplish.<sup>28</sup> The prophet’s name, which means Yahweh remembers, reminds the reader that God’s promise to the people of Abraham is not dead. Yahweh will restore His people. Yahweh will purify His people and bring an elect remnant back into covenant fellowship. God’s promises are not dead!

#### *Major Outline and Flow of Zechariah 1-14*

In terms of overall theme, one can make a persuasive argument that the main theme of the book is the certainty of God’s promised restoration to Israel through the purifying and redeeming work of the Messiah.

The book can be broken down into three major sections all of which support this assertion.<sup>29</sup> After the prologue of verses 1-6, the book includes the following outline:<sup>30</sup>

**(1) 1:7-6:15:** The first major section consists of eight night visions which speak about God's purposes to fully restore scattered Israel through the work of the Messiah. The last portion in 6:9-15 culminates with a coronation of the Messianic Priest-King. In this section one see that (A) One day Israel will be purified, and (B) this purification and restoration will be accomplished by Messiah the King.

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<sup>28</sup> House, 383.

<sup>29</sup> Ger, 90.

<sup>30</sup> Gerard Chrispin, *The Bible Panorama* (Leominster: Day One Publications, 2005), 386-387.

**(2) 7:1-8:23:** The second major begins with a question about religious rituals. God answers this question by telling the nation that His concern does not lie primarily in religious rituals, but much more in hearts that love Him and respond in obedience. God tells them this by providing four answers to their question in 7:1-3. The final answer is followed in 8:18-23 with a section that highlights the universal blessings that will come to Israel, and also to all mankind, with the coming of the Messiah. In this section God shows that (A) He will turn the fasts into feasts, and that (B) at long last when Messiah brings the kingdom to Israel, the nation will finally become the light and priest to the world that God had always intended her to be.

**(3) 9:1-14:21:** The third major section consists of two burdens—two divine oracles that further elaborate on the redeeming and restoring work of God through the Messiah. The first burden consists of chapters 9-11 and largely focuses on the first coming of the Messiah. The second burden consists of chapters 12-14 with its messianic emphasis focusing largely on the second coming of the Messiah.

The following section will now begin to focus on an exegesis of chapters 12-14, including the theological themes and motifs contained therein.

## CHAPTER 3

### THEOLOGICAL OBSERVATIONS FROM ZECHARIAH

This chapter will focus on observations directly from the text of 12-14. The initial focus will be upon specific Hebrew terms that carry significant theological weight. Following this focus on specific terms, the chapter will then examine significant theological themes and motifs. From these direct observations the writer will then provide a synthesis of the exegetical findings to help the reader understand the message of 12-14 and how this message makes its contribution to the Bible as a whole.

#### *Terminology*

Zechariah 12-14 has a number of theologically weighty Hebrew terms that are worthy of consideration and very helpful in explaining the message of the prophet. The first significant term in chapter 12 happens to be the very first word of the chapter, the term that is often translated by the English word “burden.”

“Burden” (נִשְׂבָּר)

Chapter 12 begins with the words “the burden of the word of the Lord.” The Hebrew term for burden, נִשְׂבָּר, occurs in both 9:1 and 12:1 and serves to mark off two distinct prophetic oracles (9-11 and 12-14). The root of the word behind this noun (נִשְׂבָּר, *nasa'*) carries the idea of lifting or carrying. At first glance, this would seem to suggest that the noun has the idea of something like “a heavy message”—a message with harsh judgment associated with it. It is used some 27 times by a number of different authors in the OT to refer to prophetic oracles of great calamity and judgment.

Lexical studies confirm the idea that this term has the connotation of “heavy message.” *The New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis* (hereafter, *NIDOTTE*) shows how the root idea behind the noun has the idea of “heavy burden” or “load” (cf. Exod. 23:5; Neh. 13:15). The term can speak about burden in a literal, physical sense, but it can also have a metaphorical usage, too. As an example, *NIDOTTE* also lists various metaphorical uses of the term such as in the idea that “the people were a burden to Moses.”<sup>31</sup>

Holladay lists two semantic ideas from this term with one of them being the idea of “burden” or “hardship” in the physical sense, i.e., something heavy that is carried (e.g., 2 Sam. 15:33) and the other being the idea of “pronouncement,” i.e., an oracular declaration from God as illustrated in 2 Kings 9:25, Isaiah 13:1; 15:1, Jeremiah 23:33, 38 and Zechariah 9:1; 12:1 (the translation “pronouncement,” though would be assumed to be coming from a different, but unattested root).<sup>32</sup> Youngblood considers this latter idea one of the metaphorical uses in Zechariah 9:1 and 12:1.<sup>33</sup>

The *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (hereafter, *TWOT*) suggests that the translation “burden” is preferable, saying that it deals with the idea of a prophetic speech of a threatening or minatory character. *TWOT* also adds that the word has alternately been translated as “burden” (the view of the Targum of Jonathan, Aquila, and the Syriac version. Jerome, Luther, Calvin Hengstenberg, and J. A. Alexander) but also by the terms “oracle,” “utterance,” or “prophecy” (again, this is positing a hypothetical

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<sup>31</sup> Ronald Youngblood, “כִּבְיָהוּ,” in *NIDOTTE*, vol. 2, Willem VanGemeren, gen. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 1112.

<sup>32</sup> William Holladay, ed., “כִּבְיָהוּ,” in *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 217.

<sup>33</sup> Youngblood, 1113.

root *nāśā* “to utter” or “to receive”; those taking this position would include the LXX, Cocceius, J. D. Michaelis, Lowth, and E. J. Young). All the data suggests that “burden” is the better supported rendering. The main concept is that the prophetic message is more than a mere proclamation, it is in fact a prophetic “burden”—a harsh message of great consequence.<sup>34</sup>

In summary, the etymology of this term suggests that the concept of “heavy” is more the root of the term than the idea of “announce” or “declare.” Prophetic usage makes it clear that this term carries the connotation that God is giving a harsh message of judgment by His prophet.<sup>35</sup> The contents of Zechariah 12-14 certainly support this kind of usage in Zechariah 12:1. By the mouth of His prophet, God is announcing a message of great tribulation and conflict, one that has great impact not only upon the nation of Israel, but also upon the Gentile nations as the text reveals.

“In that Day” (בְּיוֹם־יְהוָה), “A Day for Yahweh” (יּוֹם־בָּא לַיהוָה)

These two expressions also have great theological significance in the Book of Zechariah, for both of them make reference to a coming era of divine intervention when Yahweh will put an end to sinful rebellion on earth and bring restoration and comfort to those who have trusted in His Word, Jew and Gentile. Throughout the Old Testament, this future period of divine intervention has been called by many prophets “the Day of the

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LXX The Septuagint Version of the Old Testament in Greek

<sup>34</sup> R. L. Harris, G. L. Archer, & B. K. Waltke, (1999, c1980). *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (electronic ed.) (602). Chicago: Moody Press. Cited in electronic form with Logos Libronix.

<sup>35</sup> Unger calls it “a divine message freighted with woe and judgment (Isa. 14:28; 15:1; 17:1; Ezek. 12:10; Nah. 1:1).” Merrill Unger, *Zechariah* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1963), 207.

Lord.” There is good reason for seeing these two expressions in Zechariah as referring to the Day of the Lord.

Day of the Lord (יְוֹם יְהוָה) occurs no less than 15 times in the Masoretic Text (Isa. 13:6, 9; Joel 1:15; 2:1, 11; 3:4; 4:14 [MT]; Amos 5:18, 20; Obad. 1:15; Zeph. 1:7, 14; Mal. 3:23). The dominant idea associated with Day of the Lord is that of God’s intervening judgment. Generally the reference is to God’s judgment on the Gentiles, but sometimes the prophets make an explicit statement about Israel being the one who will come under judgment in the Day of the Lord (cf. Amos 5:18-20). Sometimes the expression points to a fulfillment at a time in ancient history—such as when God used the Persians to overthrow Babylon (cf. Isa. 13:6, 9), but most of the uses have a distinctly eschatological reference (cf. Mal. 4:5). Most of the references point to the idea of judgment and destruction from the hand of God, but certain references also suggest that the Day of the Lord will embrace an age of peace, blessing, and prosperity (Joel 3:14, 18ff.).

Although the expression “in that day” (בַּיּוֹם-הַהוּא, *Bayom Hahu*) does not linguistically say “the Day of the Lord,” many commentators believe that it is referring to the same eschatological period of God’s intervention into the affairs of mankind.<sup>36</sup> The expression “the that day” occurs 22 times in Zechariah (2:15; 3:10; 6:10; 9:16; 11:11; 12:3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 11; 13:1, 2, 4; 14:4, 6, 8, 9, 13, 20, 21), 21 of which have strong eschatological elements. In themselves, these Hebrew words are not necessarily theologically significant, but this compound expression becomes extremely significant

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<sup>36</sup> Commenting on this expression, Merrill says, “Few writings of the Old Testament are so consistently and persistently rooted in the eschaton as this. That classic eschatological formula ‘in that day’ or the like occurs 19 times in just 45 verses.” Merrill, 310.

due to the way Zechariah uses it speak about eschatological contexts. Zechariah's 19 uses of "in that day" in 12-14 serve to mark off chapters 12-14 as dealing strictly with future eschatological events.<sup>37</sup> This heavy concentration of the expression and the nature of the events spoken of in those chapters confirm that these events are eschatological, for there is absolutely nothing in history can come close to fulfilling the predictions therein.

In Zechariah 14:1 the reader finds yet another eschatological phrase in the expression "a day is coming for the Lord" (יְוֹם-בֹּא לַיהוָה, *Yom Bo' LaYahweh*). This expression comes only in 14:1, but it too is evidently referring to the Day of the Lord.<sup>38</sup> This particular expression, although it sounds more like the common expression "the day of Lord" than "in that day," is actually unique in this exact form to Zechariah 14:1. Nevertheless, Unger is certainly on safe ground when he notes that the *lamed* prefix on Yahweh has the idea of "belong to" (cf. similar uses of the *lamed* in Isa. 2:12; 22:5; 28:2), and that this expression is simply serving as a circumlocution for the more common expression "the day of the Lord."<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> Unger, 241. As Unger puts it, "In every case [the use of this expression in 12-14] denotes 'the day of the Lord' in its future eschatological significance with reference to Israel's deliverance from her final time of trouble just prior to her conversion and establishment in kingdom blessing." The era when these events takes places is also known as The Tribulation Period. This paper is written based on the theological conviction that immediately after the (pretribulation) rapture of the church (1 Cor. 15:50-58; 1 Thess. 4:13-18), the Antichrist will put in force the seven-year covenant that was foretold in Daniel 9:27. The establishing of this covenant will cause the Day of the Lord to commence (1 Thess. 5:1ff.; 2 Thess. 2:1-8). The timing of when this seven-year covenant gets put in place would be parallel to the opening of the first seal in Revelation 6 (and Matthew 24:4-14). As Daniel 9:27 and Matthew 24:15 indicate, the Antichrist will break that seven-year covenant at its mid-point and turn against Israel to seek to destroy her. This last three and a half year period is what Jesus described as "great tribulation." This last three and a half years is more often than not the era in focus when Old Testament prophets speak about the eschatological era of tribulation. This last three and a half year period is the time frame that Zechariah 12-14 focuses on.

<sup>38</sup> Barker says that although it is not the usual construction for "the day of the Lord," it "doubtless means the same thing." Ken Barker, "Zechariah," in *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, vol. 7, Frank E. Gaebelin, gen. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1985), 689.

<sup>39</sup> Unger, 240-241.



One might say that at the present time “man is having his day.” That is, man is doing his own thing and God is permitting a sinful mass of humanity to act without immediate divine repercussions. When the day of the Lord comes, though, the day will finally arrive when it will be God’s time to put a stop to the rebellion of mankind. As Zechariah 14 makes clear, this will be the time when God once again comes down to earth as a man of war (14:4). This is the period when wickedness will be punished (cf. 14:12), and when the Messiah will take His role as King over the whole earth with no false gods to rob God of the glory that is due Him (14:9). This is the age that belongs to Yahweh—a day for Yahweh. This will be the time when all the unfulfilled prophecies of the Old Testament see their fulfillment, the time when Israel’s enemies, and all who reject the Messiah, come to a bitter end, the time when God at long last removes the curse of sin and death from this world and establishes His Son as the King who rules from Jerusalem over all the earth.

“Jerusalem” (יְרוּשָׁלַיִם), “Judah” (יְהוּדָה), “Israel” (יִשְׂרָאֵל)

It is not without significance that in Zechariah 12-14 one finds multiple references to the nation of Israel, the people of Israel, their land, and their capital city, for this book is a book that deals primarily with a literal restoration of the nation of Israel to the land that God swore to their patriarch Abraham.<sup>40</sup> So clear is the intent that one is hard

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<sup>40</sup> Harrison points out that “Prior to World War I it was impossible that Jews in any number could return and dwell safely in Palestine. Their return was made possible during the British mandate over the land following that war. The Jews started to return to the land promised to Abraham and his descendants (Gen. 17:8) and it was, as one writer said, an obsession. In 1948 the nation Israel became a recognized people and government.” William K. Harrison, “As Ye See the Day Approaching,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 116:461 (January 1959): 72.

pressed to escape the idea that “the war and victory theme with which the prophet begins is localized in Jerusalem.”<sup>41</sup> This is a message about the restoration of Israel.

A survey of writers from various theological persuasions, however, shows that there are many who do not allow the Bible to speak according to face value in this issue. They allow theological presuppositions override the direct declarations of the text with the result that they deny a literal, future fulfillment. Theodore Laetsch would be one of many non-dispensational writers who assign different meanings to the personal and place names used by the inspired writer. Laetsch says, for example, that Judah and Jerusalem are “types of the New Testament Church.”<sup>42</sup> Thus, throughout his comments on chapters 12-14, Laetsch consistently identifies references to Jerusalem, Judah or Israel as being references to the New Testament Church. In so doing, Laetsch does not even seek to show any historical meaning in reference to Israel as a possible historical basis for a typological fulfillment in the church. His interpretation of 12-14 takes everything and identifies it as speaking strictly about the church.

However, neither the terms themselves, the context in which they are spoken, nor the frequency with which these terms are used grant any validity to the idea that one should reassign new meanings to the terms to make them figurative references to the church. The non-dispensational error is an error of method in exegesis and theological formulation. One cannot begin with theological presuppositions and mandate them upon the text. The beginning point must be contextual exegesis as the foundation for formulating a biblical and systematic theology.

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<sup>41</sup> Baldwin, 187.

<sup>42</sup> Laetsch, 479.

By itself, the name Jerusalem (יְרוּשָׁלַיִם, *Yerushalaim*) occurs 37 times in Zechariah (1:12, 14, 16, 17; 2:2, 6, 8, 16; 3:2; 7:7; 8:3, 4, 8, 15, 22; 9:9, 10; 12:2, 3, 5-11; 13:1; 14:2, 4, 8, 10, 11, 12, 14, 16, 17, 21), with the heaviest concentration being in chapters 12-14. *Strong's* dictionary makes the simple reference that Jerusalem is “the capital city of Palestine.”<sup>43</sup> *The Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains* (hereafter, *DBL*) calls it the “major political/religious city of the Jews (cf. 2 Sa 5:5).”<sup>44</sup>

*TWOT* describes Jerusalem as

[the] ancient city of southern Canaan, capital of the Davidic dynasty and religious center of Judaism until its rejection of Jesus and the resultant destruction by Titus in A.D. 70. . . . Mentioned by name 669 times in the OT alone, Jerusalem is the world's most significant city (Ps. 48:1–2 [Heb. 2–3]). It was God's earthly dwelling place (1 Kings 8:13), the scene of Christ's resurrection (Lk. 24:47) and will be the place of his return in glory (Zech. 14:5). . . . Its first mention comes . . . when Abraham honors its priest-king Melchizedek (Gen. 14:20), a type of Christ (Ps. 110:4; Heb. 7) in his double office. . . . On the adjoining hill of Moriah (2 Chron. 3:1) Abraham was willing to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice to God (Gen. 22:2, ca. 2050 B. C.). . . . Its initial biblical designation, in Moses' writing of Genesis (ca. 1450 B. C. ), is simply “Salem” (14:18; cf. Ps 76:2 [H 3]). . . . Although captured by Joshua in the Late Bronze Age (Josh. 10:1) and occupied for a brief period after his death (Judg. 1:8, ca. 1390), Jerusalem remained in Canaanite (Jebusite) hands (1:21) until its capture by David in 1003 B. C. (2 Sam. 5:6–9).<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> James Strong, *The New Strong's Dictionary of Hebrew and Greek Words*. Nashville : Thomas Nelson, 1997, c1996, S. H3389. Cited in electronic form with Logos Libronix.

<sup>44</sup> J. Swanson, (1997). *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains : Hebrew (Old Testament)* (electronic ed.) (DBLH 3731). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc. Cited in electronic form with Logos Libronix.

<sup>45</sup> R. L. Harris, G. L. Archer, G. L., & B. K. Waltke, (1999, c1980). *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (electronic ed.) (405). Chicago: Moody Press. Cited in electronic form with Logos Libronix.

*TWOT* is clear in showing that the name Jerusalem has historically always signified one location, the capital city of Israel. Writers who have embraced non-dispensational theological systems should consider the great error of redefining biblical terms and assigning new meanings to the Old Testament text in order to make the Bible fit into their theological system.

The repeated references to Jerusalem in Zechariah 12-14 tell the reader that very significant, world-shattering, future events will center on the capital city of the Jews. Specifically, Zechariah's prophecy says that Jerusalem will be invaded by a huge coalition of nations and that the city will be invaded and taken over by this coalition (12:3; 14:1-2). Zechariah also shows, however, that this huge coalition will be utterly destroyed by divine judgment (12:1-11; 14:3-4, 12-13). An outpouring of God's grace will bring about a massive repentance among the nation so that a huge remnant from the nation turns to the Messiah in repentant faith (12:10ff.; 13:1ff.; 13:8-9). The return of the Messiah will bring about huge changes in nature such as has never been seen (14:4-11). Jerusalem will be a city at peace, and the wealth of all the world will become the wealth of Jerusalem's King, for all of it is rightly His to begin with (14:14:9, 11, 14). As a result of the spiritual change in Israel, converted Jews and converted Gentiles from all over the world will come annually to this city to worship Yahweh (14:16ff.). Jerusalem will at long last be the city of the Great King (Matt. 5:35) and holiness is what will dominate throughout (14:20-21). Nothing like this has ever happened since Zechariah wrote these words and any attempt to find fulfillment of these verses in the church simply cannot be sustained.

The name Judah (יהודה, *Yehudah*) occurs 20 times in the Book of Zechariah (1:12; 2:2, 4, 16; 8:13, 15, 19; 9:7, 13; 10:3, 6; 11:14; 12:2, 4, 5, 6, 7; 14:5, 14, 21), again with a heavy concentration of these uses being in chapters 12-14. The *Brown, Driver, Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (hereafter, *BDB*) speaks about the etymology of the root of יהודה (Heb. Root: יהי: give thanks) as signifying “praised” or “object of praise.” *BDB* also points out that the origin of the term (1) originally began as the name of the son of Jacob through Leah (Gen. 29:35; 49:8), (2) became the name of the tribe that descended from him (Deut. 33:7), (3) became the name of southern Jewish kingdom after the split during the reign of Rehoboam in 931 B. C. (Jer. 2:28; Hos. 4:15), and (4) was the name of the southern region that made up that southern kingdom (1 Sam. 27:11; 2 Sam. 24:7).<sup>46</sup>

*TWOT* confirms that this proper noun יהודה is

used of persons and of a territory. . . . Jacob’s blessing promised leadership, victory, and kingship (Gen. 49:8–12) anticipating the royal line established by covenant with David and ultimately the Lord Jesus Christ who was to combine in his person the suzerain king and the anointed one (Messiah). . . . With the Babylonian exile, Judah continues its basic identification, though a people no longer in their own land. During this period the people of God are called *yěhûdî* notably in Zechariah 8:23 and Daniel 3:8, 12. A small percentage returned to their homeland during the Persian period, yet both groups ultimately participated in God’s providential workings. . . . Many believe that Judah and Israel will be restored to covenantal favor by the sovereign steadfast faithfulness of Yahweh. Explicit statements by Hosea (1:9, 10 [H 2:1]; 3:5; 14:4), Amos (9:8–12), Jeremiah (33:3–26), and Ezekiel (37:16–28) should be compared to Paul’s teaching (Rom. 9–11) and John’s revelation (Rev. 7:4–8).<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Francis Brown, Samuel Driver, Charles Briggs, *Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*. electronic ed. Oak Harbor, WA : Logos Research Systems, 2000, S. 397. Cited in electronic form with Logos Libronix.

<sup>47</sup> R. L. Harris, G. L. Archer, & B. K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*. electronic ed. Chicago : Moody Press, 1999, c1980, S. 369. Cited in electronic form with Logos Libronix.

In summary, it is crucial that the New Testament student use the expression Judah as it would have been understood by its author and original hearers. Just as God used the name Jerusalem in speaking of a promised restoration, so too, He used the name Judah in speaking of a literal place where literal events will take place (with some of the references appearing to refer perhaps to the region of Judah and others to the people of Judah). Central to this section, though, is the massive, Gentile, military attack that will one day come upon Judah. As Fruchtenbaum has put it, “This will be the largest and most intense persecution of the Jews in history.”<sup>48</sup> In this invasion, the countryside of Judah will be attacked by a massive invasion from surrounding nations (12:2) but, shows Zechariah, God will utterly destroy those attacking nations (12:4-7). The Jewish nation, living at peace in their own land that God promised to the patriarchs, will at long last be characterized by the holiness that God has always desired (14:21). This is God’s promise.

A third and very significant name that Zechariah uses here in 12-14 is Israel (יִשְׂרָאֵל, *Yisra’el*). The name occurs five times in Zechariah (2:2; 8:13; 9:1; 11:14; 12:1), but only once in 12-14. *DBL* speaks of Israel as signifying (1) another name for Jacob, son of Abraham (Gen. 32:29; 35:10), (2) a people pertaining to Israel (Exod. 18:25), or (3) the territory that reaches from approximately from Dan to Beersheva, from the Great Sea to the Jordan (1 Sam. 13:19).<sup>49</sup> *NIDOTE* speaks of Israel, as indicated in the writings of Moses, as that nation who Yahweh had

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<sup>48</sup> Arnold Fruchtenbaum, *Israelology: Part 4 of 6*,” *Chafer Theological Seminary Journal* 6:1 (January 2000): 48.

elected, redeemed, and made covenant with at Mount Sinai. . . .  
According to their commonly held tradition, fleshed out now by Moses in writing for perhaps the first time, Israel consisted of descendants of twelve sons of Jacob, a man whose name was changed to the eponymous surrogate Israel (Exod. 1:1-7).<sup>50</sup>

In thinking about the theological ramifications of Zechariah 12-14 with regard to eschatology and whether or not “Israel” should be taken at face value to mean the literal nation, it is interesting that covenant theologians frequently speak of the church as being the new Israel, but here in Zechariah so many of these promises in 12-14 revolve not around the name Israel, but the names Jerusalem and Judah. As noted earlier, this does not stop many commentators from redefining all of these terms (Israel, Judah and Jerusalem) to be references to the church. In so doing, though, they show utter disregard for the historical meanings of the terms.

The truth is that all these expressions refer to the geopolitical, theocratic entity called Israel. Writers like Johnson (dealing with a final massive invasion of Jerusalem) have rightly shown the theological connection between passages like Zechariah 12, Daniel 9:27 and Revelation 11:3, and shown how all of these texts point ahead to eschatological events and not to the church. There simply is no way to fit these events into any past history or present events.<sup>51</sup> Huge portions of the Old Testament deal with Israel in eschatological contexts, and it is a gross error to redefine these references to the nation as being fulfilled in the church.

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<sup>49</sup> J. Swanson, (1997). *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains : Hebrew (Old Testament)* (electronic ed.) (DBLH 3776). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc. Cited in electronic form with Logos Libronix.

<sup>50</sup> Eugene Merrill, “אִשְׂרָאֵל,” in *NIDOTE*, vol. 7, Willem VanGemeren, gen. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 76.

<sup>51</sup> Ron Johnson, “The Centrality of The Jewish Temple In The Affairs of God, Israel, and The Nations,” *Conservative Theological Journal* 1:2 (August 1997): 123.

Furthermore, there is absolutely no evidence for any kind of historical fulfilling to prophecies that speak of phenomena like a “stream of healing waters flowing from the temple,”<sup>52</sup> or a “changed topography of Palestine,”<sup>53</sup> or a “restoration of a priesthood and the reinstatement of a bloody sacrificial system,”<sup>54</sup> or a time when “the Millennial temple will be the world center of worship . . . [and] government.”<sup>55</sup> Johnson’s points are extremely valid: the world has never seen these things happen in any way that corresponds to the promises. The reason for this is because they are not fulfilled in the church, nor in the eternal state. They get fulfilled when Christ returns to restore Israel and establish the messianic kingdom here on this present earth.

In summary, in the days to come the people of Israel are going to see an invasion such as they have never seen. The nations of the world will make one last attempt to destroy Israel. This theme (great destruction to God’s flock Israel) comes out in 11:4ff. but it sees its culmination in 12-14.<sup>56</sup> As Zechariah shows, the only reason they are saved from destruction is the intervention of the Messiah who turns the nation to Himself in a mighty act of grace and also delivers them from annihilation by the enemy.

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<sup>52</sup> Ibid., 127.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 129.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 130.

<sup>55</sup> Ibid., 136-137.

<sup>56</sup> Theologically speaking, the reason why the nation comes under these afflictions is because of their own covenant apostasy and the rejection of the Messiah. In chapter 11 he calls them “the flock of slaughter,” those who would suffer enemy oppression for the ages to come (throughout history up to the time of their repentance and restoration) because of their sinful rebellion. Ronald Pierce, “A Thematic Development of the Haggai/Zechariah/Malachi Corpus,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 27:4 (December 1984): 408.



“All The Nations” (אֶת־כָּל־הַגּוֹיִם), “The Peoples” (הָעַמִּים)

This discussion about the terms “nations and “peoples” is closely related to the former discussion concerning the invasion of Israel, Judah, and Jerusalem.

The term “nations,” especially as used in Zechariah when he says “all the nations” (אֶת־כָּל־הַגּוֹיִם, *Eth Kol Hagoyim*), should be taken at face value. Zechariah is here predicting a massive, future invasion by all the surrounding nations. This term only occurs one time in Zechariah (12:3), but its use is very important. *DBL* defines the term nation (גּוֹי) as including (1) a people—a large group based on various cultural, physical and geographical ties (Gen. 10:5; 25:23), or (2) the Gentiles—national groups that are not Jewish (Neh. 5:8).<sup>57</sup> When used in the singular, the term can be used in reference to the nation of Israel (cf. Josh. 3:17; 4:1; 5:6), but more frequently it is used in the plural as a reference to the Gentile nations.

*TWOT* explains the term as including the basic idea of “a defined body or group of people, or some specific large segment of a given body. The context will generally indicate the specific quality or characteristic which is to be understood.” *TWOT* adds further that this term is often synonymous with the word עַם (people), but that גּוֹי is used especially to refer to specifically defined political, ethnic or territorial groups of people without intending to ascribe a specific religious or moral connotation. The plural form is employed also to refer to the people dwelling in and around Canaan; these were definite ethnic, political, territorial groups, whom Israel as a nation was to dispossess (Deut. 4:38;

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<sup>57</sup> J. Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages With Semantic Domains : Hebrew (Old Testament)*. electronic ed. Oak Harbor : Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997, S. DBLH 1580-1582. Cited in electronic form with Logos Libronix.

Josh. 23:13) or among whom, for testing and judgment, Israel was to live (Judg. 2:21, 23).<sup>58</sup>

In addition to the word “nation,” Zechariah also makes references to the surrounding “peoples” (חַיִּים, *Ha`amim*). This expression occurs six times in Zechariah (11:10; 12:2, 3, 4, 6; 14:12) with five of these being in 12-14. As with nation, this term can refer to Israel (when used in the singular), but it often refers to foreign nations when used in the plural (Isa. 19:25 being one notable exception where the singular is used in reference to a redeemed Egypt). *TWOT* defines the term חַיִּים according to its plain meaning “people” (Ezek. 6:12; Dan. 2:44; 7:27, et al.), with the unique emphasis being “in its reference to a group of people as viewed by one of themselves or to people in general.”<sup>59</sup>

Here in 12-14, several of Zechariah’s uses of “people” include the addition of the adjective that means “around” or “surrounding” (סָבִיב, *Sabib*). This term occurs five times in Zechariah with three of them being in 12-14 (2:9; 7:7; 12:2, 6; 14:14). *BDB* describes the simple meaning of this term as (1) circuit, or (2) round about, such as round about the Nile (Num. 11:24, 31, 32; 35:2).<sup>60</sup> Zechariah is describing a massive invasion by all the nations that surround tiny Israel—an invasion that will end in utter destruction for the invading nations. *TWOT* makes special note of the references to peoples in

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<sup>58</sup> R. L. Harris, G. L. Archer, & B. K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*. electronic ed. Chicago : Moody Press, 1999, c1980, S. 153. Cited in electronic form with Logos Libronix.

<sup>59</sup> R. L. Harris, G. L. Archer, & B. K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*. electronic ed. Chicago : Moody Press, 1999, c1980, S. 676. Cited in electronic form with Logos Libronix.

<sup>60</sup> Francis Brown, Samuel Driver, & Charles Briggs, *Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*. electronic ed. Oak Harbor, WA : Logos Research Systems, 2000, S. 686. Cited in electronic form with Logos Libronix.

Zechariah 12-14 in a context which says that the Messiah will triumph “over all the enemies of God and man, redeeming his own and ruling over a changed and revitalized earth” (Zech. 14:9-11).<sup>61</sup>

In summary, Zechariah is predicting that all the surrounding Gentile nations (the “surrounding peoples”) will attack the nation of Israel, even invading its capital city Jerusalem (12:2-3; 14:2), but also that God says that these armies will be utterly destroyed. An elect remnant from the nations will come to faith in the Messiah and worship Him in the Messianic kingdom (14:16-21), but the nations themselves will be brought into subjugation and annexed into the universal kingdom that belongs to the Messiah alone (14:14) so that He is the only King on earth (14:9).

“Plague” (הַמַּגָּפָה), “Strike” (נִכָּה)

The language Zechariah uses to speak of God’s intervention leaves little room for the idea of figurative judgments. Both context and terminology suggest that God’s future intervention and judgments will be literal and severe, resulting in the death of hoards of unrepentant sinners.

One of the expressions Zechariah uses to describe this is the term that often gets translated as “plague” (הַמַּגָּפָה, נָגַף, nom. *Hamagapha*, vb. *Nagaph*). These terms occur two times in Zechariah (14:12, 18) and, as noted, often carry the idea of “plague” or “to strike with a plague.” *DBL* suggests various renderings including terms like “plague,” i.e., a destructive pandemic disease (Num. 14:37), or “losses” or “casualties,” such as in

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<sup>61</sup> R. L. Harris, G. L. Archer, & B. K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*. electronic ed. Chicago : Moody Press, 1999, c1980, S. 615. Cited in electronic form with Logos Libronix.

war (Deut.28:7; 1 Sam. 4:17; 2 Sam. 17:9; 18:7).<sup>62</sup> *TWOT* adds the idea of “blow” or “pestilence” with the idea that this blow is usually fatal or disastrous, often being from divine retribution. A significant illustration of usage lies in the plagues that God brought upon Egypt (cf. Exod. 12:23). *TWOT* notes that “in the eschaton, however, God’s blows/plagues effect repentance on Egypt (Isa. 19:22).” Indeed, all God’s enemies will either repent or perish (Zech 14:12ff.).<sup>63</sup> As noted in 14:12, the plague which Yahweh brings about will result in utter annihilation to those who reject Him and seek the destruction of His people.

These terms speak about very harsh judgments from the hand of God, for He will judge unrepentant sin. The day is fast approaching when this world will face the wrath of an angry God. House is correct in pointing out that texts like Zechariah 12-14 (in addition to texts like Isa. 13-27; 63-66; Jer. 46-51; Ezek. 25-32; and 40-48) are describing a time when “God’s power will purge the earth of kings and kingdoms who do not honor the God who rules history and discloses the future.”<sup>64</sup> The reader is urged to ask whether or not there is any way that these prophecies can be seen as being presently fulfilled in the church age. This writer sees no legitimate way of supporting this viewpoint.

A second word, “to strike” (נָכַח, *nacah*), also reminds the reader of the severe judgment that God will bring on those nations that attack Israel. This term occurs five times in Zechariah (9:4; 10:11; 12:4; 13:6, 7) with three of them being in 12-14. The root

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<sup>62</sup> J. Swanson, (1997). *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains : Hebrew (Old Testament)* (electronic ed.) (DBLH 5597, #3). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc. Cited in electronic form with Logos Libronix.

<sup>63</sup> R. L. Harris, G. L. Archer, & B. K. Waltke, (1999, c1980). *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (electronic ed.) (552). Chicago: Moody Press. Cited in electronic form with Logos Libronix.

<sup>64</sup> House, 500.

idea behind the term **נָכַח** is “to strike.” *DBL* shows that it signifies a violent act of striking down and killing, such as when God struck Egypt (Exod. 5:14, 16, 22; 7:17). The term occurs in various places in the Old Testament where God warns sinners by His prophets that He is going to bring severe judgment upon them (e.g., Isa. 58:4; Jer. 18:21; Hos. 9:16). Other interesting uses include Isaiah’s description of Israel, saying that Israel has been struck hard due to her own sin (Isa. 1:5), and also that the coming Servant would be “struck down” to take the punishment of the people (Isa. 53:4; Zech. 13:6).<sup>65</sup>

*TWOT* says that the term does not demand that the blow be fatal (cf. Num 22:23, 25, 27) but that it often is, with context indicating which idea is to be preferred. In a large number of passages, though, “**נָכַח** means to slay, kill, or strike dead. . . . [A] large group of passages uses the root in the sense of attack and/or destroy, the object being a group of people. . . . Of particular theological importance is the fact that God is often the subject.”<sup>66</sup>

The terms in this word group always signify violent action against another. Many of the uses involve man striking man, but a large number of uses involve God striking sinners for their evil. This idea stands out in Zechariah 12:4 wherein God declares that He will strike those armies who come against Israel. As 12:5ff. and 14:3ff. make clear, Israel’s future will involve a massive invasion by a huge coalition of enemy nations, but according to this text, Yahweh will not allow them to destroy His chosen nation. The

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<sup>65</sup> J. Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages With Semantic Domains : Hebrew (Old Testament)*. electronic ed. Oak Harbor : Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997, S. DBLH 5782, #8. Cited in electronic form with Logos Libronix.

<sup>66</sup> R. L. Harris, G. L. Archer, & B. K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*. electronic ed. Chicago : Moody Press, 1999, c1980, S. 578. Cited in electronic form with Logos Libronix.

Lord will fight for His people and He will deliver them from destruction by bringing severe universal destruction to Israel's enemies. This has never happened since Zechariah made this prophecy.

Zechariah also notes that the Lord will also use these trials to bring to Himself a purged and refined remnant who will put their trust in their Messiah (13:7-8), the One who died for their sins (12:10; 13:7), the One who fights for their protection (14:3ff.), the One who shall reign as the only King on earth (14:9) and the One who alone will be worshipped (14:9, 16-21).

In summary, the language of Zechariah 12-14 makes it clear that God has a literal restoration planned for the nation Israel. In the end, Israel will (1) return to her land (something that began taking place after the Babylonian exile ended, but never has seen its full realization), (2) experience a massive invasion by all the surrounding nations, (3) experience a great deliverance when Yahweh destroys these armies, (4) turn to the Messiah in repentance (12:10-13:1), (5) be purged of spiritual defilement (13:2-7), (6) experience covenant restoration through the remnant who has come to trust in the Lord (12:10; 13:8-9), (7) be blessed with peace and prosperity under the blessings of Messiah the King (14:8-11), and (8) worship the Lord in righteousness and holiness for the ages to come (14:16-21).

### *Theological Concepts and Motifs*

In addition to the study of specific terms, one can also identify crucial theological concepts and motifs as well. This section will focus on the exegetical implications of six separate theological motifs in Zechariah 12-14.

## God's Sovereignty as Seen in Creator Motifs

The idea of God's sovereignty in as seen in Creator motifs comes out in 12:1. Zechariah uses three active participles in reference to Yahweh as the Creator, all of which connote the idea that Yahweh has all sovereignty due to the fact that He is the Creator of all things.

The first term speaks of Yahweh as the One who "stretches out the heavens" (נָטָה, *Natah*). This term occurs one time in Zechariah (12:1) and is the first of three Hebrew terms in 12:1 (all active participles which are describing the work of Yahweh) that make allusion to God as the Creator. *DBL* shows that this term has the general idea of "stretching out," either literally or metaphorically. Examples would include the idea of (1) spreading out, i.e., a non-linear motion of an object covering an ever larger area, extending from a source (Job 26:7; Ezek. 1:22), (2) stretching out, i.e., a non-linear motion of a limb of the body, with a focus that an action will occur (Exod. 6:6; 7:5), or (3) extending (Jer. 6:12), perhaps even with the idea of pitching a tent (Exod. 33:7).<sup>67</sup> *TWOT* makes note of the fact that several times in the Old Testament the term "is also figuratively used of Yahweh, the Creator, whose hands "stretched out" the heavens as a tent (Isa. 40:22; 42:5; 44:24; 45:12, et al.),"<sup>68</sup> with this last idea being the exact way that the term is being employed in Zechariah 12:1.

By the use of this expression, Zechariah is making allusion not only to Isaiah's use of the expression, but also to Moses who originally wrote about Yahweh as Creator

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<sup>67</sup> J. Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages With Semantic Domains : Hebrew (Old Testament)*. electronic ed. Oak Harbor : Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997, S. DBLH 5742, #16. Cited in electronic form with Logos Libronix.

<sup>68</sup> R. L. Harris, G. L. Archer, B. K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*. electronic ed. Chicago : Moody Press, 1999, c1980, S. 573. Cited in electronic form with Logos Libronix.

of all things (Gen. 1-2). Merrill notes that for God to remind the readers that He is the One who stretches out the heavens, He is using theological language to underline

the creative and redemptive role of Yahweh. He redeems because He is the omnipotent creator, and He creates new things in order to redeem. Here at the brink of a new age it is important to know that the same God who brought everything into existence in the first place is well able to usher in a new creation of a restored people in a renewed and universal kingdom.<sup>69</sup>

Zechariah uses a second participle to speak of Yahweh as Creator when he says that Yahweh is the One who “lays the foundation of the earth” (יָסַד, *Yosed*), this term also occurring only here in Zechariah. *DBL* shows that this term has the basic idea of laying a foundation or setting a base for construction (cf. Ezra 3:12; Isa. 44:28).<sup>70</sup> *TWOT* concurs with this basic idea, saying that the primary meaning of *yasad* is

to found or fix firmly. . . . Several passages refer to the foundation of the earth and the heavens together, as in Proverbs 3:19 (“The Lord by wisdom founded the earth; by understanding He established the heavens”) and also in passages like Psalm 102:26; Isaiah 48:13; 51:13, 16.<sup>71</sup>

As with *noteh*, this term gives the connotation that Yahweh alone is the sovereign God. He created all things and He put them in their place. Thus, when He announces His plan to restore Israel, His sovereignty assures that it will happen. As Unger put it, these terms are arresting in their emphasis upon “the authority that supports the message it enunciates.”<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> Merrill, *An Exegetical Commentary: Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, 312.

<sup>70</sup> J. Swanson, James, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages With Semantic Domains : Hebrew (Old Testament)*. electronic ed. Oak Harbor : Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997, S. DBLH 3569, #5. Cited in electronic form with Logos Libronix.

<sup>71</sup> R. L. Harris, G. L. Archer, & B. K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*. electronic ed. Chicago : Moody Press, 1999, c1980, S. 384. Cited in electronic form with Logos Libronix.

<sup>72</sup> Unger, 207.



The third term (again, only here in 12:1) has the idea of “forming” (יָצַר, *Yotser*), as in the idea of “forming” man’s spirit within him. Once again the connotation is to Yahweh as sovereign Creator. *DBL* states that the basic idea is that of forming, especially as seen in the forming of man from the dust of the ground (Gen. 2:7; cf. Isa. 43:10) or forging (Isa. 54:17), perhaps even with the idea of forming plans and schemes (2 Kings 19:25). A number of uses in the Old Testament point to Yahweh as the Creator and Cause of all things (Isa. 27:11; 45:9, 11; Jer. 10:16; 51:19).<sup>73</sup> The primary idea is that of shaping or forming of the object involved with a popular secular illustration being the way that the participle speaks about a potter who forms pottery.

A number of passages use the this word in association with *bara*’ (“to create”) to refer to the creation of the universe (Isa. 45:18), the earth, or even man himself (Jer. 33:2; Amos 4:13; Ps. 95:5; Zech. 12:1). The root is also used of God’s forming the nation of Israel in the sense of bringing it into existence. It is used in this way only by Isaiah and always connotes God’s activity in this regard (Isa. 43:1, 7, 21; 44:2, 21, 24).<sup>74</sup> This term, especially when combined with the former two terms, makes it clear that Yahweh is the sovereign Creator of all things. As Kaiser notes, “The God who worked in creation in the past is the same Lord who continues to work in revelation, providence, and deliverance in the present and in the future.”<sup>75</sup>

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<sup>73</sup> J. Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages With Semantic Domains : Hebrew (Old Testament)*. electronic ed. Oak Harbor : Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997, S. DBLH 3670, #4. Cited in electronic form with Logos Libronix.

<sup>74</sup> R. L. Harris, G. L. Archer, & B. K. Waltke, *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*. electronic ed. Chicago : Moody Press, 1999, c1980, S. 396. Cited in electronic form with Logos Libronix.

<sup>75</sup> Kaiser, 399-400.

In summary, God is announcing to the world in no uncertain terms that in the future Israel will face a period of unprecedented warfare, but also that the Lord will deliver her from annihilation. He is the Creator of all things. He created the heavens, the earth, mankind, and even the nation of Israel (cf. Isa. 43:1). He is also the same God who will one day very soon restore (and recreate) His apostate people, the nation of Israel (Isa. 42:9; 43:18-21; 44:3-5).<sup>76</sup>

#### Holy War and Exodus Motifs

Some writers have noted the way that Zechariah employs “divine warrior” imagery in a way similar to Moses at the Exodus (Exod. 14:14; 15:3; cf. Rev. 19:11).<sup>77</sup> As Zechariah shows, Yahweh is a man of war who not only empowers His people to fight (12:5-8), but also goes out Himself to fight against His enemies (14:3-4).<sup>78</sup> Yahweh, the King of Israel (in the person of Messiah), will strike hard and leave His enemies shattered and broken (12:3-4; 14:12-15; cf. Pss. 2:4-12; 89:23; 110:1-7; Isa. 59:16-21; 63:1-6). The Lord, indeed, is a man of war. Gentile nations who seek Israel’s destruction will themselves suffer destruction at the hand of the Warrior Yahweh. Judgment on sinful disbelief will not be confined to Gentiles, though, for Zechariah also shows that God will purge out the unbelieving Jewish rebels in the time of Jacob’s distress (Zech. 13:8-9; cf.

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<sup>76</sup> Jeffrey Townsend, “Fulfillment of the Land Promises in the Old Testament,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 142:568 (October 1985): 331. Townsend rightly stresses the point that this restoration must include every promise for “the Old Testament is pointing to a single fulfillment of Abrahamic land promises at the conversion of Israel (cf. Zech. 12:10; 13:1-6).

<sup>77</sup> Kessler, 62.

<sup>78</sup> Walvoord rightly draws the connection between Zechariah 12-14 and Revelation 19:11-21 wherein Christ is pictured as coming from heaven on a white horse accompanied by the armies of heaven to claim His right as King of kings and Lord of lords to judge the wicked earth. John Walvoord, “The Future Work of Christ: Part III: Christ’s Coming to Reign,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 123:491 (July 1966): 168.

Jer. 30:7; Ezek. 20:37-38).<sup>79</sup> This time will mean utter destruction for all who refuse His lordship over their lives. In the Day of the Lord, the Divine Warrior will crush His foes and “lay claim to the riches of the world (Zech. 14:14; cf. 2:8; Hag. 2:20-23; Joel 3:5).”<sup>80</sup>

A second Exodus motif seems to appear in 14:4-5 in the way that God makes a way of escape for His people by splitting the Mount of Olives in two. This imagery would appear to find a historical parallel in the way that God made a way of escape at the Red Sea when He parted the waters for Israel to escape.<sup>81</sup> Holy war is about to come to planet earth and Yahweh, the Man of War, will take His stand against all who defy Him.

#### Covenant Restoration by God’s Gracious Enablement

Certainly one of the major ideas of Zechariah (the whole prophecy) is that God is going to restore Israel to Himself. Throughout the prophecy Zechariah makes numerous mentions of God bringing Israel to restoration.<sup>82</sup> Here in 12-14 the reader sees that covenant restoration takes place by the work of God’s grace when He pours out His Spirit upon the people to draw them to Himself in repentant faith (12:10ff.; 13:1). It is crucial to remember that repentance over sin and covenant restoration do not happen by dead religious works (as Zechariah chapters 7-8 indicate), but rather by the work of God to bring men to true repentance. Before the kingdom can be established on earth, Israel

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<sup>79</sup> Robert Asher, “Isaiah 35: Exposition and Biblical Theology,” *Chafer Theological Seminary Journal* 8:2 (April 2002): 101.

<sup>80</sup> Kessler, 166.

<sup>81</sup> Ger, 105.

<sup>82</sup> Prime examples would include (1) 1:16-17 where the Lord speaks of compassion on His people and again choosing Jerusalem, (2) 2:10-12 where the Lord promises that He will be in their midst in the holy land, (3) 3:1-5 where the purification of Joshua takes place, (4) 5:1ff. where the curse is removed, and (5) chapter 8 where a restored people dwells in prosperity, etc.

“must fulfill the condition” that God requires: they must “confess their iniquity.”<sup>83</sup> The Great Tribulation is that time when God will stir the hearts of His people Israel to at long last confess the sin that has separated them from Himself. They do this when they turn to Christ and “look unto the One whom they have pierced.”<sup>84</sup>

Zechariah makes it clear that God accomplishes and works this repentance through a very practical means: He brings the nation through the fiery trials of invasion and affliction in order to bring them to their knees. A number of other Old Testament texts indicate that God will bring purification to an elect remnant by subjecting them to the fiery trials of that period that would commonly be known today as “the tribulation period.”<sup>85</sup> Here in Zechariah 13:8-9 God speaks very pointedly about the fact that He will employ affliction, tribulation, and persecution to bring about this purification by bringing “the third part through the fire.” Zechariah uses two particular terms to describe the way that God works to bring about purification.

The first Hebrew term that Zechariah uses to describe this purification process (צָרָף, *Tsaraph*) is translated by in English by the NASB as “refine.” This term צָרָף, though found 34 times in the Masoretic Text, occurs only one time in Zechariah (13:9). Here in 13:9, the NASB translates the term צָרָף by saying that God will take a 1/3 remnant from the nation of Israel through the fires of the tribulation period and “refine” (צָרָף) them as silver is refined. In other words, just as a silver smith refines silver, so

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<sup>83</sup> Fruchtenbaum, 54.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid.

<sup>85</sup> Among these would be passages like Isaiah 26:20-21; 27:12-13; Jeremiah 30:7; Ezekiel 38-39; Daniel 12:7-13; Amos 9:7-10; Micah 2:12-13; Joel 2:28-32; Malachi 3:2ff.

too, Yahweh will seek to refine and purify His people. The term  $\text{פָּרַף}$  has a root idea of “to burn,” often in the sense of subjecting metals to heat in the refining process in order to purify them. Thus, refinement comes when impurities are burned away. *DBL* supports this idea by listing various semantic ideas with the most relevant being “to refine,” i.e., to remove impurities in metal to make the precious metal pure with the idea applying metaphorically to the way that people can be refined (cf. Mal. 3:2-3). Another concept relates to the idea of “testing,” i.e., examining something to learn the information about the true nature or moral purity of an object, as a figurative extension of refining metals (cf. Judg. 7:4; Pss. 17:3; 26:2; 66:10; 105:19; Jer. 9:7; Dan. 11:35; 12:10; Zech. 13:9).<sup>86</sup> Similarly, *TWOT* suggests English terms such as “smelt,” “refine,” and “test” as being appropriate renderings for the term.

God uses this imagery at times to speak about the way that His purification processes produce purification from sin (e.g., Isa. 1:25; Jer. 6:27-30; Ezek. 22:18–22). In view of this term, one sees that when God’s people are wayward and sinful, God will often bring them back to Himself by refining them to purify and bring forth holiness, comparable to the way that purity in metals comes about through a refining process (Jer. 9:7; Zech. 13:9; Mal. 3:2ff.).<sup>87</sup> As the Old Testament affirms many times over, God can, and does, use affliction as a means of bringing about this repentance and purification. It is part of the natural means that God employs in the gracious work of salvation. Just as

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<sup>86</sup> J. Swanson, (1997). *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains : Hebrew (Old Testament)* (electronic ed.) (DBLH 7671, #4). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc. Cited in electronic form with Logos Libronix.

<sup>87</sup> R. L. Harris, G. L. Archer, & B. K. Waltke, (1999, c1980). *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (electronic ed.) (777). Chicago: Moody Press. Cited in electronic form with Logos Libronix.

metals are purified by the burning fire, so too, sinners are purified by the trials that God uses to bring about repentance.

Zechariah 13:9 uses a second term in referring to this purification process, a term that is translated by the English term “test” (יִבְחַן, *Bachan*). This term occurs only here in Zechariah. *DBL* suggests that the term יִבְחַן should be translated with the idea of “test,” “try,” “probe,” “examine,” or “assay.” In other words, the idea behind this term deals with the goal of trying to “learn the genuineness of an object by examination” (cf. 1Chron. 29:17; Job 7:18; 12:11; 23:10; 34:3; Pss. 7:10; 11:4, 5; 17:3; 26:2; 66:10; 81:8; 95:9; 139:23; Prov. 17:3; Jer. 6:27; 9:6; 11:20; 12:3; 17:10; 20:12; Zech. 13:9; Mal. 3:10, 15).<sup>88</sup> *TWOT* supports this same idea saying that יִבְחַן

often appears in parallel with הִבְחִין [to test or tempt] and הִרְצִיחַ [to burn or refine or smelt], with the meaning of יִבְחַן falling about midway between the two. Thus, הִבְחִין means “to put to the test, tempt” while הִרְצִיחַ means “to smelt, refine,” but יִבְחַן partakes of both of these in that it denotes examining to determine essential qualities, especially integrity.

Furthermore, יִבְחַן is used almost exclusively in the spiritual or religious realm. Thus, it seems to have the most spiritual connotations of these three synonyms (with only five of its occurrences not having explicit theological reference: Gen. 42:15–16; Ezek. 21:13; Job 12:11; 34:3). . . . Yahweh continually assays the hearts of his people that in the end they may come forth as gold (Zech. 13:9; Job 23:10).<sup>89</sup>

As the Scripture shows, God’s desire is to purify and purge His people so that they might be the holy people He has called them to be. This truth applies not only to individuals of

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<sup>88</sup> J. Swanson, (1997). *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains : Hebrew (Old Testament)* (electronic ed.) (DBLH 1043). Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc. Cited in electronic form with Logos Libronix.

<sup>89</sup> R. L. Harris, G. L. Archer, & B. K. Waltke, (1999, c1980). *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (electronic ed.) (100). Chicago: Moody Press. Cited in electronic form with Logos Libronix.

every age, but also in a collective sense to the corporate nation of Israel. God’s final work of restoration will include a time when He puts them to the test so as to bring about the purity and holiness—the purity and holiness that He knows He can produce among His elect nation. God says that He will test and purify a remnant from within Israel to produce a redeemed and restored nation. He will bring it to pass.

Ultimately, the price for this purification and restoration was the rejection and death of Israel’s own Messiah, the Shepherd of Israel (11:4-14). He is the One whom Yahweh Himself struck (13:7), albeit through the agency of His own apostate people who rejected Him and had Him pierced through (12:10). Here in 12:10, this expression “pierced” (פָּרַד ' D ' , root: פָּרַד) carries with it the strong connotation of a literal piercing. *NIDOTE* suggests the idea of “to stab,” or “pierce through” as the basic meaning.<sup>90</sup> Notable illustrations include various examples where men were stabbed to death (Judg. 9:54; 1 Sam. 31:4). This is the term, for example, that describes the way that Phineas put two defiant sinners to death with a spear (Num. 25). John makes allusion to this statement at the literal piercing of Christ at the crucifixion (19:37). As John shows, the literal prophecy of 12:10 had a literal fulfilling on the cross. Its only other use in Zechariah speaks about the way that parents might put a child to death for false prophecy in the messianic kingdom (13:3),<sup>91</sup> once again with a literal piercing being the connotation. The text of 12:10 is telling the reader that during the Tribulation Period

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<sup>90</sup> Gary Alan Long, “פָּרַד,” in *NIDOTE*, vol. 1, Willem Vangemeren, gen. ed. (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1997), 983.

<sup>91</sup> *Ibid.*

Israel will at long last realize that Jesus of Nazareth is the Messiah, the One whom they themselves denied and rejected—the One who was pierced through on their behalf.

In summary, it is God, the Holy Spirit, who comes on the basis free grace and brings about brokenness and repentance among the Jews. Through His work, the people turn to God with bitter, broken hearts and offer their supplications to God for mercy and forgiveness (collectively and individually), confessing their sin to God (12:10-14).<sup>92</sup> The Spirit of grace and supplication is the One who opens up the fountain of blessing for a needy people (13:1) so that they, by His grace, might believe in the One who has been pursuing them for and find restoration.

#### Kingdom Motifs: Yahweh as Only King

Zechariah explicitly states that when the Day of the Lord comes and Yahweh has removed all enemies that He (i.e., the Messiah) will be the only King on earth and that His name will be the only one. These words will quickly remind the Old Testament student of the *Shema`* command to have Yahweh as the only God whom they were to love and serve (Deut. 6:4-5). When God's kingdom comes to earth, Israel (and all humanity) will at long last have Messiah as their only King and God.

Concerning this concept of kingdom and rulership, the Old Testament scholar will also call to mind the fact that God's command to mankind in the Garden of Eden included the command to rule over the earth and to exercise dominion over it (Gen. 1:26-28). In effect, mankind was to serve as God's vice-regent. Thus, Scripture indicates that it has always been God's design for mankind to have a mediatorial rule over the earth. Mankind was given that task in the Garden and graciously given all he needed to fulfill

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<sup>92</sup> Merrill, 319.



this task, but he failed due to disobedience.<sup>93</sup> The final purpose of Yahweh in this regard finds its final realization in the person of Jesus Christ when He returns to rule forever.

What Adam lost Christ will restore in full.

In view of this final goal, the reader can also bring to mind the way that this purpose of God has had a progressive unfolding over the ages of human history. A very significant part of this story took place when God brought Israel to Himself at the Exodus in order to make Israel into a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Ex. 19:6). God's promise to the patriarchs (some 500+ years earlier) included the promise that one day kings would come from their loins (Gen. 17:6; 35:8-9). God's message to Israel at the Exodus was that He was turning the family of Abraham into a nation—a theocratic nation to work out His redemptive purposes.

Later in the history of Israel (some 300+ years after the Exodus), Samuel grieved when Israel sought a king based on wrong motivations (1 Sam. 8:6), but as noted it had always in the purpose of God to bring forth a righteous King to rule over His people (Gen. 17:6; 35:8-9; 49:10; Num. 24:17ff.; Deut. 17:14ff.). As Scripture later notes, David would become a special king who would typify in many ways the final King to come (cf. 2 Sam. 7:12-16), but as the Bible shows David, and every other mere human king who followed in his lineage, would always fall short of this perfect ideal. Zechariah reveals that the perfect King (Messiah, the Branch) will serve as Priest between God and His people (6:9-15) and that His advent will also include a humble entrance to His people

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<sup>93</sup> Walvoord notes that God's theocratic kingdom began in one sense "in the creation of Adam in the Garden of Eden, continued through human government, was manifested in the kingly line which ruled Israel, and has its consummation in the millennial kingdom, which in turn is superseded by the timeless eternity which follows." John Walvoord, "The Doctrine of the Millennium, Part I: The Righteous Government of the Millennium," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 115:457 (January 1958): 2.

(Zech. 9:9).<sup>94</sup> In the end, though, it will be the crucified and resurrected Messiah whom they see and worship (12:10; 14:9).<sup>95</sup> This will be the time when “God comes in the Day of the Lord to take up His rulership as King.”<sup>96</sup> As Zechariah promises, God’s day will come when evil is purged and when He rules the earth through His chosen King, the Messiah.

Walvoord and others are entirely within their rights to point out that our present age is not that promised kingdom. Walvoord makes reference to passages like (1) Psalm 2:8 which speak of the Messiah shattering the nations, (2) like Isaiah 11 which speaks about perfect peace between animal and animal as well between animal and man, (3) like Isaiah 11:9 which speaks about the whole world having a saving knowledge of Yahweh, and (4) like Daniel 2:35-45 and Zechariah 14:1-9 which speak about a total subjugation of world powers to the lordship of Yahweh in the kingdom.<sup>97</sup> These references are just a small sampling of the passages which point to a future age of God’s rule on this earth at the Second Coming of Christ, passages which cannot be made to fit into this present age.

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<sup>94</sup> As the Gospels show, the prophecy of 9:9 was fulfilled in the first coming of Christ in the Triumphal Entry.

<sup>95</sup> Norman Geisler, “The Significance of Christ’s Physical Resurrection,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 146:582 (April 1989): 164. Geisler emphasizes the reality of continuity: the same body that was pierced is the same body that will come in literal fashion to save and to rule (12:10; 14:3-4, 9).

<sup>96</sup> John Brumett, “Does Progressive Dispensationalism Teach A Posttribulational Rapture? Part II,” *Conservative Theological Journal* 2:6 (September 1998): 323.

<sup>97</sup> “Walvoord, “The Doctrine of the Millennium, Part I: The Righteous Government of the Millennium,” 3.

### Feast Motifs: Day of Atonement and Tabernacles for a Purified Remnant

In Zechariah 12-14 there seem to be allusions to at least two particular feasts that were assigned by God to the nation of Israel in the Law of Moses (e.g., Lev. 23). These two feasts are the Day of Atonement and Tabernacles.<sup>98</sup>

By mentioning these two feasts (with the Day of Atonement admittedly being derived more by theological inference than Tabernacles—but one that is nonetheless justifiable on contextual grounds), God is indicating His purpose of bringing in a final restoration to the nation of Israel—a restoration that takes place because the nation finally comes to recognize its sin and covenant disobedience.<sup>99</sup> Feinberg draws this theological connection between Zechariah 12:10ff. and the Day of Atonement by showing how “regathering, repentance, and rest” are all part of Israel’s conversion and restoration (thus, Trumpets would point to a regathering of the scattered nation [Zech. 11:11-16; cf. Isa. 27:12-13; Matt. 24:31], the Day of Atonement would see its typological fulfillment in the future repentance spoken of in Zechariah 12:10, and Tabernacles would find its typological fulfillment in the final rest in Yahweh’s presence as seen in 14:16-21).<sup>100</sup>

God’s gracious promise to the patriarchs that they would forever be His people and possess the land of Canaan (cf. Gen. 12; 13; 15; 17) cannot be annulled, for the

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<sup>98</sup> There is the possibility of also seeing Trumpets as having an eschatological fulfillment at this time, although there is a question about how this is so. One idea is that the ancient blasting of Trumpets is fulfilled eschatologically at the rapture of the church before the beginning of the seven-year tribulation period (cf. 1 Cor. 15:52). Another idea is that Trumpets sees its eschatological realization in the way that Israel gets summoned to battle. Another possible idea for an eschatological side to Trumpets lies in the fact that Zechariah is speaking about a regathered Israel, achieved in part by the (metaphorical) blasting of trumpets to signal a regathering (cf. Is. 11:11-16; 27:12-13; Matt. 24:31).

<sup>99</sup> The reader is urged to consider the prayer of Daniel 9 (ca. 539 B. C.) and how Daniel was passionately confessing the covenant rebellion of the nation, i.e., their rebellion against the Law of Moses and how the curses of the Law had now come upon them.

<sup>100</sup> Charles L. Feinberg, “God’s Message to Man Through the Prophets II: The Prophetic Word and Israel,” *Grace Theological Journal* 5:2 (Spring 1964): 14.

promises are guaranteed by the very character of Yahweh who has sworn these things to the nation Israel (cf. Rom. 11:29). For this reason, there is great error in saying that God has cast aside the nation of Israel (cf. Rom. 11:1-2) and will not restore them as promised.

Nevertheless, despite all these promises, from roughly the third century onward (about 150 years +- after the fall and dispersion of Israel) the use of allegorical hermeneutics, especially as originating from the area of Alexandria, began to have an increasingly prominent place in Christian theology. Examples would include people like (1) Origen, who denied any future national conversion of Israel, (2) Augustine, whose writings really helped solidify the idea that these promises are fulfilled in the church, (3) the Reformer Martin Luther, who said in effect that the Jews are the devil's children and impossible to convert, and (4) other Reformation teachers who say that national Israel will not see a restoration and that those patriarchal promises are being fulfilled now in the church.<sup>101</sup> Dogmatic theological assertions like these are only as valid as the biblical exegesis that one can provide to sustain the theological claim. Sadly, theologians of all stripes who deny God's promise to the Jews (e.g., Amillennial, Postmillennial, Preterists, etc.) do so in opposition to the plain promises of God. The importance of this issue should not be marginalized. Charles Feinberg asks the question, "Is there a future for the nation Israel? On this pivotal question all systems of prophecy divide. There is probably no more comprehensive theme in all prophecy than this."<sup>102</sup> Feinberg is right: the future

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<sup>101</sup> John Walvoord, "Eschatological Problems VIII: Israel's Blindness," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 102:407 (July 1945): 281-282.

<sup>102</sup> Feinberg, "God's Message to Man Through the Prophets II: The Prophetic Word and Israel," 10.

of Israel is a massive topic in biblical prophecy. It is fascinating to see, though, the way that theological opinions that deny this future restoration have formed over different periods of time to eventually become entrenched, dogmatic positions.

Vangemeren provides an outstanding discussion on this issue, showing how it is that “ambivalence” on eschatological issues among the early Reformers (e.g., in Calvin) eventually turned into dogmatism in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, a dogmatism that denies a literal restoration for national Israel.<sup>103</sup> That is, says Vangemeren, “there is no clearly defined position on Israel in Calvin’s writings.” This was in part due to the fact that there were no Jews in Geneva in Calvin’s time. Therefore, early Reformed confessions were “silent on the future of the Jews.”<sup>104</sup> Consequently, even though the Reformers had already inherited a jaded (essentially Roman Catholic) view of Israel, some of them who sought truth from the Bible actually saw that the Scriptures promised a future conversion and restoration for the nation of Israel.<sup>105</sup> Vangemeren demonstrates how this lack of

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<sup>103</sup> Willem Vangemeren, “Israel as the Hermeneutical Crux in the Interpretation of Prophecy (II),” *Westminster Theological Journal* 46:2 (Fall 1984): 254. Vangemeren describes it by saying that “a change from ambivalence to univalence first takes place in the nineteenth century. Whereas Calvin’s heirs developed distinctive eschatological views, ambivalence prevailed” (264).

<sup>104</sup> *Ibid.*, 254-255; Feinberg shows how Hegel, “an ardent student of the philosophy of history, said when speaking of the history of Israel, ‘It is a dark, troublesome enigma to me. I am not able to understand it. It does not fit in with any of our categories. It is a riddle to me.’” Feinberg, “God’s Message to Man Through the Prophets II: The Prophetic Word and Israel,” 10. In other words, trying to explain the ongoing existence and perseverance of Israel does not fit into general historical patterns. The reason why Hegel had problems with the nation of Israel is due to disbelief. Likewise, the reason why so many non-dispensational theologians struggle to make sense of eschatology is due to disbelief: they do not believe in the plain sense of the promises of God concerning a future restoration to Israel, and therefore, they are faced with the problem of trying to explain away those passages which promise this restoration.

<sup>105</sup> Vangemeren points (1) to Voetius (1609-1676) who “fervently hoped for the conversion of the Jews (255), (2) to Andres Essenius (1618-1677) who taught that “the conversion of all Israel will benefit the Gentiles (256), (3) to Jacobus Keilman (1633-1695) who “went so far as to teach that the Jews must be restored to Palestine, and that the testimony of the converted Jews will be a light to the Gentiles” (256), and (4) to the 1599 edition of the Geneva Study Bible which stated that the national conversion of Israel had been predicted by the OT prophets and also to the 1560 edition which defines Israel as “the nation of the Jews” (256). Vangemeren’s observations are absolutely critical for pointing out the way that a lack of

systematic clarity eventually turned into dogmatic denials concerning a future for Israel, i.e., how writers like Patrick Fairbairn (1805-1874), Herman Bavnick (1895-1964), and Geerhardus Vos (1862-1949) caused Amillennialism to become the entrenched eschatological position of most Reformed circles, leaving no future for a restoration of national Israel.<sup>106</sup> Vangemeren exposes the hermeneutical errors of Bavnick (as well as the rest who reside in the Amillennial camp) who (1) hold that the language of the Old Testament was a peculiar language which demands a non-literal interpretation, and (2) who hold that one must interpret the Old Testament only through the lens of the New Testament.<sup>107</sup> What Bavnick and others have done is to decide a-priori that the Old Testament has no objective meaning based upon the normal meaning of the text. They have (1) decided a-priori which eschatological position they are going to hold, and (2) they have then gone back on the Old Testament to impose their theological system on the Old Testament text.

This writer rejects these methods as utterly flawed. The proper way to approach the text is to let it speak according to the normal rules of interpretation. Doing so in Zechariah 12-14 reveals that God will bring about a final and perfect restoration for the nation of Israel. Part of this restoration includes a time of repentance that has been foreshadowed by the Old Testament Feast, the Day of Atonement. The Old Testament theologian will recognize that not only has this future restoration been foreshadowed by

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clarity in eschatology in those early Reformers (but driven by a sincere desire to listen to the text) eventually grew into dogmatic assertions in later Reformed writers who firmly denied a future to the nation.

<sup>106</sup> Ibid., 259-261.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid., 261-262 (cited from Herman Bavnick, *Gereformeerde Dogmatiek* [Kampen: J. H. Kok, 1930], 4.635).

the Day of Atonement, but it was explicitly predicted and promised by many prophets, beginning with Moses himself in Deuteronomy (cf. 30:1-10).<sup>108</sup>

The allusion to the Day of Atonement seems to come out especially in Zechariah 12:10ff. Central to the Day of Atonement was the idea of deep grieving over sin—not just on the personal level—but also at the national level. Zechariah 12 brings out this kind of spiritual reality in very vivid terms. Israel’s brokenness is reflected in the most bitter weeping and mourning that she has ever seen. Feinberg makes note of the fact that “in the twelfth chapter, Messiah is seen returning to penitent Israel who look upon Him whom they have pierced, mourning the great tragedy of their national history in rejecting Him.”<sup>109</sup> As Feinberg notes elsewhere, “nothing in Israel’s past history can be interpreted as the fulfillment of this passage” when Israel will at long last experience a “national atonement” to bring about restoration to Yahweh.<sup>110</sup>

Why is it that Israel responds with such repentance? Zechariah explains it as the result of Yahweh pouring out the Spirit of grace and supplication.<sup>111</sup> Barker does well by explaining this as the Holy Spirit who “conveys grace” and “calls forth supplications.”<sup>112</sup> This mighty outpouring of grace will bring corporate Israel (based upon the individual responses of a massive elect remnant) to look upon Yahweh, the One whom they pierced.

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<sup>108</sup> Feinberg, “God’s Message to Man Through the Prophets II: The Prophetic Word and Israel,” 11. Thus, the message of a final, future restoration should never been seen as a doctrine that is new or novel. This is the message of the entire Old Testament in large measure.

<sup>109</sup> Feinberg, “Exegetical Studies in Zechariah, Part 1,” 195.

<sup>110</sup> Feinberg, *The Minor Prophets* (Chicago: Moody, 1990), 332.

<sup>111</sup> Numerous Old Testament texts include the promise of a mighty outpouring of God’s Spirit to bring Israel to repentance and restoration (Isa. 32:15; 43:18-21; 44:3-5; Ezek. 36:25-26; 39:29; Joel 2:28-32; Zech. 12:10; 13:1).

<sup>112</sup> Barker, 683. Unger points to other OT passages (cf. 1 Kings 8:52; 2 Chron. 33:13; Jer. 36:7; 37:20; Dan. 9:20) where “supplications” are offered by the people (216).

House notes that “without question, the person’s death is necessary for Israel’s repentance that leads to the remnant’s emergence.”<sup>113</sup> Without Christ, Israel has no hope.

Lexical studies show that the idea of “look” in 12:10 (*nabat*) need not mean necessarily a physical look, for the expression can refer to either physical vision or mental attention (cf. e.g., Num. 23:21; 1 Sam. 2:32; Isa. 5:12).<sup>114</sup> The message is clear, though: at long last Israel will recognize that the Messiah whom they rejected and had killed is in fact their God-sent King.

In this verse, the idea that the people would look upon a Yahweh who has been pierced was so strong and so offense that it would appear that some scribes changed certain manuscripts to introduce the variant reading “they will look upon *him*” whom they pierced instead of “me” as a reference to Yahweh. The idea of Yahweh being pierced was very hard to accept, and it seems that this textual variant “him” was a Scribe’s effort of smoothing out this theological challenge. Furthermore, this difficulty of trying to interpret messianic prophecy that included not only (1) messianic victory and glory but also (2) rejection and death led some to posit (as seen in the Babylonian Talmud) that there would be two Messiahs. One of these messiah’s would be a son of Joseph who would suffer and die, but the second would be a son of David, the one who would come to rule in victory and glory.<sup>115</sup> In the Day of the Lord the nation will come to recognize that Jesus Christ is the One who fulfills all of these prophecies. The intense grief and mourning seen here (which would be parallel to the grief reflected in Isa.

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<sup>113</sup> House, 392.

<sup>114</sup> Unger, 217.

<sup>115</sup> Barker, 684.



53:1ff.) seems to have a theological foreshadowing in the Day of Atonement that God gave to Israel, the next to the last feast on the yearly calendar, to be followed only by the Feast of Tabernacles.

In summary, Zechariah 12-14 promises a national conversion and restoration to the nation of Israel. Theologians who recognize the doctrines of sovereign grace (i.e., that God freely bestows grace according to His own purpose and choice and that this grace is not contingent upon human merit or worth) should not be surprised that God is going to bring about this future conversion. As a matter of fact, the character and faithfulness of God demand that such a restoration take place. As Vangemeren (one who historically came out of a Reformed background) has pointed out, “An affirmation of the Covenant of Grace is *not* (emphasis original) inconsistent with a belief in the future of Israel.”<sup>116</sup> That is, a proper view of God when combined with “historico-grammatical interpretation of the prophetic word” naturally leads one to believe in a “restoration of the people to a land they knew so well,” a restoration of “the hill country, the vineyards and orchards, the sheep and fields, the cities, the gates” with the result that Jerusalem and Judah are “densely populated and gone forever will be the ages of “mourning and sorrow.”<sup>117</sup> In short, God’s character and promises assure this literal restoration.

It is no coincidence that Zechariah also makes reference to the Feast of Tabernacles, although explicitly in this case as opposed to implicitly in the case of the Day of Atonement. As the Law of Moses indicated, Tabernacles was to be a time of rejoicing for Israel at the end of the harvest period. The Law of Moses (cf. Lev. 23:33-

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<sup>116</sup> Vangemeren, 266.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid., 272.

44) gave detailed instructions on the way that Israel was to yearly celebrate Tabernacles at the end of the harvest period each fall, a feast that included burnt offerings, grain offerings, sacrifices and libations (23:37). Some have objected to the idea that Israel should have a reinstatement of any kind of animal sacrifices in the Millennium, despite the fact that Zechariah 14:16-21 and Ezekiel 40-48 (cf. esp. 45:17-25; 46:2ff., etc.) make explicit declarations that such sacrifices will take place in the messianic kingdom. It is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss the topic in detail as others have in dedicated papers,<sup>118</sup> but this writer commends the plain declarations of the text as being worthy of acceptance.

On the one hand, certain elements of Tabernacles pointed back to the way that Yahweh dwelt in the presence of Israel during the wilderness wanderings (Lev. 23:40-44), but it would also seem that throughout Old Testament history (and during periods of great apostasy) progressive revelation would show that Tabernacles also was pointing ahead in some way to a future day when Yahweh would once again dwell with His people in a restored covenant relationship.<sup>119</sup> Ezekiel spoke very boldly about a restored nation with a descendant of David to rule in peace over a unified nation (34:23-26).<sup>120</sup> He tells them that they will have one King to rule them in righteousness (Ezek. 37:24-25) and that they will enjoy peace and fruitfulness forever (37:26) and that God will make

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<sup>118</sup> Bob Bolender, "Memorials And Shadows: Animal Sacrifices Of The Millennium," *Chafer Theological Seminary Journal* 8:2 (April 2002): 26-40. Bolender provides a reasonable explanation of the nature and purpose of the Old Testament and Millennial sacrifices.

<sup>119</sup> Just as the end of the harvest meant rest and joy in the presence of Yahweh, Israel's future restoration will be characterized by rest and joy in the presence of Yahweh.

<sup>120</sup> Bock is correct in noting that the Davidic hope that began in 2 Samuel 7 continued on throughout the Old Testament with greater and greater promises (Pss. 2; 16; 89; 110; 118; 132; Isa. 91; 55; Jer. 23; 30; 33; Ezek. 34-37; Dan. 2; 7; 9; Hos. 3; Amos 9; Zech. 12-14). Darrell Bock, "Current Messianic Activity and OT David Promises: Dispensationalism, Hermeneutics, and NT Fulfillment," *Trinity Journal* 15:1 (Spring 1994): 67-68.

His dwelling place among them and that they will be His people and that He will be their God (37:26-27). Covenant restoration will at long last come to the nation of Israel, for God has spoken it. Zechariah makes explicit mention of how Tabernacles will be part of worship (for all mankind) under the New Covenant in the Messianic kingdom. Men from all nations (not only Jews) will come to worship Yahweh in Jerusalem at the Feast of Tabernacles (Zech. 14:16-21).

It would also seem, as one final eschatological point, that this millennial fellowship with Yahweh also points ahead even further to the final realization of all of God's promises in an everlasting age when the Lord will merge the millennial kingdom into an kingdom of eternal bliss in the New Heavens and New Earth. Revelation 7:15-17 speaks of how (in heaven) the Lamb "shall spread His tabernacle over them" and also how His presence will shelter them from all harm. Furthermore, Revelation 21:3-4 speaks of the glorious reality of a New Heavens and a New Earth when God will at long last and in a final way make His "tabernacle" among men when they will be His people and when He will be their God. It would appear that the Feast of Tabernacles has been pointing ahead to this final day of restoration for mankind.<sup>121</sup>

#### Curse Removal and Worship Restoration

Curse began to impact man from the moment man chose to rebel against His Creator (Gen. 3:7ff.). One of the immediate results of curse was banishment from the presence of God (Gen. 3:24). God's promise of restoration includes the promise that His people will live in Jerusalem and there will be no more curse (14:11) and, as noted above,

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<sup>121</sup> The reader can also see hints of this in John's description of Christ taking on flesh to "dwell among us" (John 1:14) as well as Paul's reference to God dwelling among His church in 2 Corinthians 6:16-18.

God will dwell in the presence of His people. Jerusalem, the city whose name signifies peace, will at long last dwell in the peace that God has desired for her, for the Prince of Peace will be King in her midst.<sup>122</sup> Indeed, the Tribulation Period will purge out many who die in disbelief (13:8-9; cf. Ezek. 20:38-39), but through it all God will bring forth a remnant for Himself who has been “purified through their suffering” with the result that they “worship the Lord within the parameters of covenant lifestyle.”<sup>123</sup>

In that day, all mankind (Jew and Gentile) will worship Yahweh in His presence in holiness and righteousness, and never again will curse destroy the relationship between Yahweh and His people (14:16-21). This is not to say that the messianic, millennial kingdom will be totally purged from sin and curse, for both Testaments make it clear that as blissful as the Millennium will be, it will not include the perfect and final removal of curse quite yet (as will be seen in the New Heavens and New Earth of Revelation 21-22).<sup>124</sup>

Nevertheless, in the Millennium earthly existence will be restored closer to the bliss of the Garden of Eden than man has ever seen since his expulsion from that garden. Zechariah alludes to this near Edenic condition by describing the fact that “living waters will flow out of Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea [the Dead Sea] and the other half toward the western sea [the Mediterranean]; it will be in summer as well as in winter” (14:8). Ezekiel describes this same phenomenon in chapter 47 of his prophecy

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<sup>122</sup> Hartman, 137.

<sup>123</sup> Ger, 105.

<sup>124</sup> Jeffrey Townsend, “Is the Present Age the Millennium?” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 140:559 (July 1983): 209. Townsend points to certain kingdom passages (e.g., Isa. 65:17-25; Zech. 14:16-21) which indicate that despite the rule of Christ on earth, there still be some trace of sin and curse, although radically diminished from the present state of existence. It will not be until the Millennium merges into the eternal kingdom in a New Heavens and Earth that sin and curse is removed in total.

and Joel 3:18 also speaks about this stream that will flow out from the Jerusalem temple in the messianic kingdom. Ezekiel says that this stream of living waters will bring life to everything it touches, including life to the Dead Sea itself (47:8-12). It would appear that the physical passage the river needs to reach each sea may get created by the great earthquake described in Zechariah 14:4-5. At the present time it is a physical impossibility for water to flow from Mt. Zion to the Dead Sea or the Mediterranean Sea. These prophecies are not being fulfilled at the present time. Furthermore, these prophecies cannot be referring to some condition of the New Heavens and the New Earth, for in the recreated universe there will neither be any sea (Rev. 21:1) nor any Jerusalem temple (Rev. 21:22), both of which are present in these Old Testament prophecies.

What Zechariah is showing, though, is that here on this earth during the messianic kingdom, this earth will experience a huge restoration, bringing it back to a near Edenic condition. Just as waters flowed at one time from Yahweh's own holy paradise, the Garden of Eden (Gen. 2:10-14), so too, once again, waters will flow from Yahweh's holy place, His temple in Jerusalem.

#### *Synthesis of a Biblical Theology in Zechariah 12-14*

Having given a focused look at the individual terms and theological motifs that pervade Zechariah 12-14, this section will seek to produce a short synthesis of the message contained therein. This synthesis will include an explanation of God's plan with reference Israel, as well as Gods' plan with reference to the Gentiles.

#### God's Plan is for a Restored Israel

As seen, God's plan for Israel includes a host of future events that all work together for the final restoration and ultimate good of the nation. First of all, one must

notice that the Day of the Lord will include a massive invasion by numerous, hostile nations (Zech. 12:1-3; 13:7-8; 14:1-2; cf. Ezek. 38-39; Dan. 9:27; 11:36ff.; Joel 3:9-17). In this invasion, Jerusalem will be invaded by enemy powers who will brutally ravage and pillage among the people and the city. Theologically speaking, one might see this as a kind of culmination to Satan's enmity against God's people that began with the entrance of sin and curse (cf. Gen. 3:15). God's promise, though, is that the one who attacks His chosen people will himself face severe punishment (Gen. 12:1-3; Ps. 2). This day of war and conflict is about to come upon the earth and it will be a time such as no man has ever seen when the nations of the earth take action to destroy Israel (cf. Rev. 12:4, 13). Jesus described this time as "a great tribulation such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall be" (Matt. 24:21).

Despite the initial successes of these enemy powers, the Lord will defend His city and His people against a total defeat. Zechariah says that God will defend His people and strike down the enemy armies by two means. One of the way God comes against these enemies is by strengthening His people so that they fight very fiercely against the enemy invaders (Zech. 12:5-9; 14:14). Secondly, the Bible also indicates a direct intervention by the Lord Himself to bring down the enemy powers (Zech. 12:3-9; 14:3, 6-7, 12-15; cf. Isa. 63:1-6, 8-9; Ezek. 38-39; Mic. 2:12-13; Rev. 14:14-20; 19:11-21). This intervention seems to also include a supernatural confusion that God sends upon the enemy armies (Zech. 12:4; 14:13) but also a direct physical intervention by the Messiah, providing a path of escape for His people when He comes to wage war against the enemy (Zech. 14:3-5). It would also appear that God brings about certain very severe and unusual judgments such as have never before been seen—perhaps coming by direct, supernatural

cause or perhaps by some form of modern, military means (e.g., 14:12: human flesh rotting while men are standing on their feet). Yahweh is a Man of War who will not let wickedness prosper forever, especially when this wickedness is bent on the destruction of His people (Zech. 14:3-4; cf. Exod. 14:14; 15:3; 26:20-21; Mic. 2:12-13; Zeph. 3:14-17; Rev. 19:14-16).

The end result is that the enemy powers will be utterly crushed and that all of the wealth that they had tried to plunder (and also all that belonged to the enemy powers already) will come under the possession of Israel herself (Zech. 14:14-15), and Israel will at long last be able to dwell in security (14:11).

During this final phase of the seven-year tribulation (i.e., the last three and a half years), God will be at work in a marvelous way to bring about repentance and spiritual restoration to His chosen nation. This repentance happens when Israel recognizes the Jesus of Nazareth is their Messiah, the One whom God sent for their salvation even though they hated Him, despised Him, rejected Him, and had Him put to death (Zech. 12:10; cf. Isa. 42:6-7; 49:5-7; 52:13-53:12).

The gracious outpouring of God's Spirit upon God's elect remnant within that nation will bring the people to repentance so that they turn to God in sincere prayer, seeking His mercy and forgiveness (Zech. 12:10-14; cf. Isa. 32:15ff.; 43:18-21; 44:3-5; Ezek. 36:25-26; 39:29; Joel 2:28-32). This purification will produce a spiritual cleansing from every kind of defilement, as suggested by the reference to both (1) the broader expression "sin," as well as (2) the more narrow and repulsive term "impurity" (Zech. 13:1). In that day, Israel will obtain a total cleansing from all sin (Zech. 3:1ff.; cf. Dan. 9:25). The restoration of Israel will also include a removal of demonic influences so that

false prophets and false doctrines will never again lead the nation into rebellion and idolatry (Zech. 13:2-6; cf. Isa. 24:21-23; Rev. 20:1ff.). God's work of restoration to a covenant relationship (Zech. 8:1-23; 13:9; cf. Isa. 11:11-16; 27:12-13; Jer. 31:31-34; Hos. 2:14-23; 3:5) will result in a massive conversion of one third of the Jews (the remnant; cf. Isa. 1:9; 6:13; 7:3; 10:20-21; 37:4, 31-32; 41:17; 46:3; 49:6; 59:20-22; Jer. 42:15, 19; 44:12-14; Hos. 14:4-7; Mic. 2:12; 4:7; 5:3, 7; 7:18) who, in their restored relationship, call upon Yahweh and say "The Lord is my God" (13:9; cf. Deut. 10:12-16; 30:6; Jer. 3:13; 4:4; Ezek. 36:25-26; Hos. 2:14ff.). Because the sins of Israel will no longer be separating them from Him (Zech. 1:15-17; cf. Isa. 27:12-13; 59:1-2; Jer. 30:7; 31:9, 31; 50:4-5; 51; Dan. 12:7; Hos. 3:5; Joel 2:32; Obad. 17; Mal. 3:1-5; 4:1-6), God tells them that when they call upon Him, He will answer them and tell them "They are my people" (13:9).

Finally, Israel will dwell in peace and safety in the blessings of the fruitful kingdom that Yahweh has promised (Zech. 6:9-15; 14:9, 11; cf. Isa. 2:1ff.; 4:1ff.; 9:6-7; 25:6-12; 65:17ff.; 66:20-24; Ezek. 40-48; Dan. 12:13; Joel 3:18-21; Amos 9:11-15) for the Lord will be in her midst (Zech. 2:5, 10; 8:3; cf. Ezek. 48:35), promising them that He will never again depart from them (cf. Ezek. 43:4-5; 44:1-2). The Lord's restoration also means that the wealth of the world will become the wealth of His King (Zech. 2:8; 14:14; cf. Ps. 72:10-11; Isa. 23:18; 24:14; 60:5ff.; 61:7; 62:1-5; Dan. 7:14; Mic. 4:13; Zeph. 3:19-20; Hag. 2:7-9).<sup>125</sup> As Zechariah predicts in these closing verses, in that day Israel, God's chosen nation, will serve and worship the Lord in holiness and righteousness in the

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<sup>125</sup> Daniel says that the King will share this kingdom with all who belong to Him by faith (Dan. 7:27).



way that God has always desired (Zech. 14:16-21). This promise is certain, for it is something that the Lord has sworn He will accomplish and fulfill.<sup>126</sup>

#### God's Plan is for Restored Gentiles

Despite the prominence and attention that the Old Testament places upon a restored Israel, theologians should not fail to see that God's plan includes the promise of blessings for all the nations of the world. Zechariah 14:16-21 makes the explicit declaration that among those who worship the Lord, there will be an elect remnant from "all the nations" who had come against Israel to destroy her. In other words, God's destruction against enemy nations that sought Israel's destruction does not mean that there will not be any among those nations who will not come to faith in the Messiah. As this text indicates, there will be a significant number from all nations who do come to Christ in that day.<sup>127</sup> The fact is that God brings salvation to a remnant of believers from all over the world.<sup>128</sup> This redeemed remnant from all the nations of the world (Jew and Gentile) will worship the Lord, with Jerusalem itself being the center of world worship

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<sup>126</sup> Isaiah calls this restored covenant relationship "an everlasting covenant" (55:3) which "will not be cut off" (55:13), an "everlasting covenant" (61:8). Jeremiah (31:31-34) says that this New Covenant can never be broken, for it is grounded in the faithful promises of Yahweh, an "everlasting covenant" (32:40) from which the Lord will never turn away and from which they themselves will never turn away. Hosea describes it by saying that Yahweh will betroth Israel to Himself forever, a betrothal in righteousness and justice, in lovingkindness, and compassion with the result that Israel will at long last "know the Lord" (2:19-20). This is the promise which Yahweh has made to Israel for a perfect and permanent covenant restoration.

<sup>127</sup> Revelation 5:9 describes heaven as including redeemed men "from every tribe and tongue and people and nation" and Revelation 7:9-17 describes those getting saved yet killed during the Great Tribulation as including a great multitude "from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues."

<sup>128</sup> God has the promise of salvation for a remnant from nations like Egypt (Isa. 19:21-25), Iraq (Ps. 87:4), Iran (Jer. 49:39), Ethiopia, Sudan, and Eritrea (Ps. 68:31), Jordan (Jer. 48:7), Lebanon and Palestine (Ps. 87:4), Saudi Arabia (Isa. 42:11; 60:7), and Yemen (Isa. 60:6). George King, "Four Things You Should Know About Islam and Muslims," Unpublished Conference Notes from the Front Range Bible Institute "Christ in a World of Religions" conference (Colorado Springs, November 17, 2007).

(Zech. 2:11; 8:20-23; 14:16; cf. Isa. 2:1ff.; 4:1ff.; 9:7; 19:19-25; 66:23; Amos 9:12; Jonah 4:11; Mic. 4:1ff.; 5:3ff., et al.).

Initial entrance into the messianic kingdom will include only those who have trusted in the Messiah (Isa. 35:8-10), but this will not preclude the fact (as various texts suggest) that among the later descendants of these kingdom saints, there will some who do not exercise saving faith in the Messiah, even to the point of disobedience and rebellion as Zechariah suggests (14:18-19).<sup>129</sup> Through this all, the reader is reminded of the horrible and perverting power of sin. Even a paradisiacal earth and the very presence of Christ will not be enough to prevent rebellion by those who are steadfast in rejecting God's grace (cf. Rev. 20:7-10).

## CHAPTER 4

### PROCLAMATION AND APPLICATION ISSUES

As one final exercise, this paper will present seven ideas on how the exegetical and theological observations from Zechariah 12-14 can be taught and applied in the church today.

#### *Trusting in Promises of Protection*

The first idea for proclamation and application that one can take from Zechariah 12-14 is the idea that God's people should trust the Lord when He makes a promise. Not

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<sup>129</sup> Cf. Rev. 20:7-10 for a description of one final rebellion of unsaved man at the end of the millennial kingdom when Satan is released and allowed one final chance to deceive.

every promise spoken in the Bible is spoken directly to the church today, but the fact that God keeps every promise that He does make should be a strong incentive for men and women to trust God in what has actually been promised to them. God's promise to restore Israel is certain and true. He will do it. Because God's promise of salvation is always certain and true, men and women today can be certain that God will complete the good work which He has begun in their lives, regardless of how many hardships one must endure to see that final salvation (Rom. 8:28; Phil. 1:6).

### *Repenting Over Personal Sin*

According to the Bible, the solution for Israel's sin lies in repentance. The prophet Jeremiah called out to the rebellious nation saying, "'Return faithless Israel,' declares the Lord; 'I will not look upon you in anger. For I am gracious,' declares the Lord; 'I will not be angry forever, only acknowledge your iniquity'" (Jer. 3:12-13). The answer for Israel's sin has always been in repentance. This same principle applies equally to the church. Man's real problem lies in sin. God's promise to all men is that forgiveness and cleansing will come for the one who confesses sin and ask forgiveness (1 John 1:9; 2:1-2).

### *Rejoicing Over the Provision of Grace*

Just as Israel's restoration is based on God's free grace, so it is for all of God's saints. No one has ever had anything good except that which has come as a gracious gift from God. Many biblical portraits of God's saints (e.g., Zech. 12:10-14; Rev. 5:13) serve as fine examples of the kind of the joyful people that men and women should seek to be in the church—saints who are ever rejoicing in the overflowing provisions of God's

saving grace. Israel's gratitude for grace is thus an example for the church to emulate today. Zechariah's message is one for the church to teach and apply.

### *Guarding Against the Dangers of False Prophecy*

Zechariah makes the explicit promise that demonically inspired false teaching will be purged from earth during the messianic kingdom. It would behoove the church to consider the seriousness of this matter and do what it can to protect God's people from the demonic doctrines that infect the church today (cf. 2 Pet. 2:1ff.). In 2 Timothy Paul gives repeated admonitions to both preach the truth and to guard against the lies of false teaching. The church today needs to take seriously the task of protecting the flock. The teachings of Zechariah remind the church just how serious these matters really are, especially with the great numbers of people today who are claiming that they giving prophetic messages from God.

### *Persevering in the Process of Purification*

Zechariah gives a very vivid description of God's work to bring sinners to holiness (Zech. 13:8-9). By application, God's people today should not fear the gracious work of God to produce holiness, even if this work involves a fiery refining process. The writer of Hebrews (12:1-13) reminds the church that God's work to produce holiness often involves chastisement. God's people today need to remember the importance of persevering in the process of sanctification. Zechariah can help the Bible student appreciate God's work to produce holiness in the lives of His people.

### *Interceding for the Salvation of Lost Souls*

The horrors of the Tribulation Period (Zech. 12-16) and the horrors of the Lake of Fire should become strong incentives for the church to be very zealous in lovingly preaching the gospel and praying for the salvation of lost souls (Rom. 9:1ff.; 10:11ff.). God does not desire the death of the wicked (Ezek. 18:23, 30-32). Rather He wants sinners to turn to Him so that they might obtain forgiveness (Matt. 23:37; 2 Pet. 3:9). Because of God's moral desire for men to be saved, the church should become all the more zealous in striving for the salvation of the lost. Zechariah 12-14 should serve as a motivator to the church in being zealous for evangelism.

### *Hoping in an Imminent Restoration*

One final point of proclamation/application lies in the idea that God wants His people to live with a zealous hope for the future. As Zechariah shows, the Lord remembers His people; He will not forget them! This truth applies to the nation of Israel, but it also applies to all of God's people. God's promise to the church is that even though the church at this moment does not see the promised resurrection glory, the very fact that He has promised it means that God's people can eagerly wait for it with perseverance (Rom. 8:25). The Lord is coming to bring wrath to a sinful world, but this also means deliverance for God's church—a supreme reason for hope and comfort (1 Thess. 1:10; 4:18; 5:9). As Zechariah shows, the Lord will not forget His promises. Therefore, God's saints today can live in hope of the imminent return of Christ who will bring a final restoration of all things.

## CHAPTER 5

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

As this paper has shown, the prophet Zechariah has announced ahead of time God's plan for this world. Many of these promises are as sweet as honey for they consist in the promise of restoration and forgiveness of sin. At the same time, these promises are also very, very bitter, for they reveal the horrors of divine retribution. The Apostle John experienced this bitter-sweet idea as God gave him the contents of the Apocalypse (Rev.

10:9-11). On the one hand, God's people rejoice with joy inexpressible for the fact that God is going to judge evil and take it away once and for all (Rev. 18:20; 19:1-6). On the other hand, this message is indeed very sober and very disheartening, for this judgment will also mean the condemnation of many human souls.

The never-ending task of the church today is to "make disciples" of all the nations. This means that God's people can take the message of Zechariah and use it for all that God has intended: comfort for those who believe and need comfort, and warning and admonition for those who have not yet come to recognize the pierced Messiah. This writer urges the readers of this paper to take the message of Zechariah and proclaim it until the day Christ returns in glory or God takes them home.

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- Walden, J. W. "The Kingdom of God—Its Millennial Dispensation." *Bibliotheca Sacra* 103:409 (January 1946): 39-49. This article provides a few helpful observations about the future repentance and restoration of the nation of Israel.
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