

Zechariah 1:16-2:13

## The Future Hope of Jerusalem

In Zechariah's day, a small remnant of Jews had recently returned to the land of Israel after being held in captivity for seventy years in Babylon.

They returned to find their cities, villages and farms in ruin after having been destroyed by the Babylonians seventy years earlier.

The small group of returned Jewish exiles were very discouraged and overwhelmed by the extent of the devastation.

The Lord gave these messages to the prophet Zechariah to encourage the people of Israel to put their hope in the Lord, who would rebuild them into a greater nation than ever before.

But these promises had two-stages to their fulfilment. The city would be restored in the near future, but the greatness of the nation would not be accomplished until the coming of the Messiah who would rule as King.

The Messiah came to Israel, but most of the people lacked Biblical discernment, therefore they were deceived by the enemy and rejected Jesus, their Messiah, and they crucified Him.

As a result, God paused His dealing with Israel; He is disciplining Israel with a time out; He has paused His plans for building a world-wide Kingdom that would be based out of Israel, and instead began building the church—a non-political, group of followers, without a national identity, who are scattered among all the nations, living as missionaries, to prepare the people of the world for the coming Messiah.

Let's continue where we left off last week. The Lord was giving the prophet Zechariah visions in the night, which were prophetic messages revealing glimpses of God's plans for the nation of Israel.

God also sent an angel to help explain to Zechariah the meaning of what he was seeing in these visions.

As we read these verses, recognize that the primary focus of these prophecies is on God's **future** plans for Jerusalem and for the Jews of Israel.

***Zechariah 1:14-16, "Then the angel said to me, "Shout this message for all to hear: 'This is what the LORD of Heaven's Armies says: My love for Jerusalem and Mount Zion is passionate and strong.<sup>15</sup> But I am very angry with the other nations that are now enjoying peace and security. I was only a little angry with my people [Israel], but the nations inflicted***

*harm on them far beyond my intentions. <sup>16</sup> ‘Therefore thus says the LORD: “I am returning to Jerusalem with mercy; My house shall be built in it,” says the LORD of hosts, “and a surveyor’s line shall be stretched out over Jerusalem.”’*

Here are 3 promises that the LORD makes concerning the city of Jerusalem, promises that would be fulfilled literally, very shortly after Zechariah gave this prophecy:

- 1) After 70 years of judgment against the city, God would once again return His blessing and protective care to Jerusalem.
- 2) God’s house—His temple will be rebuilt in Jerusalem. Zerubbabel accomplished this in just a few years after this prophecy was given.
- 3) A surveyor’s line shall be stretched out over Jerusalem, meaning that the streets and boundaries of Jerusalem would be restored. This was accomplished a few years later in the days of Nehemiah, who began by rebuilding the walls of the city.

Just as these first three prophecies were fulfilled literally and exactly as given, so too will the next three be literally fulfilled.

***Zechariah 1:17, “Again proclaim, saying, ‘Thus says the LORD of hosts: “My cities shall again spread out through prosperity [when before was this the case? Only in Solomon’s time]; the LORD will again comfort Zion, and will again choose Jerusalem.”’”***

These three prophecies have not yet been fulfilled, but they await the coming of the Messiah, who will bring this to pass.

- 1) The cities were rebuilt, but they have never grown expansive through prosperity. They will when Jesus returns.
- 2) Since Zechariah’s time, Israel has not yet experienced living in peaceful comfort. They have always lived under the oppression and threat of occupying nations. But they will live comfortably at peace with God when Jesus returns.
- 3) The Lord has not yet established His throne and His home in Jerusalem—not until Jesus returns.

***Zechariah 1:18-19, “Then I raised my eyes and looked, and there were four horns. <sup>19</sup> And I said to the angel who talked with me, “What are these?” So he answered me, “These are the horns that have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem.”***

In the Bible, the horns of animals are always symbols of power and pride of strength, and they often represent the military strength of a nation. (*David Baron, p. 45*)

These four horns in Zechariah are connected to Daniel's prophecies of four great world-powers, represented by the image of Gold, Silver, Bronze and Iron, in Daniel chapter two, and also the four great beasts in Daniel chapter seven.

By studying Daniel's prophecies, which were given about 35 years before Zechariah, we discover that these four horns represent the Babylonian Empire, the Medo-Persian Empire, the Greek Empire and the Roman Empire.

In history, each of these empires, took their turn in ruling over, afflicting and scattering the Jewish people.

***Zechariah 1:20-21, "Then the LORD showed me four craftsmen. <sup>21</sup> And I said, "What are these coming to do?" So he said, "These are the horns [powerful empires] that scattered Judah, so that no one could lift up his head; but the craftsmen are coming to terrify them, to cast out the horns of the nations that lifted up their horn against the land of Judah to scatter it."***

The horns of a bull are very strong, and not easy to remove.

If a farmer wanted to remove the horns of his bull, so that it would not be able to use them to gore people, or other animals, he would hire a craftsman to come with his tools and cut off the horns.

In verses 20 and 21, the Lord revealed to Zechariah in his night vision that there would rise up four world powers who would oppose and scatter the people of Judah, but for each kingdom that afflicted Israel, God would raise up a counteracting kingdom (a craftsman) to cut off the horn, or to destroy the power of the Empire that opposed Israel.

Daniel's prophecy, and history, show that God raised up the Medo-Persians to destroy the Babylonians.

Then God raised up the Greeks to destroy the Medo-Persians.

Then God raised up the Romans to destroy the Greeks.

But then, during the rule of the Romans, Jews rejected their Messiah, Jesus was crucified, and the Romans turned against the Jews, and in AD 70 they destroyed Jerusalem and destroyed their temple and drove the Jews out of Israel, scattering them all across the Roman Empire.

But God paused His plans for Israel, and no fourth craftsman was raised up to liberate Israel from Rome.

According to Daniel's prophecies, when God resumes working out His plans for Israel, the Roman Empire is going to be revived in some way under the Antichrist, and Rome will re-establish its authority over Israel.

The Roman Empire was never overthrown by another empire, the Roman Empire just kind of slowly died out.

However, there is a sense in which the smoldering embers of the Roman Empire are still at work in their opposition of the Jewish people.

For example, the Roman Catholic Church, is one of the remaining embers of the Empire, and its anti-Semitic influence on the global political scene is rapidly being fanned back into flame.

But Zechariah prophesied that there would come a fourth craftsman to destroy the power of the fourth horn. And both Daniel, and later on, Zechariah, make it clear that the Messiah (Jesus Christ) will be that fourth craftsman, who will put to an end that fourth and final Roman Kingdom that has opposed and scattered Israel.

Think about the centuries of time that have passed during which the small remnant of the tiny nation of Israel have been scattered, homeless across the globe.

The Jews should have quickly been swallowed up and absorbed by the much larger nations that they were scattered among, and ceased to exist as an identifiable group of people.

Over the last 2,000 years that the Jewish people have been scattered around the world, every imaginable opposition, persecution and hatred has been poured out against any who would identify themselves as Jewish.

This pressure to abandon their identity should have quickly erased all evidence of the Jews.

Roman Catholicism tried for centuries to wipe out the Jewish people.

The communists of Russia, and the Soviet Union tried to wipe out the Jews.

Hitler's Nazis tried to wipe out the Jews.

Muslim radicals continue to try to wipe out the Jews.

Why has there always been so much anti-Semitism in the world?

It is because Satan knows that God has promised to rule the world through the Jewish people, and Satan is doing all he can to prevent that from happening—because Satan wants to rule the world.

But one day a Jew named Jesus Christ, will be the undisputed ruler of the world.

But in spite of all this persecution, the Jewish people have not disappeared, they live on, and they are distinctly identifiable.

Not only that, but now Israel has been reborn as a nation, and there are more Jews in the world today than there have ever been at any previous time in the world's history.

***Jeremiah 30:11***, "For I am with you," says the Lord, "to save you; though I make a full end of all nations where I have scattered you, yet I will not make a complete end of you..."

***Zechariah 2:1***, "Then I raised my eyes and looked, and behold, a man with a measuring line in his hand. <sup>2</sup> So I said, "Where are you going" And he said to me, "To measure Jerusalem, to see what is its width and what is its length."

This measuring line is the surveyors line mentioned in 1:16.

Jerusalem was about to be surveyed to mark out the boundaries for its reconstruction.

The man with a measuring line is believed to be the same Angel of the LORD that we saw riding the red horse in the first vision in chapter one. The Angel of the LORD is an Old Testament appearance of Christ.

The Lord is the builder, ***Psalms 127:1***, "Unless the LORD builds the house, they labor in vain who build it..."

We will be with our Lord Jesus Christ and participating in this construction of Jerusalem, Judea and the nations of the world during the Millennial Kingdom.

Our future will not be a boring time of sitting around on clouds playing harps, but this present life is but a dim shadow of the greater reality that lies ahead in our future.

***Zechariah 2:3–4***, "And there was the angel who talked with me, going out; and another angel was coming out to meet him, <sup>4</sup>who said to him, "Run, speak to this young man, saying: 'Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls, because of the multitude of men and livestock in it.'"

The city of Jerusalem was going to be rebuilt and repopulated.

The Lord gave Zechariah several promises concerning Jerusalem:

First of all, Jerusalem would be greatly enlarged, and it would be home to a great multitude of people and livestock—it will be greater than it has ever been before.

The specific details of this prophecy refer to the future Millennial Kingdom, for even in Jesus' time, there were walls around the city of Jerusalem.

The lack of protective walls implies that the people are living in peace and safety.

Jerusalem today is without walls, but it isn't living in peace and safety. They have modern fortifications known as, "The Iron Dome."

Jerusalem today doesn't yet fulfill the description of verse five:

***Zechariah 2:5, "For I,' says the Lord, 'will be a wall of fire all around her, and I will be the glory in her midst.'"***

When Christ returns to rule in Jerusalem, the city will need no walls for the Lord Himself will be her protection.

***"...and I will be the glory in her midst."*** This refers to the manifest presence of the Lord, the Shekinah glory that once filled the Tabernacle and Temple. It would once again dwell in the city of Jerusalem.

That glory had departed prior to the Babylonian destruction of the first temple in Ezek. 11:22-23, and has not returned since.

Many wrongly believe that when the Jews crucified their Messiah that God rejected them as His chosen people and instead, all of the promises to the Jews were transferred to the church.

But look at what God says in the New Testament, through Paul in ***Romans 15:8***, *"Now I say that Jesus Christ has become a servant to the [Jews] for the truth of God, to confirm the promises made to the fathers,"*

Jesus Christ came not to cancel the promises God made to Israel, or transfer them to the church, but to confirm the promises. And He confirmed them with the shedding of His own blood.

Now because of the new covenant, all the promises of the Old Testament are doubly certain. (David Baron, p. 67) The Lord is still zealous for Jerusalem and for Israel with great zeal.

***Zechariah 2:6-7, "'Up, up! Flee from the land of the north," says the Lord; "for I have spread you abroad like the four winds of heaven," says the Lord. <sup>7</sup>"Up, Zion! Escape, you who dwell with the daughter of Babylon.'"***

Most Jews, were still living in Babylon at the time Zechariah was given this prophecy. They are instructed return to Israel.

However, during the Assyrian and Babylonian captivity the Jews were not scattered to the four winds of heaven, this only happened during the dispersion following the Roman destruction of the Jews in AD 70.

Therefore, this dual prophecy is also speaking of a yet future call for the Jews to return to Israel from all the nations of the world as the Lord will bring fierce judgment on the nations of the world.

Today we see more and more Jews every year returning from every nation on earth to the land of Israel.

***Zechariah 2:8–9, "For thus says the Lord of hosts: "He sent Me after glory, to the nations which plunder you; for he who touches you touches the apple of His eye. <sup>9</sup>For surely I will shake My hand against them, and they shall become spoil for their servants. Then you will know that the Lord of hosts has sent Me."***

Look closely at verse 8. Who is sending who? Here the **Lord** of hosts, says that “the **Lord** sent Me...” God is sent by God!

If our God is One, how can God send God?

Look at what Jesus said, **Luke 4:18**, “*The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, Because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed;*”

This is the Lord speaking. He is known in the New Testament as Jesus Christ.

And notice the reason given in verse 8 for why the Lord is going to oppose and inflict harm on the nations—because they have plundered Israel. (c.f., Ezek. 38-39)

And the next statement is very sobering — “*for he who touches you [referring to Israel] touches the apple of His [God’s] eye.*”

Some translations of verse 8 say, “*...Anyone who harms you harms My most precious possession.*” (NLT)

The eye is one of the most valuable parts of our body. We would rather lose almost any other ability than lose our ability to see.

God says, “He who touches Israel pokes the pupil of God’s eye.” And they will get an unwelcome response.

***Zechariah 2:9-11, "For surely I will shake My hand against them, [NLT, I will raise my fist to crush them] and they shall become spoil for their servants. Then you [Jews] will know that the Lord of hosts has sent Me [Jesus Christ—referring to His second coming, because they didn’t recognize Him as their Messiah the first time He came]."***

<sup>10</sup> “*Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion [people of Israel]! For behold, I [Jesus Christ] am coming and I will dwell in your midst,*” says the Lord. <sup>11</sup>“*Many nations [non-Jews] shall be joined to the Lord in that day, and they shall become My people [followers of Christ along with Israel]. And I will dwell in your [Israel’s] midst. Then you will know that the Lord of hosts has sent Me to you.*”

God's plan, from the beginning, was that He would bring great blessing to the world through the Jewish nation of Israel. His promise to Abraham was that "In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed..." (Gen. 22:18)

The book of Romans tells us that the result of Israel's rejection of their Messiah is that God began working through the church to bring salvation to the world.

And then Paul asks this question in **Romans 11:15**, For if the result of Israel being cast away [given a time-out] is the reconciling of the world, how much greater will be the blessing that comes to the world when Israel is restored to their intended place of being God's source of blessing? It will be what life was meant to be like.

When Israel recognizes and believes Jesus, their Messiah, then as a result of their faith, Zechariah reveals that many nations shall be joined to the Lord—many entire nations will come to faith in Jesus Christ.

But even then in that Millennial Kingdom when many entire nations are walking in faith in Jesus Christ, the nation of Israel will still have a special position in God's sight.

***Zechariah 2:12, "And the Lord will take possession of Judah as His inheritance in the Holy Land, and will again choose Jerusalem."***

The Lord Jesus will live in Jerusalem in the land of Judah which is in the center of the earth.

***Zechariah 2:13, "Be silent, all flesh, before the Lord, for He is aroused [He is springing into action] from His holy habitation!"***

And He is going to bring judgment upon the nations of the world.

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