

Zechariah's First Vision: A Prophetic Shadow of 2016 ?

Introduction

Zechariah 1 occurred in 520 B.C. This was about 18 years after the Jews returned from Babylon. The Temple foundation had been laid by Zerubbabel, but construction had been interrupted. Zechariah was encouraging the Jews to finish the House of the Lord. The Temple took just under five years to reconstruct. It was finally finished in 516 B.C. some twenty-one years after the Jews return from the Babylonian exile.

This first vision prophecy, while having a partial fulfillment in the time of Zechariah concerning the completion of the Second Temple, appears to speak forward looking to the Third Temple referred to by Ezekiel and appearing in the Books of Daniel and Revelation.

Zechariah 1:12-17: A Third Temple Vision ?

When we read Zechariah 1:12, it seems strange and out of place, in the context of rebuilding the Second Temple, that the "angel of the Lord" should suggest that "the Lord of Hosts" did not have mercy on Jerusalem and the cities of Judah in 520 B.C. The verse states:

" Then the angel of the LORD answered and said, O LORD of hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah, against which thou hast had indignation these threescore and ten years?"

At the time this prophecy was spoken, 520 B.C., the Jews had been in the land of Israel about 18 years. They had begun the Temple rebuilding project but were having challenges completing it timely.

Why would the "Angel of the Lord" suggest that it was time to have mercy on Jerusalem and the cities of Judah ? God had seen to it that they had been released from Babylon. Cyrus, King of Persia, had allowed the captive Jews in Babylon to return to Jerusalem to rebuild the Temple. He returned all of the original Temple vessels which had been looted by Nebuchadnezzar. In the second month of the second year after their return from Babylon, the Temple foundation was laid. (Ezra 3:8-11) After the foundation had been laid, the local people opposing the Jews complained to the ruling authorities that their work exceeded the scope of Cyrus' decree concerning Temple reconstruction. Apparently, they had begun to restore the city and its walls. Over time these opposing local people succeeded in stalling the completion of the Temple. (Ezra 4)

Only a remnant had returned to Israel. At this point, in Verse 12 it seems odd that there is a reference to a 70 year period? Most commentators immediately suggest that this refers back to the Babylonian exile. The Jew had been in Jerusalem and Judea for about 18 years when Zechariah voiced these words. Obviously, God had been merciful by releasing them and causing Cyrus and later Darius the Great to permit the rebuilding of the Temple. These events

all speak to God's mercies toward the Jew during this 18 years. Attributing the 70 year statement back to Babylon appears contextually inappropriate.

What if, these 70 years speaks prophetically to a future 70-year period ? Could this prophecy be speaking to a 70 year period prior to the rebuilding of the Third Temple, Ezekiel's Temple. This Third Temple must be built and be situated in Jerusalem during the Time of Jacob's Trouble ?

In Israel today, the Temple Institute has constructed all of the Temple elements. The priesthood is begin trained. Temple plans have been drawn by architects. The cornerstone has been cut. We are in a 70-year window now.

The greatest prophetic fulfillment of our day is that Israel was born as a sovereign nation on May 14, 1948 during Hebrew Year 5707 after 2,600 years. This year, 2016, commencing on Passover 2016 under the liturgical calendar and Trumpets 2016 under the civil calendar, is Hebrew year 5777. This is the earliest reckoning of a 70-year period.

Could it be that Zechariah's prophecy looks forward to this year, 2016/5777 as the 70th year of Verse 12 ? Surely, Jerusalem has become a burdensome stone. (Zechariah 12:3) The "heathen" control Temple Mount. While God's mercies delivered Jerusalem into the hands of the Jews in 1967, they do not control God's mountain.

Today, Israel struggles with the Palestinian Arabs who live in their land. These are the same locals who thwarted the building of the Second Temple. The heathen are collaborating to divide Jerusalem today. The world refuses to acknowledge Jerusalem as Israel's capital city.

Considering all of the problems that this fledgling nation has endured these last 70 years, one might surmise that God has had indignation as described in this 70-year verse. God's prophetic re-gathering of Israel into the land of Judea is a necessary preceding condition to His "end of days" promises to save Israel and restore their fortunes as promised to Abraham.

In Zechariah 1:13, the Lord answered:

"And the LORD answered the angel that talked with me with good words and comfortable words."

What are good and comfortable words to the Jew ? Are they not the promises which God made to Abraham. God promised Israel the whole land from the River Nile to the Euphrates. He promised that they would rule over their enemies. He promised they would live in peace.

I think we can agree that God told Zechariah the results of God's promises. He confirmed the Abrahamic promises to Zechariah with "good and comfortable words" looking forward past the Time of Jacob's Trouble when the Messiah returns and sets up the Millennial Kingdom.

Next in Verses 14 and 15 we see the Lord of Hosts, declare His righteous jealousy for Jerusalem (the apple of His eye) and Zion (His mountain). In Verse 15, God declares that He is displeased with the "heathen" who have zealously afflicted His people, Jerusalem and Zion. This zealous affliction continues today.

In Verse 16, the Lord says:

"Therefore thus saith the Lord; I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies: my house shall be built in it, saith the Lord of hosts, and a line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem."

This statement does not appear applicable to Zechariah's time because the Temple foundation had been laid out and set. This verse looks more applicable to the Third Temple.

This is a powerful and emphatic statement. This looks like the conclusion of the matter. God says "enough already" !

At the end of the 70th year, "I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies". We can infer that during the prior 70 years (1948-2016), that God was absent from being "in Jerusalem with mercies". That is the literal inference of the words. God must have been in Jerusalem in Zechariah's time because the Jews were on their way to completing the Temple construction.

So, such a statement leads us to look forward to the Third Temple. It fits our season. All prophecy testifies to Messiah Jesus. His testimony is the spirit of prophecy. (Revelation 19:10)

Zechariah 1:17: Millennial View

In Zechariah 1:17, the prophet makes another statement which appears to look into the Millennial Kingdom period, a period of extended peace. He says:

" Cry yet, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts; My cities through prosperity shall yet be spread abroad; and the Lord shall yet comfort Zion, and shall yet choose Jerusalem."

So, after we see God's declaration about returning to Jerusalem and building His House, we have this Millennial peace verse. Verse 17 will surely follow the events of the Third Temple and the Second Coming of Jesus, Israel's Messianic King.

He is the King of Righteousness, the King of Peace. The name "Jerusalem" means "City of Peace".

Zechariah 1: 7-11: Nations Judged

I have reserved a discussion of Zechariah 1:7-11 for the end of this letter because my focus is the 70-year period. These five verses are really difficult to understand. Commentators vary with interpretation.

The verses state:

⁷ Upon the four and twentieth day [24] of the eleventh month, which is the month Sebat, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the LORD unto Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet, saying,

⁸ I saw by night, and behold a man riding upon a red horse, and he stood among the myrtle trees that were in the bottom; and behind him were there red horses, speckled, and white.

⁹ Then said I, O my lord, what are these? And the angel that talked with me said unto me, I will shew thee what these be.

¹⁰ And the man that stood among the myrtle trees answered and said, These are they whom the LORD hath sent to walk to and fro through the earth.

¹¹ And they answered the angel of the LORD that stood among the myrtle trees, and said, We have walked to and fro through the earth, and, behold, all the earth sitteth still, and is at rest."

I will not discuss the various views. While these verses appear to provide a divine interpretation, many are at a loss to understand the interpretation. I am one of them. I have the following observations and comments:

The numbers 24 and its inverse 42, are often associated with the "Day of the Lord". As an example, Matthew 24:42 is the 24,000th verse of the Bible. It is the Day of the Lord. The Book of Job, a picture of Israel during the Time of Jacob's Trouble, has 42 chapters.

All I will say is that "myrtle trees" are present in the Millennium. (Isaiah 41:19, 55:13) They may represent "trees of righteousness", a term which appears after the Second Coming of Messiah. (Isaiah 61:3)

The Lord is seated on a "red horse". Red often connotes war. Jesus rides a white horse at the second coming, but that horse is probably "red with blood" when He is finished judging the heathen in Revelation 19:13. This is a guess.

The earth is not still and at rest until Jesus finishes His judgment work.

So, it is possible that we have a snap shot of post-Tribulation judgment in Chapter 1 with verses 7-11. We see a pre-Tribulation view of the "horns" or nations which will be subject to judgment in Verses 18-21. We get a glimpse Millennium peace in Verse 17. In verses 12-17 we possibly

have a reference to the construction of the Third Temple 70 years after Israel becomes an independent sovereign nation after 2,600 years.

Conclusion:

It is my opinion, that Zechariah 1:12-17 could very likely be associated with prophetic events in the season of the "time of the end" just before and after the Time of Jacob's Trouble or Tribulation.

The current day events and facts appear to be in reasonable alignment with this view.

We know that a Third Temple must be built in support of prophecy.

We know that God has a 70-year pattern of acting on Israel and Jerusalem.

We may be just days away from 1 Corinthians 15:23, 52, a Pentecost event.

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