

Zechariah's First Vision: A Prophetic Shadow of 2017 ?

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Introduction

Zechariah 1 occurred in 520 B.C. This was about 17 years after the Jews returned from Babylon. The Temple foundation had been laid by Zerubbabel in the second year of return, 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 17 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 17 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. Emphasizing God's merciful attitude, Jeremiah 29:10-11 says: "For thus saith the LORD, That after seventy years be accomplished at Babylon I will visit you, and perform my good word toward you, in causing you to return to this place. ¹¹For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the LORD, thoughts of peace, and not of evil, to give you an expected end." These events all speak to God's mercies toward the Jews during these 18 years which includes God's thoughts of peace and not evil. Do these two scriptural references have any indication of God's indignation toward Jerusalem and the cities of Judah during the time following the return to Jerusalem ? Not at all, quite the opposite. Attributing the 70-year statement back to Babylon appears contextually inappropriate.

Additionally, another question must be asked. If this seventy year period was only intended to represent the seventy year period during the Babylonian exile it begs the question: "Did God have indignation against Jerusalem and the cities of Judah during this 70-year period ? I think the only plausible answer is "No". During the seventy year period when the disobedient generation was exiled, Jerusalem enjoyed her "Sabbath rest". This resting period was confirmed in 2 Chronicles 36:21. The "land enjoyed her sabbaths". Sabbath rest is not the result of God's righteous indignation.

Therefore, the seventy year period and the time following the Jew's return to Jerusalem described in Zechariah 1:12 must point to a different seventy year period of divine indignation, perhaps the current 70-year period which began in 1948 and ends in 2017.

Is it not plausible that the Time of Jacob's Trouble could be associated with Zechariah 1? If the Time of Jacob's Trouble were to commence in the years 2017 or 2018, surely the 70-year period discussed in this chapter would speak to the 70-year period 1947/48-2017/18 or in Hebrew years 5707-5777 (the "Indignation Period").

Could this be the Indignation Period described in Zechariah 1 ? Indignation is the Hebrew word "za'an. It literally means to "foam at the mouth", be enraged or abhorrent. Considering Israel experienced the fulfillment of prophecy concerning nationhood in 1948, one might suggest that God has blessed Israel these past 69 years. But biblically, Jerusalem is described as Sodom and Egypt (Revelation 11:8) and a daughter of Babylon (Psalm 137:8) during the time leading up to the second coming of Jesus.

God bears righteous jealousy for the Temple Mountain. Isaiah says: "...in the latter days, that the mountain of the Lord's house shall be established..." What is presently situated on God's Temple mountain is an Islamic structure which bears inscriptions denying that God has a Son. This is Omar's Islamic mosque and the quote is from the Qur'an 17:111. The inscription on the northwest outer face of the octagonal arcade of the mosque reads, "to God who has not taken a

son and who does not have any partner in dominion...". John says that the liar and spirit of antichrist is one who denies the Father and the Son. (1 John 2:22; 1 John 4:3) This inscription contradicts the New Testament's words. Therefore, based on these words, one should expect God to maintain a sense of indignation against Jerusalem to this day.

Additionally, God surely has a continuing indignation against the cities of Judah and Israel today because Israel continues in Jacob's transgression, denying that Jesus, the Son of God, is the Christ. The nation of Israel possesses the spirit of antichrist.

While it would appear that God has blessed the people of Israel with their new nation in Judea one should keep in mind the ultimate purpose is the national purifying by fire in the Tribulation.

Israel must be a homogenous nation in order to experience God's wrath during the Time of Jacob's Trouble, Daniel's 70th week. God will save the remnant of Israel and that remnant will keep the commandments of God and have the testimony of Jesus. (Revelation 12:17; 14:12)

What if, these 70 years speaks prophetically to a future 70-year period ? Could this Zechariah 1 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 this 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. The years, 2016/2017, 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, 2017/5777 as the 70th year of Verse 12 ? Surely, Jerusalem has become a burdensome stone. (Zechariah 12:3) The "spirit of antichrist" controls Temple Mount. Even today, October 13, 2016, the United Nations UNESCO body passed a resolution denying the Jew's historic connection between Jerusalem and the 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 "spirit of antichrist" is 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 at the time of Zechariah 1. This verse looks more applicable to the Third Temple. Interestingly, in Revelation 11:1-2 we note that there was a command to "rise and measure the temple of God". Could this measurement be associated with Zechariah's line being stretched upon Jerusalem ?

The statement "I am returned to Jerusalem" 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". God's promise to Israel is that His mercy will prevail when He removes their unbelief. (Romans 11:32)

We can infer that during the prior 70 years (1947/48-2016/17), 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. These comforting words are consistent with Isaiah 61:2(c), the post Tribulation period of comforting all that mourn.

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 matching the 42 months of Great Tribulation, the last 3 and 1/2 year period of persecution by the Antichrist.

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 2,590 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.