

Zechariah 9-14

INTRODUCTION

We'll be finishing off the book of Zechariah tonight but in order to cover these 6 chapters efficiently, we need to do some overview first to understand the basic structure of these chapters.

You see, Chapters 9-14 give us 2 oracles, or as the NKJ puts it, 2 "*burdens*" of the Lord the prophet Zechariah was given – both focusing on the Coming Messiah.

Chapters 9, 10, & 11 see the Messiah *Rejected*.

Chapters 12, 13, & 14 see Him *Received* by repentant hearts.

While the 1st oracle centers on the first coming of the Messiah and His rejection by the people, there are frequent flashes out to the last days, and God's judgment of the nations while He moves to deliver and bless Israel.

Using events that will take place shortly after Zechariah's prophecy, God will move in the last days to an even greater fulfillment of them.

This is a common prophetic device employed by many of the prophets of God.

It's called the "rule of double-fulfillment," or *telescoping*.

A prophet will foretell an event that is soon to take place, but then will speak past it to some greater, later fulfillment – usually in the last days.

Imagine looking through a telescope at two distant peaks.

One is in the foreground, the other lies just beyond it, but is somewhat eclipsed by the mount in front of it.

That's the idea here.

God used these dual-fulfillment prophecies as a way of confirming or assuring His people of the reality of the *later* fulfillment.

By saying something would happen soon, but be finalized much later, when they saw the nearer fulfillment, it would secure their faith to believe the later fulfillment was just as sure.

One example of this dual fulfillment is the return of the Jewish people to their land.

It was prophesied to happen *after* the exile in Babylon, and then in the last days from all the nations of the world.

We see a lot of this *dual-fulfillment* or *telescoping* in the first oracle in Chapters 9-11.

The first oracle is against the nations and tells how God will judge them.

The second concerns Israel and tells how God will bring them to repentance and restore them.

ZECHARIAH 9

¹The burden [in some translations – oracle; it refers to a specific message handed over like a scroll to be communicated directly – word for word as it is given] **The burden of the word of the LORD Against the land of Hadrach, And Damascus its resting place (For the eyes of men And all the tribes of Israel Are on the LORD);**

This is a word *against* Syria, a long time oppressor of Israel.

Hadrach was a large city-state in northern Syria.

Damascus, the capital of Syria, was a bit south of Hadrach.

As we'll see, Zechariah starts in the very north of Syria and then working his way South, lists the classic centers of opposition to the Israelites.

All of these will come in for God's judgment – and in that judgment, the nations will know that it is the hand of the Lord that is at work.

² Also *against* Hamath, *which* borders on it, And *against* Tyre and Sidon, though they are very wise.

³ For Tyre built herself a tower, Heaped up silver like the dust, And gold like the mire of the streets.

⁴ Behold, the LORD will cast her out; He will destroy her power in the sea, And she will be devoured by fire.

Tyre & Sidon were Phoenician cities of great wealth and strength.

The Phoenicians were a maritime powerhouse and dominated all trade on the Mediterranean Sea for many generations.

Though there were occasional treaties between Israel and these cities, they usually stood in opposition to the Jews.

5 Ashkelon shall see *it* and fear; Gaza also shall be very sorrowful; And Ekron, for He dried up her expectation. The king shall perish from Gaza, And Ashkelon shall not be inhabited.

6 “A mixed race shall settle in Ashdod, And I will cut off the pride of the Philistines.

Ashkelon, Gaza, Ashdod, and Ekron were all chief cities of the Philistian coast directly west of Israel.

Of course, anyone who has even a cursory knowledge of the Bible knows that the Philistines and the Israelites were dire and serious enemies *throughout* their history.

7 I will take away the blood from his mouth, And the abominations from between his teeth. But he who remains, even he *shall be* for our God, And shall be like a leader in Judah, And Ekron like a Jebusite.

God is saying that he will utterly judge all these nations, but those who are left behind will be purged of their sin and idolatry and will look to God for salvation.

They will even find a place *among* the covenant people of God, just as the Jebusites continued to live in the midst of the Promised Land after the conquest by Joshua and were eventually absorbed into the social life of the nation.

Some of them even rose to places of leadership among the people, showing their full inclusion in the covenant with God.

8 I will camp around My house Because of the army, Because of him who passes by and him who returns. No more shall an oppressor pass through them, For now I have seen with My eyes.

While God will go forth to judge the nations who have opposed His people – He will return to encamp around His house, the temple.

God has carefully considered the whole long sad history of His people and will set Himself to ensure that no more armies march through and destroy His Land and People.

9 “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, Lowly and riding on a donkey, A colt, the foal of a donkey.

This is clearly a prophecy of the Triumphal entry on Palm Sunday.

All the people recognized that Jesus was fulfilling this word from Zechariah and it's why they began shouting the words of the Messianic Psalm – “Hosanna – Save Now! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!”

Jesus knew full well that He was fulfilling this prophecy as well; that's why he sent the 2 disciples to go get the colt and bring it to Him as He waited just over the summit of the Mt. of Olives.

This verse has something incredible to teach us about the nature of God and a profound truth about the spiritual life that will be the focus of my message this Sunday.

10 I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim And the horse from Jerusalem; The battle bow shall be cut off. He shall spea peace to the nations; His dominion shall be 'from sea to sea, And from the River to the ends of the earth.'

When Christ comes, there will be no more need for military spending because war will be over-finally!

Peace will finally settle over planet earth because He is the Prince of Peace and His presence will ensure peace for all nations.

He will spea peace – and peace there will be!

There's a lot of peace *talk* today.

We hear about the peace talks at the UN between this and that country.

We hear about the peace negotiations between the Palestinians and the Israelis, between the Syrians and the Israelis, the Jordanians and the Israelis.

Recently there's been a new round of talks between the Russians and the US over nuclear arms.

All the peace talks of the world have led to little but conflict, bloodshed, and war.

Jesus will come and speak the word – “PEACE!” and peace will settle

over the World from one end to the other.

- 11 “As for you also, Because of the blood of your covenant, I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit.**
- 12 Return to the stronghold, You prisoners of hope. Even today I declare *That* I will restore double to you.**

God is issuing an invitation to the Jewish exiles still in Babylon to come back to the Land.

- 13 For I have bent Judah, My *bow*, Fitted the bow with Ephraim, And raised up your sons, O Zion, Against your sons, O Greece, And made you like the sword of a mighty man.”**
- 14 Then the LORD will be seen over them, And His arrow will go forth like lightning. The Lord GOD will blow the trumpet, And go with whirlwinds from the south.**
- 15 The LORD of hosts will defend them; They shall devour and subdue with slingstones. They shall drink *and* roar as if with wine; They shall be filled *with blood* like basins, Like the corners of the altar.**
- 16 The LORD their God will save them in that day, As the flock of His people. For they *shall be like* the jewels of a crown, Lifted like a banner over His land—**
- 17 For how great is its goodness And how great its beauty! Grain shall make the young men thrive, And new wine the young women.**

These verses look to the period of the Maccabees when Israel was finally able to assert its independence, really for the first time, since the return from Babylon.

In the day Zechariah spoke, Israel was dominated by Persia.

Following Persian it was Greece.

But following the death of Alexander the Great, the Greek Empire broke up in to 4 smaller kingdoms that fought with one another.

It was during this time that the Jews were able to move for

independence and threw off the foreign yoke.

ZECHARIAH 10

1 Ask the LORD for rain In the time of the latter rain. The LORD will make flashing clouds; He will give them showers of rain, Grass in the field for everyone.

In an agriculturally based economy – rains were essential and were seen as a blessing from God.

The Lord is saying that He will favor them with rains in the right season.

2 For the idols speak delusion; The diviners envision lies, And tell false dreams; They comfort in vain. Therefore *the people* wend their way like sheep; They are in trouble because *there is* no shepherd.

In v. 1, God had called the people to look to Him for help.

Here He tells them not to look to idols or fortune-tellers because they're deceivers.

3 “My anger is kindled against the shepherds, And I will punish the goatherds. For the LORD of hosts will visit His flock, The house of Judah, And will make them as His royal horse in the battle.

It's a truism that that the fortunes of a people are largely dependent on the quality of their leaders.

If their leaders are people of integrity and justice who deal prudently and diligently, then the people are well served and the leaders become moral and ethical *examples* that inspire others to greatness.

Unfortunately, the opposite is also true: when leaders lack integrity and use their office merely for their own interests, the fortunes of the people decline.

Except for the governor Zerubbabel and the high priest Joshua, the leadership of Zechariah's day was weak.

They'd been far more interested in their own fortunes than in taking care of those under their authority.

God is saying that He would raise up a new generation and breed

of leaders whose hearts were like His own.
They would come from the tribe of Judah.

- 4 From him [meaning Judah] comes the cornerstone, From him the tent peg, From him the battle bow, From him every ruler together.**
- 5 They shall be like mighty men, Who tread down *their enemies* In the mire of the streets in the battle. They shall fight because the LORD is with them, And the riders on horses shall be put to shame.**
- 6 “I will strengthen the house of Judah, And I will save the house of Joseph. I will bring them back, Because I have mercy on them. They shall be as though I had not cast them aside; For I *am* the LORD their God, And I will hear them.**

The first of the Maccabees was named Judas, because he was from the house of Judah.

He rallied the men of Israel against the Syrian Greeks and was able to secure Israel's independence as I mentioned a moment ago. Once Israel gained its independence, many of the Jews who had remained outside the land returned, thinking that a new day had come and that the nation would return to its former glory under Solomon and David.

Zechariah sees the Maccabees as a foreshadowing of the Messiah's reign as King over all the Earth.

- 7 *Those of Ephraim* shall be like a mighty man, And their heart shall rejoice as if with wine. Yes, their children shall see *it* and be glad; Their heart shall rejoice in the LORD.**
- 8 I will whistle for them and gather them, For I will redeem them; And they shall increase as they once increased.**
- 9 “I will sow them among the peoples, And they shall remember Me in far countries; They shall live, together with their children, And they shall return.**
- 10 I will also bring them back from the land of Egypt, And**

gather them from Assyria. I will bring them into the land of Gilead and Lebanon, Until no *more room* is found for them.

Here is a gaze through the prophetic telescope to one of those more distant peaks of the last days when God will re-gather the Jewish people to their land and establish Jerusalem as the capital of the Earth.

11 He shall pass through the sea with affliction, And strike the waves of the sea: All the depths of the River shall dry up. Then the pride of Assyria shall be brought down, And the scepter of Egypt shall depart.

12 “So I will strengthen them in the LORD, And they shall walk up and down in His name,” Says the LORD.

Just as God led the people through the Red Sea in the Exodus from Egypt at the birth of the nation, so at the final gathering of the people into the Land in the last days, He will overcome any and every obstacle that hinders them from returning.

Not a physical, spiritual, or national barrier will prevail against them or prevent them from returning.

We're witnessing this in our own day with the dissolving of the Soviet Union and how this has opened the doors for hundreds of thousands of Russian Jews to immigrate to Israel.

ZECHARIAH 11

1 Open your doors, O Lebanon, That fire may devour your cedars.

2 Wail, O cypress, for the cedar has fallen, Because the mighty *trees* are ruined. Wail, O oaks of Bashan, For the thick forest has come down.

3 *There is* the sound of wailing shepherds! For their glory is in ruins. *There is* the sound of roaring lions! For the pride of the Jordan is in ruins.

Using the idiom of a raging forest fire, Zechariah foretells the ruin that befall as a result of the people's rejection of the Messiah.

It starts in Lebanon and consumes the cedars, then moves to the east side of the Jordan and consumes the mighty oaks, and ends in the Jordan valley, burning up the palms and fig trees that are the staple there.

The trees represent the civil rulers of these regions while the lions speak of the military leaders. Shepherds were the priests.

It's interesting that this roughly sketches the route taken by the Roman general Vespasian and his son Titus as they came with 3 Roman armies to put down the Jewish revolt of the late 60's.

4Thus says the LORD my God, "Feed the flock for slaughter, ⁵whose owners slaughter them and feel no guilt; those who sell them say, 'Blessed be the LORD, for I am rich'; and their shepherds do not pity them. ⁶For I will no longer pity the inhabitants of the land," says the LORD. "But indeed I will give everyone into his neighbor's hand and into the hand of his king. They shall attack the land, and I will not deliver *them* from their hand."

Zechariah receives a commission from God to be a *shepherd* to His flock.

But the flock is a *sorry* lot – they've already been marked for slaughter.

These are *not* sheep who are to be kept and raised for *wool*.

They've already been painted with an "X" and so marked to be used as mutton!

Their previous shepherds have mistreated and abused them – so God has appointed the prophet to be *His* selection as shepherd.

What's different with this flock is that they're given an option of abiding under God's Shepherd or not.

They decide to *reject* God's choice, and as a result, end up rejecting His provision and blessing.

They will suffer helplessly at the hands of even worse shepherds.

All of this foreshadowed the first coming of Christ who was the Good Shepherd, but who was rejected.

Because the people rejected Christ, they turned to civil and military leaders who led them in an insurrection against Rome and the eventual loss of their land.

7 So I fed the flock for slaughter, in particular the poor of the flock. I took for myself two staves: the one I called Beauty, and the other I called Bonds; and I fed the flock.

In Zechariah's symbolic tending to the flock of God, he paid special attention to the very ones the previous shepherds had overlooked – the poor and weak.

And to fulfill his role as shepherd, he secured 2 staves.

One he named “beauty” or “favor” and the other he named “bonds” or “union.”

Beauty represented the *special favor* God extends to those who look in faith to the covenant, While *Bonds* represented the *unity* of the people under the covenant.

8 I dismissed the three shepherds in one month. My soul loathed them, and their soul also abhorred me. **9** Then I said, “I will not feed you. Let what is dying die, and what is perishing perish. Let those that are left eat each other's flesh.”

The three shepherds represent the three branches of leadership in Israel – prophet, priest, and king – all of whom had neglected their task of faithfully leading and had turned to their own advancement at the expense of God's people.

God's Shepherd replaces these three shepherds because they were disqualified.

We know that Jesus, as the Messiah fulfills all three roles of prophet, priest, and king.

But as is foretold here – the people rejected Him.

So He left them to their fate.

10 And I took my staff, Beauty, and cut it in two, that I might break the covenant which I had made with all the peoples. **11** So it was broken on that day. Thus the poor of the flock, who were watching me, knew that it was the word of the LORD. **12** Then I said to them, “If it is agreeable to you, give *me* my wages; and if not, refrain.” So they weighed out for my wages thirty *pieces* of silver.

13 And the LORD said to me, “Throw it to the potter”—that

princely price they set on me. So I took the thirty *pieces* of silver and threw them into the house of the LORD for the potter.

As the people had rejected the focal point of the covenant, which is the Messiah, so God would *sever* His protection of the nation and she would fall prey to her enemies.

A tiny handful of the people would realize that the judgment of the nation was the work of God for their *rejection* of His Shepherd.

To this tiny minority, Zechariah issues a question – “Will you pay me?”

Bear in mind that Zechariah is representing Jesus Christ here – and the payment the nation figures he is worth is what? 30 pieces of silver.

What’s provocative about this amount is that this is the amount that is spelled out in Exodus 21:32 that was to be paid for a *wounded* slave.

For God’s Shepherd to be evaluated this way was a deliberate insult.

God’s response to this insult was for the wages to be thrown to the potter.

Pots were made of clay – dirt really.

Pottery was the most common labor and pottery was the most common thing in the world!

In fact, it is so common that to this day as you tour Israel, pottery shards are literally the ground under your feet.

To throw the silver to the potter meant it was received as an insult just as it had been given as one.

But in an interesting twist, the potter Zechariah throws the 30 pieces of silver to happens to be *in the temple*.

All of this would find its ultimate fulfillment in the price the priests paid to Judas for betraying Christ – they gave him 30 pieces of silver.

When Judas realized the terrible error of what he’d done, he tried to return the money, but the priests would not accept it – so Judas threw it on the ground in the temple.

The priests then gathered the money and purchased a small plot of land called the Potter’s field which they dedicated to the burial of those common people who couldn’t afford their own tomb.

Very likely, that is where Judas *himself* was buried!

14 Then I cut in two my other staff, Bonds, that I might break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel.

Following the rejection of Christ by the nation – the internal cohesion of Israel fell apart!

Several factions all began earnest attempts to seize control and assert their agenda.

The zealots vied with the loyalists. The Pharisees fought with the Sadducees.

Then even in these camps there were divisions – the zealots were broken into a half dozen of their own groups which all vied for leadership of the zealot-movement.

The lack of cohesion is what led to Israel's ruin at the hands of the Romans.

History tells us that even when the Romans laid siege to Jerusalem, the Jews trapped inside the city were battling it out and letting the blood of hundreds.

15 And the LORD said to me, "Next, take for yourself the implements of a foolish shepherd. 16 For indeed I will raise up a shepherd in the land who will not care for those who are cut off, nor seek the young, nor heal those that are broken, nor feed those that still stand. But he will eat the flesh of the fat and tear their hooves in pieces.

17 "Woe to the worthless shepherd, Who leaves the flock! A sword shall be against his arm And against his right eye; His arm shall completely wither, And his right eye shall be totally blinded."

This is a prophecy of the anti-christ who will come to Israel – ostensibly appearing to be their protector and leader, but who will in fact be the devil-incarnate.

V. 17 reminds us that God will come against the anti-christ, the false shepherd with judgment that will wither his strength and blind him on the right side!

There are some bible students who conclude from this passage that

one of the signs of the anti-christ is that he will be wounded or suffer a stroke that will leave his right side paralyzed.

Now, on this issue of the anti-christ – I read something *extremely* interesting yesterday.

Those of you who know me know that I have been firmly resistant to identifying anyone as a potential candidate for the anti-christ.

I consider such speculation ill-advised.

BUT . . . having said that, let me say that something extremely interesting surfaced in the news yesterday – and it has to do with a high ranking official in the Vatican named Cardinal Jean-Marie Lustiger.

In an article titled – “The Next Jewish Pope” an Australian newspaper began with this byline

“His mother was burned in the ovens of Auschwitz, yet he converted to Catholicism, rose to the zenith of power in the church, and could become its next leader. He started life as *Aaron* Lustiger. Now he is Cardinal Jean-Marie Lustiger, prince of the Catholic Church, confidant of Pope John Paul II. As the Pope grows more and more frail, Cardinal Lustiger, the Archbishop of Paris, grows more crucial to the leadership of the church.”

The article goes on to describe him as an intellectual of the highest order, a loyal supporter of Israel, and a man universally loved and adored.

He is traveling more and more and commanding larger audiences everywhere he goes.

What so provocative about this is that for many years, a small fringe of Bible students have maintained that the antichrist will emerge as the leader of the Roman Catholic Church but from Jewish roots. Those who’ve held this view have been in a tiny minority because it seemed so totally contradictory and impossible.

No – let me be perfectly clear - I AM NOT SAYING Lustiger is the antichrist.

What I am saying is that in our day we are seeing things that the world used to consider too far out – to “out there” for the prophecies of the last days to be fulfilled as literally as they are presented in the Bible.

But with each year that passes – we realize the a good part of what the Bible foretells is already *literally* in place and ready for the curtain to rise on the last few years of history as we know it.

ZECHARIAH 12

Now we get to the 2nd oracle, which looks to the last days specifically.

¹The burden of the word of the LORD against Israel. Thus says the LORD, who stretches out the heavens, lays the foundation of the earth, and forms the spirit of man within him: ²“Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of drunkenness to all the surrounding peoples, when they lay siege against Judah and Jerusalem. ³And it shall happen in that day that I will make Jerusalem a very heavy stone for all peoples; all who would heave it away will surely be cut in pieces, though all nations of the earth are gathered against it.

As God begins this second oracle, He reminds us that He is sovereign over all and can do what He wills.

Notice the phrase, “in that day” in v. 3.

It occurs 16 times in these last three chapters.

The day He is speaking of is the Day of the Lord – the last days of rebellious human history.

The specific event He refers to here is the siege of Jerusalem by the forces of antichrist at the very end of the Tribulation.

Just when their victory seems assured, God turns the table and wipes them out!

They will drink the cup of the wrath of God.

While this looks to the end of the Tribulation, even today we see how Jerusalem has become the focal point of so much the world’s attention.

A good portion of the deliberations of the UN are given to dealing with the problem of dividing Jerusalem between the Israelis and the Palestinians.

A week doesn’t pass that some news story in the front section of the paper doesn’t care some story about something in Jerusalem.

In most capitals of the nations of the world, foreign policy hacks are attempting to draft a policy regarding Jerusalem.

The Vatican has even proposed that they be allowed to take over control of Jerusalem and administer it as an *international* city, divorced from the control of any one nation.

But as God says here, any nation that tries to shoulder the burden of the problem of Jerusalem will find it a weight too heavy to bear. Jerusalem's fate is God's to decide – not man's, and anyone who attempts to wrest Jerusalem from the control of the Jewish people will experience ruin.

The best and safest thing a person, people, or nation can do is pray for the Peace of Jerusalem.

4In that day," says the LORD, "I will strike every horse with confusion, and its rider with madness; I will open My eyes on the house of Judah, and will strike every horse of the peoples with blindness. **5**And the governors of Judah shall say in their heart, 'The inhabitants of Jerusalem *are* my strength in the LORD of hosts, their God.' **6**In that day I will make the governors of Judah like a firepan in the woodpile, and like a fiery torch in the sheaves; they shall devour all the surrounding peoples on the right hand and on the left, but Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place—Jerusalem.

7"The LORD will save the tents of Judah first, so that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem shall not become greater than that of Judah. **8**In that day the LORD will defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; the one who is feeble among them in that day shall be like David, and the house of David *shall be* like God, like the Angel of the LORD before them. **9**It shall be in that day *that* I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.

As the invading armies of the antichrist approach Jerusalem, they will pass by the other cities and towns of Judah – but even these God will intervene to protect.

10“And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for *his* only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn. **11**In that day there shall be a great mourning in Jerusalem, like the mourning at Hadad Rimmon in the plain of Megiddo. **12**And the land shall mourn, every family by itself: the family of the house of David by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of the house of Nathan by itself, and their wives by themselves; **13**the family of the house of Levi by itself, and their wives by themselves; the family of Shimei by itself, and their wives by themselves; **14**all the families that remain, every family by itself, and their wives by themselves.

This is a prophecy of the *wholesale repentance* of the Jewish nation when they see Christ coming in the clouds in the Second Coming. They will look on Him whom they have pierced – meaning the wounds of the crucifixion.

And against the backdrop of the anti-christ whom they had received as their Messiah but who had proven himself to be false, they will realize that Jesus of Nazareth, the one they had rejected and held at bay, is indeed their Messiah.

Their repentance will be instant and universal.

Leading the movement to embrace Christ as their Messiah will be the kingly house of David and the priestly line of Levi.

Their weeping will be greatest because as leaders, they are *moiré* culpable for their rejection of Jesus as Messiah – and they know it!

ZECHARIAH 13

1“In that day a fountain shall be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness.

In a massive national cleansing from sin, possibly by baptism, God

will open a fountain.

We're told that when Messiah comes again, His foot touches the Mount of Olives and a spring gushes forth.

This will be the headwaters of a mighty river that will provide an endless supply of fresh water for thirsty Jerusalem – and water for baptism.

2“It shall be in that day,” says the LORD of hosts, “*that* I will cut off the names of the idols from the land, and they shall no longer be remembered. I will also cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to depart from the land. **3**It shall come to pass *that* if anyone still prophesies, then his father and mother who begot him will say to him, ‘You shall not live, because you have spoken lies in the name of the LORD.’ And his father and mother who begot him shall thrust him through when he prophesies.

The prophets referred to here were *false* prophets, of which there were an abundance in that day and will be in the last days – as emissaries for the arch-deceiver, antichrist.

Idolatry, which has been largely banished from the Jewish mindset since the Babylonian exile, will find a resurgence in the last days as people turn to worship the antichrist and his lackeys.

This is another thing we can watch for as an evidence that we live in the last days, a growing interest in classic idolatry – the worship of powerful figures and forces.

4“And it shall be in that day *that* every prophet will be ashamed of his vision when he prophesies; they will not wear a robe of coarse hair to deceive. **5**But he will say, ‘I *am* no prophet, I *am* a farmer; for a man taught me to keep cattle from my youth.’ **6**And *one* will say to him, ‘What are these wounds between your arms?’ Then he will answer, ‘*Those* with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.’

False religion will be swept aside and it will be that anyone who practiced idolatry or was a false prophets prior to the Lord's coming will go into hiding.

When asked if they had been previously employed as false prophets, they will say, “No – I’ve always been a farmer!” When questioned further about the source of the wounds on their bodies, they will reply that they are inconsequential wounds received while helping their friend with some task.

False prophets would often afflict some extreme physical trial on themselves in order to get into an altered state of conscious – these trials frequently involved self-inflicted wounds and these would be evidence of their occupation as false prophets – but they would try to pass them off as something else.

I must say that there are some who try to attach v. 6 to chapter 12:10-14 and the prophecy of Jesus coming in the clouds.

They see the reference here to wounds and the mention of piercing in 12:10 and think that these are connected – but they aren’t.

The next verses however – *are* spoken about the Messiah . . .

7 “Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, Against the Man who is My Companion,” Says the LORD of hosts. “Strike the Shepherd, And the sheep will be scattered; Then I will turn My hand against the little ones.

In the previous sections, God’s Shepherd has been rejected by the people, but here Shepherd is slain by God’s decree.

This of course refers to the cross where according to the plan and purpose of God, Jesus died for the sins of the world.

Within one half of a generation from Jesus’ death, the Nation of Israel was smitten and scattered by the Romans.

8 And it shall come to pass in all the land,” Says the LORD, “*That two-thirds in it shall be cut off and die, But one-third shall be left in it:*

9 I will bring the *one-third* through the fire, Will refine them as silver is refined, And test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, And I will answer them. I will say, ‘*This is My people*’; And each one will say, ‘*The LORD is my God.*’”

In the destruction that ensued at the hands of the Romans – hundreds of thousands of Jews were put to the sword.

The few who were left were scattered all over the world in what is known as the Dispora, the Dispersion.

From this remnant, God has faithfully preserved the Jewish people and will one day re-gather them back in to their land and reconstitute of them a faithful nation.

It's important to realize that the events of 70 AD and the destruction of Jerusalem at the hands of the Roman army under Titus is but a foretaste of the atrocities to be visited on the City at the end of the Tribulation.

But all of these trials are the furnace God will use to refine the hearts of His people to receive their Messiah.

Then, when He comes, they will truly be God's people and He will be their God.

ZECHARIAH 14

In this chapter – we have the final siege of Jerusalem . . .

- 1 Behold, the day of the LORD is coming, And your spoil will be divided in your midst.**
- 2 For I will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem; The city shall be taken, The houses rifled, And the women ravished. Half of the city shall go into captivity, But the remnant of the people shall not be cut off from the city.**
- 3 Then the LORD will go forth And fight against those nations, As He fights in the day of battle.**

This invasion, foreshadowed by the destruction of 70 AD, is fully realized in the last days' invasion led by the antichrist.

It seems as though the forces of antichrist lay siege to Jerusalem, take it and despoil it, then when they hear that the armies of the east are coming to oppose them, they move north in to the Plain of Jezreel – and enter in to battle there in a massive conflagration we know as the Battle of Armageddon.

It's in the heat of this battle that Jesus returns to earth and brings the fighting to a halt.

- 4 And in that day His feet will stand on the Mount of**

Olives, Which faces Jerusalem on the east. And the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, From east to west, *Making* a very large valley; Half of the mountain shall move toward the north And half of it toward the south.

5 Then you shall flee *through* My mountain valley, For the mountain valley shall reach to Azal. Yes, you shall flee As you fled from the earthquake In the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Thus the LORD my God will come, *And* all the saints with You.

The Mount of Olives is the place from which the glory of the Lord departed from the land in 586 BC prior to the destruction of the temple. (Ezekiel 11:23)

It's also the sight from which Jesus ascended in to heaven after His resurrection.

The same spot the glory departed, is the place it will return in the person of Jesus Christ.

When His foot touches the mount, a great earthquake will split the mount in two and a rift will see the two sides move apart from north to south – opening a new valley that leads down from Jerusalem to the Jordan Valley.

The remnant of Jews who have been left in Jerusalem after the sacking by the antichrist's occupying troops will flee the City as refugees through this valley as far as the ancient mountain top where the scapegoat was last seen.

Note the last phrase of v. 5 – all the saints come WITH the Lord when He comes.

Here's another evidence that the rapture has *already occurred* prior to the Second Coming because when Christ comes, the saints are coming WITH Him – not *to* Him – which is what they would be doing if the Rapture occurred at the end of the Tribulation as Christ is coming visibly to earth.

6 It shall come to pass in that day *That* there will be no light; The lights will diminish.

7 It shall be one day Which is known to the LORD— Neither day nor night. But at evening time it shall happen *That* it will be light.

At the Second Coming, the light of daytime and evening will be reversed.

The point of this is to confront man with the power of God over even the very powers of heaven.

The sun will be dimmed and it will be darkness during the day. Then, in the evening, when the light is supposed to dim, it will in fact grow!

God is reversing the order of things and turning and upside down world back right side up.

8 And in that day it shall be *That* living waters shall flow from Jerusalem, Half of them toward the eastern sea And half of them toward the western sea; In both summer and winter it shall occur.

Water has always been a perennial problem for Jerusalem – sitting as it does on the crest of the mountains.

But when Christ comes, a new spring will break forth that is so abundant, the waters will flow both east and west and spill in to the Dead Sea and the Mediterranean.

From the direction the waters flow, we can be sure this spring comes from the rift valley formed by Jesus' coming.

It would have to be at the very crest, or dividing line of central ridge that runs north-south in Israel and which the Mt. of Olives is one peak of.

9 And the LORD shall be King over all the earth. In that day it shall be—“The LORD *is* one,” And His name one.

The ancient motto of the Jews – the Shema – drawn from Deut 6, will become the motto of the whole earth.

10 All the land shall be turned into a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem. *Jerusalem* shall be raised up and inhabited in her place from Benjamin's Gate to the place of the First Gate and the Corner Gate, and *from* the Tower of Hananel to the king's winepresses.

11 *The people* shall dwell in it; And no longer shall there be utter destruction, But Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited.

Dramatic geographical changes will alter the landscape around Jerusalem, possibly at the same time as the Mt. of Olives earthquake.

The central mountain ridge that Jerusalem sit on will fall and turn in to a fertile plain while Jerusalem itself will rise slightly to be like a mesa standing over the surrounding plain.

The City, ruined by the armies of antichrist will be swiftly rebuilt.

12 And this shall be the plague with which the LORD will strike all the people who fought against Jerusalem:

Their flesh shall dissolve while they stand on their feet, Their eyes shall dissolve in their sockets, And their tongues shall dissolve in their mouths.

13 It shall come to pass in that day *That* a great panic from the LORD will be among them. Everyone will seize the hand of his neighbor, And raise his hand against his neighbor's hand;

14 Judah also will fight at Jerusalem. And the wealth of all the surrounding nations Shall be gathered together: Gold, silver, and apparel in great abundance.

15 Such also shall be the plague On the horse *and* the mule, On the camel and the donkey, And on all the cattle that will be in those camps. So *shall* this plague be.

The word for plague here is the same Hebrew word used to describe the 10 plagues visited on Egypt -it means a striking by the hand of God.

The picture is this – the armies of antichrist that have moved north to intercept the armies of the east which have also come to attack Israel and Jerusalem, will together experience a radical kind of judgment.

In something that sounds like it came out of a Lucas-Spielberg movie – their flesh shall melt away and their eyes and tongues wither – as they are standing fighting each other.

Whether this is some kind of nuclear or biological agent or a divine action is unclear.

It is interesting to realize that the neutron bomb has the interesting

effect of destroying flesh while leaving non-organic material unharmed – and that’s what we seem to see here. Living things are consumed – but in a mop up battle the remnants of the Jewish people in the land come forth to finish off anyone who’s left and gather up the loot which is left behind.

16And it shall come to pass *that* everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. **17**And it shall be *that* whichever of the families of the earth do not come up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, on them there will be no rain. **18**If the family of Egypt will not come up and enter in, they *shall have no rain*; they shall receive the plague with which the LORD strikes the nations who do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. **19**This shall be the punishment of Egypt and the punishment of all the nations that do not come up to keep the Feast of Tabernacles.

This looks forward now to the Millennium when Christ is ruling in Jerusalem.

Each year for the Feast of Tabernacles, every nation will appoint a delegation to go to Jerusalem to worship the Lord and make offerings at the house of God.

If a nation refuses to send a delegation – they get no rain and famine results.

20In that day “**HOLINESS TO THE LORD**” shall be *engraved* on the bells of the horses. The pots in the LORD’s house shall be like the bowls before the altar. **21**Yes, every pot in Jerusalem and Judah shall be holiness to the LORD of hosts. Everyone who sacrifices shall come and take them and cook in them. In that day there shall no longer be a Canaanite in the house of the LORD of hosts.

In the Millennium, everything will be so right and so covered by the

purposes of God that even the most mundane things will be sacred and special; the bells on the horses, the most common pot. There will not be one shred of anything unholy or impure in all of Jerusalem.
Everyone will be a believer.