

Understanding What is Happening in the Middle East

I. INTRODUCTION

- A. Zech. 12-14 is one of the most dramatic prophetic passages in Scripture. It is a “must know” passage. In it, we see the conclusion of God’s mysterious End-Time plan. History ends with all the nations coming together to make war against Israel leading to Jesus’ return to deliver Israel and destroy her enemies. How is it possible that one small nation could enrage the whole world?
- B. The Lord has chosen this unusual plan as the best way to end natural history. It is a gift from God to show us the end of the story. By this, the Church can be prepared to stand.
- C. Israel’s main crisis is not with Islam or other anti-Semitic nations, rather it is with God. Her crisis is rooted in the fact that God loves Israel and yet the majority of Israel hates God. God will not violate their free will but will use difficulty to humble them and lead them to repentance. Jesus taught that to hate Him is to hate the God of Abraham. Many Gentiles also hate God.
²³ ***He who hates Me hates My Father also 24...they hated Me and My Father. (Jn. 15:23-24)***
- D. God’s End-Time message is politically incorrect, offending Christians, Jews, and Arabs. Many in Israel will be powerfully converted while others join the evil regime of the Antichrist to worship him. Israel will see both revival and apostasy as the Jews in the land are both gathered to the land and driven from it as some are supernaturally protected yet others are killed and/or put in prison (Zech. 14:2; Isa. 42:7, 22; 49:9, 24-25; Ps. 102:20). Zechariah prophesied that 2/3 of the nation will be killed (Zech. 13:8), however, others will function as anointed apostolic believers who will freely come and go in and out of Israel in the spirit of Is. 66:19.
- E. The Scripture is clear that Israel’s best and worst days are yet ahead. Israel’s victory will surpass anything seen in history. It is surely coming. However, the timing of her victory and the difficulty that occurs between now and then must be acknowledged and proclaimed. The Church in Jerusalem will surpass what she experienced in the Book of Acts. Israel’s judgments will surpass all other times of judgment in history including 70 AD (Mt. 24:21; Dan. 12:7).
- F. The Church must boldly and clearly proclaim these themes to believers and unbelievers, Jews and Arabs, so that all are well informed about God’s plan as set forth in Zech. 12-14. Many are embarrassed by Jesus as Judge as if His judgments are too extreme or lacking in love. Jesus is zealous to remove all that hinders love. God’s End-Time plan is motivated by passion to fill the earth with voluntary lovers of Jesus (Rev. 15:4). God’s plan is to first produce an entire nation of people (Israel) who will love God then who will lead the whole earth back to God.
- G. If we only speak the positive themes, then when the negative events occur we will have no credibility as messengers of God. If we speak the truth when it is costly, then when the crisis increases they will listen. Our message includes telling people that God is unfolding a significant End-Time plan and is fully in control and that all have a role to play that is important to God.

II. ISRAEL'S VICTORY, SUFFERING AND WORLD LEADERSHIP (ZECH. 12-14)

- A. Section one (Zech. 12:1-13:6): Israel's sudden military and spiritual victory
1. All the nations will gather against Jerusalem: a military and political assault (Zech. 12:1-3)
 2. Israel's military victory: Israel is unified and anointed like David (Zech. 12:4-9)
 3. Israel's national repentance and conversion: the outpouring of the Spirit (Zech. 12:10-14)
 4. Israel's national cleansing: from sin, idols, false prophets and the unclean spirit (Zech. 13:1-6)
- B. Section two (Zech. 13:7-14:2): Israel's suffering – the remnant will be refined in the fire
1. Israel will pass through much tribulation to refine the remnant to be saved (Zech. 13:7-9)
 2. Jerusalem is temporarily taken and captives are deported (Zech. 14:1-2)
- C. Section three (Zech. 14:3-21): Israel's victory by the return of Jesus as King of the world
1. Jesus returns as the King of Israel to deliver her from her enemies (Zech. 14:3-5)
 2. Jesus' Kingship is announced by miracles: unusual light and living water (Zech. 14:6-8)
 3. Jesus is exalted as King over all the nations (Zech. 14:9)
 4. Jesus' capital Jerusalem is leveled, exalted and safely inhabited (Zech. 14:10-11)
 5. Jesus will punish all the nations that rebel against His leadership (Zech. 14:12-15, 18, 19)
 6. The Gentiles shall be converted and unified with Israel in worshipping Jesus (Zech. 14:16-19)
 7. Israel will be the first entire nation to walk holy in every area of their life (Zech. 14:20-21)

III. SECTION ONE: ISRAEL'S MILITARY AND SPIRITUAL VICTORY (ZECH. 12:1-13:6)

- A. The Lord introduces Himself as He who stretched out the heavens, laid the foundation of the earth and formed the human spirit (Zech. 12:1). God loves and understands humans. He has the wisdom, power and love to execute His remarkable plans that are presented in Zech. 12-14.
- ¹ ***The burden...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: (Zech. 12:1)***
- B. The two metaphors: cup of drunkenness and a heavy stone (Zech. 12:2-3)
- ² ***Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of drunkenness to all the surrounding peoples, when they lay siege against Judah and Jerusalem. 3 And 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. (Zech. 12:2-3)***
- C. First, He will make Jerusalem like a cup that makes all the nations drunk. All the nations will hate the Jewish people and therefore, will surround Jerusalem and lay a siege against her with zeal to destroy Israel and then use Jerusalem for their own religious purposes.

- D. Jerusalem will be like a cup of drunkenness to the nations. She will be as a cup of strong wine that intoxicates all who drink it. The nations drink this cup by agreeing with the plan to destroy Israel. They will get “drunk” in the process. In this, they will lose their strength and their ability to think rationally. A common phrase to describe drunks is that they are, “ten feet tall and bullet-proof.” Their false feeling of invincibility leads them to make very bad decisions. The Lord will defeat them as easily as one could push a drunk man over.
- E. Second, God will make Jerusalem a very heavy stone to all people. Everyone will have to decide to stand for God and Jerusalem or against God and Jerusalem. ***There will be no neutral ground.*** God will use Jerusalem as “the issue” to separate the righteous from the unrighteous in families, neighborhoods, schools, the marketplace, economics both in the Church and in all the nations.
¹⁴ Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision! The day of the LORD is near... (Joel 3:14)
- F. We are now in the beginning stages of the valley of decision. If we do not now choose to walk close to God with a vibrant spirit, then later, we will not be able to take a stand for the difficult “politically incorrect” truths that God will require of all.
- G. To those who seek to “heave Israel out of the land,” she will be an unmovable rock whose edges are like razor blades that will lacerate all who push against her. The nations will be bolstered in their confidence to stand against Israel because all the nations on earth will stand together in this.
- H. The Lord is the One who will gather the military forces of all the nations together against Israel. The David and Goliath drama will be re-enacted on a world stage as one little nation against all the nations. Their false confidence is based in not knowing God’s jealousy for Israel (Zech. 8:2).
² For I (God) will gather all the nations to battle against Jerusalem... (Zech. 14:2)
² I will gather all nations... I will enter into judgment with them there (Jerusalem)... (Joel 3:2)
³ ...Though all nations of the earth are gathered against it (Jerusalem). (Zech. 12:3)
- I. Zechariah begins this prophecy at the end of the story where all the nations have surrounded Jerusalem. He doesn’t tell us how it happens. God put oil in Arab land on purpose so that the money from the oil could be used to seduce the nations to stand with them against Israel.
- J. The Lord put Himself in “divine checkmate.” It will take God’s power to solve Israel’s dilemma. That is how God wants it. No one has the power to deliver Israel. The ally that Israel most needs is a holy, praying and fasting, prophetic Church. Israel has Jesus on her side and thus, does not need the military strength of America. America needs Israel more than Israel needs America.
- K. God will kick every prop out from Israel and the Church. America won’t be a prop for Israel. God’s plan is to turn Israel to Jesus then make them the worldwide leaders of true Christianity. This is not the agenda that the current leaders of Israel are working for. What political Israel is doing will ultimately and utterly fail.

IV. MILITARY VICTORY: ISRAEL IS UNIFIED AND ANOINTED LIKE DAVID (ZECH. 12:4-9)

- A. The Lord will release confusion and a spirit of insanity on the Gentile armies (Zech. 12:4). They boasted of their power, however, God will use it against them. Their strength will end up being their weakness as they use their military might while under a spirit of madness.

⁴ *"In 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."* (Zech. 12:4)

¹³ *In that day...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... (Zech. 14:13)*

- B. This will be the greatest military victory and reversal in all history (Zech. 12:9). Jesus will anoint Israel so that they will be like a fire pan (vessel they put hot coals in to carry to ignite other fires). Israel's victory in battle will be as fire burns dry grass, effortlessly and instantaneously.

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 (nations)...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...⁹ It shall be in that day that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem." (Zech. 12:6-9)*

- C. Israel's national repentance and conversion: the outpouring of the Spirit (Zech. 12:10-14)

¹⁰ *I will pour on the house of David (royal family) and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem (common people) the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me (Jesus) whom they have pierced; they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son... (Zech. 12:10)*

1. God will pour out the spirit of grace and prayer so Israel cries out to Jesus for salvation. The spirit of grace and supplication refers to the anointing of revelation, power and prayer. After this great military victory, Israel will have deep humility instead of pride.
2. God will deliver Israel in a way that causes them to love Jesus more than the nations that they looked to for help. Ultimately, they will look to Jesus of Nazareth for deliverance. They will understand that He delivered them because He loved them! Then they will see the tragedy of having hated Jesus for 2,000 years as He loved them! The national repentance and mourning of Israel is described very graphically (Zech. 12:11-14).

- D. Israel's national cleansing will be from sin, idols, false prophets and the unclean spirit (Zech. 13:1-6). God will open a fountain of grace to cleanse Israel of all her national and individual sin.

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. ² "It shall be in that day...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." (Zech. 13:1-2)*

- E. The Antichrist will have been worshipped throughout the land of Israel. The False Prophet will have been working with the Antichrist in Israel. They will have had a network of false prophets working under them. The cleansing will cause false prophets to be put to shame (Zech. 13:3-6).
- F. The pattern of activity that God employs in Israel's salvation reveals the same principles that He uses to cleanse and revive the rest of the nations. God will break the pride of all nations, pour out His Spirit, reveal Jesus and then cleanse the people as they come to Him with deep repentance.

V. ISRAEL'S SUFFERING: THE REMNANT REFINED IN THE FIRE (ZECH. 13:7-14:2)

- A. In this second section, we see Israel's suffering in the End-Times (Zech. 13:7-14:2). God will use the least severe means to bring the greatest number to Jesus at the deepest level of love.
- B. The remnant of Israel will be refined through the fires of tribulation unto salvation (Zech. 13:7-9)
⁷ "Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd (Jesus), against the Man who is My Companion," Says the LORD of hosts. "Strike the Shepherd (Jesus), and the sheep will be scattered; then I will turn My hand against the little ones (End-Time Israel). ⁸ 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.'" (Zech. 13:7-9)
- C. God now reveals part of His method in bringing the great spiritual revival to Israel. Daniel spoke of persecution and suffering as part of God's End-Time plan to prepare His people to rule the earth with Jesus (Dan. 7:18-27). God forewarns Israel that her great victory will include pain.
- D. The Father awakened His sword against His Son at the cross. Jesus will oversee the cleansing of End-Time Israel. He is qualified because He was deeply acquainted with suffering for Israel. No one will be able to say, "You don't understand the suffering that You are allowing." The sword of God's judgment that struck Jesus is the same sword that will strike End-Time Israel. Jesus was innocent and End-Time Israel is guilty. Jesus understands what Israel will go through since He knows what it means to be struck by the Father's sword. He is able to lead them to salvation.
- E. God will turn His hand or sword of judgment against two-thirds of Israel who will be killed. (This was not fulfilled in 70 AD). Mal. 3:1-6 develops this same theme of Israel being refined like silver in the End-Times. Unrefined gold is full of impurities. Gold is purified with very hot fire that causes the impurities to rise to the surface to be separated from the remaining gold.
- F. Jerusalem is temporarily taken and captives are deported (Zech. 14:1-2).
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. (Zech. 14:1-2)

VI. ISRAEL'S VICTORY BY THE RETURN OF JESUS AS KING OF THE WORLD

- A. In this third section, we see Israel's victory because her King comes to her (Zech. 14:3-21). He shows us great victory that begins in Israel will spread to the whole world (Zech. 9:9-10)
- B. Jesus returns as the King of Israel to deliver her from her enemies (Zech. 14:3-5).
³ ***Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations, as He fights in the day of battle. 4 In that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives...the Mount of Olives shall be split in two, from east to west, making a very large valley...5 Then you shall flee through My mountain valley...Yes, you shall flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah...The LORD will come, and all the saints with You. (Zech. 14:3-5)***
- C. Jesus' Kingship is announced by miracles: unusual light and living water (Zech. 14:6-8).
⁶ ***It shall come to pass in that day that there will be no light; the lights will diminish. 7 It shall be one (unique) day which is known to the LORD-- neither day nor night. But at evening time it shall happen that it will be light. 8 In that day it shall be that living waters shall flow from Jerusalem, Half of them toward the eastern sea (Dead Sea) and half of them toward the western sea (Mediterranean Sea); in both summer and winter it shall occur. (Zech. 14:6-8)***
- D. Jesus is exalted as King over all the nations (Zech. 14:9).
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. (Zech. 14:9)***
- E. Jesus' capital Jerusalem is leveled, exalted and safely inhabited (Zech. 14:10-11).
¹⁰ ***All the land shall be turned into a plain from Geba (northern Judah) to Rimmon south of Jerusalem (southern Judah). Jerusalem shall be raised up and inhabited in her place... 11 Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited. (Zech. 14:10-11)***
- F. Jesus will punish all the nations that rebel against His leadership (Zech. 14:12-15, 18, 19)
¹² ***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...In that day that a great panic from the LORD will be among them. Everyone will...rise his hand against his neighbor 14...the wealth of the surrounding nations shall be gathered... (Zech. 14:12-14)***
- G. The Gentiles shall be converted and unified with Israel in worshipping Jesus (Zech. 14:16-19).
¹⁶ ***Everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King...and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles. 17 It shall be that whichever of the families of the earth do not come up to Jerusalem to worship the King...on them there will be no rain. 18...they shall receive the plague with which the LORD strikes the nations who do not keep the Feast of Tabernacles. (Zech. 14:16-19)***
- H. Israel will be the first entire nation to walk holy in every area of their life (Zech. 14:20-21).