

Zechariah

Remembrance Day (pt.2)

Look! There is a day coming, belonging to Jehovah ... and Jehovah must become King over all the earth. In that day Jehovah will prove to be one, and his name one. ZECHARIAH 14:1,9 (NWT)

Chapter 7

WAS THE 'RETURN' OVER WHILE THE TEMPLE LAY IN RUINS?

7:1-5 What evidence is there that the 70 years of Jeremiah was still counting?

It was almost seventy years since the blow had fallen upon the community. [A. Cohen, The Twelve Prophets (Soncino, 1948) p.295]

Older exegetes (Jerome, Rashi, Kimchi) have pointed out that the prophesied seventy years (Jer.25:11-14) may have been a consideration for not commencing work on the temple, because the end of that period, reckoned from the time of the destruction of the Solomonic temple (587 B.C.) had not yet come in 520 B.C. [Verhoef 56]

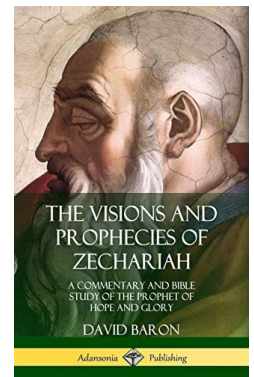
The 'Times of the Gentiles' – Israel's 'Ichabod' period

At the commencement of "the times of the Gentiles," which began with the Babylonian Captivity, when God was about to give Israel over into the hands of their enemies, the prophet Ezekiel saw the slow and reluctant departure of the glory of Jehovah from the Temple and City of Jerusalem. And with this withdrawal of the presence of Jehovah from the midst of His people, commenced Israel's Ichabod period, and the long night of darkness which has rested on the people and on the land. But not forever has Jehovah forsaken His land and cast off His people. "I will go," He said through the prophet Hosea, "and return to My place till they acknowledge their offence" (or, lit., "till they declare themselves guilty"), "and seek My face: in their affliction (lit., 'in their tribulation') they shall seek Me early." Then He will return unto them with mercies, and "His going forth in sure as the morning; and He shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter rain that watereth the earth" (Hos.5:15, 6:1-3) [Baron 232-233]

The prophetic seventy years of captivity may be reckoned either from the destruction of the first temple to the dedication of the second, 588-518 B.C.; or from the first invasion of Nebuchadnezzar to the decree of Cyrus, 606-536 B.C. [Arthur T. Pierson, Keys to the Word (1887) p.32]

Jeremiah gives the impression that he reckons the seventy-year period from the devastation of the land (25:11) ... 587-517 BC, and yet Judah was not serving the Babylonians all that time. It is not impossible that there was the double reference (a) to the years of Babylonian domination, and (b) to the length of time the land was devastated ... The evidence suggests that there was symbolism in the number, and that it was meant to be taken as a round figure, but this did not preclude a historical period of desolation for Jerusalem's Temple of seventy years. ... the fulfilment of the prophecy was remarkably accurate in view of the fact that the events commemorated in the fast did not take place before 587 BC, Zechariah must be reckoning the seventy years from that date [in v.5]. [Baldwin 97-98,144]

The definite prophecy of Jeremiah was that the inhabitants of Palestine and neighbouring lands "shall serve the king of Babylon 70 years." This began in the 3rd year of Jehoiakim, which was the 1st of year of Nebuchadnezzar ... B.C. 606, or before the 1st of Nisan (April) 605. Starting with this definite date the "70 years" were brought to an end by the decree of Cyrus in the 1st year of his reign, in B.C. 536 (Dan.1:1; Jer.24:1,9-11; Ezra 1:1-3). ... in the 17th year of Nebuchadnezzar ... B.C. 589 (588), commenced the final terrible siege of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans which lasted about a year and a half ... With this date very probably begins more particularly the seventy years of "Indignation" referred to ... Reckoning from this starting-point, the 70 years came to an end in the 2nd year of Darius Hystaspes, in B.C. 519 -- the year in which Zechariah saw these visions. [Baron pp.34-35]



Chapter 8

THE NATIONS SHALL KNOW (BECAUSE OF THE BOYS FROM BROOKLYN?)

8:1-3 Where will TRUTH be dwelling in the millennium?

His dwelling will be the Temple, and His continuing presence will ensure that this time Israel will be faithful to the covenant. [Baldwin 149]

[on v.3] The verb dwell, shakhan, means "to settle down, abide, remain, reside" and is used elsewhere of God, as here (Gen.9:27; Ex.25:8; 29:46; Num.5:3; 1 Kings 8:12; Isa.33:5; 57:15). The "tabernacle" or "dwelling of Yahweh" hence is called the mishkan, i.e., "place of dwelling" or "residing" (Ex.25:9; 40:34,35, etc.). Accordingly, the Lord in the person of the returned Messiah will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem. [Unger 135]

8:4-12 Why cannot JW's take v.12 literally? (and why do we not see this verse under the paradise pictorials?)

[vv.7,8] Now, never in the past has such a restoration taken place. A representative section, but a mere handful out of the whole people, was indeed brought back to the land after the 70 years' captivity in Babylon, of which Zechariah himself was a witness, but that could not possibly be the restoration here promised; first, because, as is to be inferred from the whole prophecy, this was to be something which take place at a time future in the point of view, or outlook, of this post-exilic prophet, to whom, what we may call the chief act in the restoration from Babylon was already an accomplished fact; and, secondly, because that partial restoration was only from one direction, namely, from the east, or "north" (as Babylon and Persia were called, because their invasions of Palestine were from the north). From the "west" they could not then have been brought back, since very few of the Jewish nation had as yet wandered westward. It was only at the second stage of Israel's dispersion, which was brought about by the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple by the Romans, that Israel became in the fullest sense a Diaspora – scattered over all the face of the earth – the majority always found in lands more or less to the west of Palestine. [Baron 238]

8:13-23 How will Israel become a blessing instead of a curse to the Gentile nations? (Gen.12:2,3; Zech.1:18-21; Mal.1:1-5)

[vv.14,15] This is God's way still. He chastens sorely ... But when we have profited by his stern discipline, and returned to Him with all our heart and soul, we are restored to our former position; God's hand wipes the tears from our eyes, and He bids us turn from our bitter repinings over an irretrievable past, to accept the unalloyed mercy which remembers our sins no more ... He sets himself to assure his people, in effect, that in the future, when they could view his dealings in their true perspective, they would discover that their darkest days had been the source and origin of their gladdest ones. [F.B. Meyer Zechariah the Prophet of Hope (1900) pp.83,85]

[v.17] ... it most interesting to note that there is here no warning against idolatry, so prominent and flagrant in the time of the pre-exilic prophets. The reason is clear: the nation had been cleansed of it in Babylon. [Feinberg 109]

[v.21] The allegorising commentators, according to whom "the literal fulfilment of such passages is a sheer impossibility" – as if it had not been foretold in this very scripture that the fulfilment of the great and glorious things which are here prophesied would appear too "wonderful" and impossible in the eyes of men – would have us believe that what is predicted by Isaiah, and Micah, and Zechariah (indeed, by all the prophets) in reference to the universal spread of the knowledge of Jehovah through the instrumentality of Israel, has already been fulfilled, or is now exhaustively fulfilling itself in this gospel dispensation. [Baron 250]

