

DECEMBER 21

Just a few more days before Christmas. Today in beginning Zechariah it will be like getting Revelation in stereo. Both books zero in on the last days of this tragic earthly history we are following Christ through. What is interesting is that both books will talk about some of the same things, but each will provide unique details. Both books end with the glory of God and with humanity safe and sound with the Savior, and that is a great way to end the year.

Zechariah 1

In talking about Haggai, I mentioned that both he and Zechariah showed up at the same time. The time was when the returned exiles had been in Jerusalem about 18 years and they were stalled in building the temple. There must have been something very crucial going on at this time that you don't see explained in the history that Ezra shares. Just knowing this time frame and the sudden arrival of these two prophets should give us a greater appreciation for these books, and for God coming through in the clutch and motivating the people to action to save them. In Haggai, God gave Zerubbabel and Joshua a shot of motivation, and then He gave them a look at the future to show them that their work would not be in vain. Zechariah continues this look at the future and is like a little book of Revelation in the OT. It will also be good for us to think about why God is giving them these visions of the future. Maybe we need that too.

Take a look at the chart at the end of these notes titled, "Dates of Key Events in Haggai's and Zechariah's Time."

V. 1 If you compare the date of this message with the messages of Haggai, you'll see that Zechariah began speaking about a month after Haggai's second message.

Vs. 2-6 This message is very much like what Haggai was saying and, miracle of miracles, the people obeyed. Notice the illustration given here. Although their fathers died and although the prophets died, the Word continued and was fulfilled. This was true of the past judgment and it would be true of the future glory promised to Israel.

Now, Zechariah is given eight night visions. The chart of the same name is located at the end of this document and it may be helpful to look at. One thing to note here is that he will see these all in one night. What a night.

Vs. 7-17 The vision of the riders.

V. 7 Notice that this vision was three months after his first message. Haggai had stopped preaching by now.

Notice that these angels patrol the earth. We saw something like this in Job 1:6-8. These angels seem to have a special commission from the Lord. It is interesting to think that even though God is omniscient, He still gives angels responsibilities. It is also interesting to think that angels are still on patrol, as we speak.

Vs. 8-12 Read this carefully. I have missed this every time. The rider of the *red horse* is very important. Notice that He is standing while the other riders are on their horses. Apparently He is the leader. In v. 9 Zechariah speaks to another angel who is with him. In v. 10 Zechariah is answered by the rider of the red horse. In v. 11 this angel rider of the red horse is addressed as *the angel of the Lord*. This is the pre-incarnate Jesus. You'll see this when we get to Zechariah 3:4 where this angel takes away the sin of Joshua the high priest. Only God has that authority.

V. 12 Notice that the world is at rest, but Jerusalem is not. The focus here is Jerusalem. The question asked in v. 12 launches the visions dealing with the city and the people. This is very similar to Daniel's question regarding the city. Daniel received the vision of the 70 weeks. Here, Zerubbabel and Joshua receive these visions through Zechariah. Since their lives have been

focused on the temple, the worship and the city, God will encourage them regarding the future of these.

Notice that this is the only place in Scripture where *the angel of the Lord* intercedes and pleads to the Father, the *Lord of hosts*. The Son is still making intercession today.

Vs. 13-17 As a result of this request, God, who is very jealous for Jerusalem, promises to restore Jerusalem, the fulfillment of which will be in the Millennial Kingdom. Still, for Zerubbabel and Joshua and all the people, God's favor on Jerusalem would be good to know. In spite of the challenges they were facing, God confirmed and encouraged them that He would comfort Zion and choose Jerusalem.

Vs. 18-21 The vision of the horns.

V. 19 These horns do not seem to stand for animals or kings, but rather for the power or pride of nations. Horns might be like a threat of strength or pain, like weapons. If you look at 1 Kings 22:11, you'll see a false prophet make iron horns. Things like this might have been put on shields or wagons. If actual nations are in view here, they might be Egypt, Assyria, Babylon, and Persia. At that moment in history, neither Greece nor Rome had risen as a threat to Jerusalem and Judah or scattered the people. Generally, it might just be referring to the pride of any nations that seek to persecute Israel. Toward the end of Zechariah we will see a very unique insight into the persecution Jerusalem will be enduring the very minute the Lord returns.

Vs. 20-21 Since the horns are manufactured, the craftsmen can destroy them. These angels will work to humble the nations that rise against Israel. Again, that is a promise that the godly leaders of Israel can depend on.

Zerubbabel and Joshua had endured many years of oppression by the Persian government and by the surrounding nations. This vision showed them that God would destroy this opposition. In God's hands Israel was secure. That's a good thing to know, especially reading Revelation 12.

Revelation 12

This is a great chapter of Revelation and it describes more fully the mystery of the victory God will secure over Satan and the world through the suffering of His people.

Vs. 1-2 The woman is Israel. Israel has always been "pregnant" with the Savior of the world, as promised to Abraham. The sun and moon sounds like something that Joseph dreamed, and the twelve stars are the sons of Jacob. Joseph was the first visual "type" or hint of a savior coming from Israel.

The deeper imagery here is from Genesis 3. There is the dragon (serpent, v. 15), the woman and the male child.

Vs. 3-4 This is interesting information. Satan has always known that the Savior was to come from Israel and therefore Israel has suffered so much. In corrupting Israel, Satan (in his mind) has held back salvation from the world. Getting Israel to crucify their Messiah was his master work, which fell back on him because he never realized that God was incarnate or that the sacrifice of Jesus could work salvation for all mankind through faith.

Notice that Satan took a third of the angelic world with him in his rebellion.

V. 5 The child was Jesus. Jesus' entire life, ministry, sacrifice and resurrection is summed up with Jesus seated at the Father's right hand.

V. 6 This is the Tribulation as shown in the 1260 days or 3.5 years. I think that toward the end of the first 3.5 years of peace in Israel, the army of the north (Ezekiel 39:6) will come to loot Israel; but God will destroy them with fire or some other miracle (probably through the witnesses). The antichrist will arrive, maybe to save Israel, but the glory of this salvation by God will cause him to lose his mind. (And a mind is a terrible thing to lose.) In heaven the decree is given to allow

the "little horn" to wage war with the saints and prevail (Daniel 8:24-26). The antichrist kills the two witnesses, desecrates the temple (Matt. 24:15) and begins a great persecution of the Jews, and then any believers he can get his hands on. This begins the "Great Tribulation."

But Israel will hide in the mountains around the Dead Sea and live off of the supplies of the destroyed army. Since the world is wrecked and primitive, it will be easy for God to hide them 3.5 years. Actually, for God, it would always be easy to hide them anyway, but having wrecked the world, He was preparing for this event.

Vs. 7-9 During this time, there is a battle in heaven and Satan loses. You might wonder why this didn't happen before, but I think that the slaughter of Christ's followers is already underway and is a key factor in Michael's victory.

Vs. 10-11 Notice that v. 11 is written in the past tense as if it has already been going on. This, I think, is what gave Michael and his forces the power they needed. I think this victory of the saints through their testimony and deaths is what Satan never saw coming, the mystery. It brings judgment and wrath upon him and gives power to the angelic forces defending Israel. These two verses hold amazingly deep spiritual truth.

Notice that although there is a declaration made in v. 10, the battle is not over. Also, notice that this declaration seems very similar to the declaration made in Revelation 11:15.

V. 12 This is wonderful for those in heaven, to have the neighborhood finally cleaned up; but now Satan and his angels are defeated and earthbound. Isn't it interesting that he knows his time is short? This shows the psychotic nature of Satan's evil and sin in general. Why does he keep destroying? He will not rule in hell. Those he deceives do not become his slaves in some fiery underworld cartoon. Satan will be tormented and punished just as all men will. In hell, all are utterly incapacitated in pain. There are no card games and parties. There is nothing for Satan to gain by destroying more people, except the satisfaction it gives him to vent his hate toward God and to see men damned by God.

Vs. 13-17 God protects those who obeyed Him and fled to the wilderness. Whatever this flood was, an army or actual waters, God will so visibly protect them that Satan knows it is useless to pursue them. God will protect them for 3.5 years. The only danger to them is being fooled into thinking that the Lord has appeared, and going out to visit the many impostors who will appear. (Matt. 24:26) Toward the end of this 3.5 years something will happen that brings the Jews (believing and unbelieving) out of hiding and back into Jerusalem.

V. 13 Read Genesis 3:14-15. You have the woman, the serpent and the male child.

Satan then turns his anger to rounding up Christians all over the world. He will slaughter many, but the more he hurts them, the more he weakens himself. And, there will be many from all nations who, on seeing the persecution of Jewish and Gentile believers, will awaken to faith and help them.

I'm not sure what the sand really is, but the first thing that comes to mind is the promise to Abraham in Genesis 22:16-18, *By myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son,*¹⁷ *I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies,*¹⁸ *and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice.*

Satan can stand on the sand (the Jews/believers), but the sand will defeat him and become a blessing to all nations. Knowing what these future disciples will endure and how they will defeat the enemy should encourage us to deny ourselves, take up our cross daily and follow Him into the harvest.

²⁷*But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong;* ²⁸*God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are.* (1 Cor. 1:27-28)

Psalm 140

It is easy to read a psalm like this and not really read it at all. We need to sense the despair and trouble and anxiousness David felt. You know how you can have one good day and seem to have all the stress under control, and the next day you are a mess? This is what David lived through for 10 years on the run from Saul. Anxiousness and trouble are not our downfall. Our downfall is not having this habit of life, living close to the heart of God, in His Word, crying out to Him.

Vs. 1-5 Not only was David asking for deliverance and protection from these very real dangers, but there is the sense that the poison of this was close to entering his heart and mind.

Vs. 6-8 The protection of David's head, like the helmet of salvation, was actually confidence and protection of his heart and thoughts. That protection is found in knowing God's heart and knowing He is our salvation. It is found in the Word and obeying the Word in faith.

Vs. 9-11 This is a call for justice in kind. As they have done, let it be done to them. But notice, David is not wanting to dispense justice. That is the Lord's job.

Vs. 12-13 David's strength was found in resting on the Lord. Verses 6-7 and 12-13 are the things David learned in the ebb and flow of his emotions. God is a rock. Our emotions move. The creation, the sun, the sea are always there. They are visual aids that God's love and faithfulness never change. It takes hopelessness to reveal this to us, but then, only if God is our hope and our foundation.

Proverbs 30:17

How should one figuratively understand the second half of this verse? This could just be a common curse people gave at that time, or it could be referring to a warning about what happens to our understanding when we ignore what God says. Jesus told His disciples, and then the people, that if your eye turns away from receiving what God says, it results in darkness. Take a look at Matthew 6:22-23 and Luke 11:34-36.

I guess the safest thing to do is just to obey the first half of the verse and honor God by honoring our parents.