

DECEMBER 26

Zechariah 9

Vs. 1-8 We can understand this as the judgment on Israel's neighbors and then comes the peace that the Messiah brings to Jerusalem.

V. 9 When you read this, it should be easy to understand why Israel thought the Messiah would be the great conquering king at His coming. When Jesus entered Jerusalem, Jesus fulfilled this verse. How were they to know that the fulfillment of the rest of this chapter of Zechariah would be thousands of years later? Jesus' followers didn't understand this either. They would have had to have listened to Jesus' words and believed Him in spite of what they thought they knew. Jesus had more than proven that He was the Messiah and that He had been sent from the Father. The fact that Jesus was so soundly rejected by the leaders and the people meant that they were bound by sin. The power of sin had to be broken first, before they could believe Him or the Word. But before that, there would need to be a payment for sin as a way to be forgiven. And for that, there would need to be a sacrifice.

Vs. 10-17 There is a mixture of tribulation, redemption, rescue, regathering and millennial blessing in these verses. Not only that, notice that v. 13 is a one-verse encouragement given to the Maccabees in their fight against Antiochus Epiphanes (the little horn and type of the antichrist from Daniel 11).

V. 11 When I read the *blood of my covenant*, I think of Jesus. Covenants in the OT were often made with blood, but not all. Jesus specifically referred to His blood as *my blood of the covenant*. (Matt. 26:28)

After reading what we've read in Revelation, you can understand some of these images better. God will save His people, yet this was all written 500 years before Jesus was born, ministered and died. And now the church has been working for two thousand years. Yet, when the Father determines that the number of the Gentiles is complete, the redemption and restoration of Israel begins and then it will unfold quickly.

Isn't it interesting to think that we are a part of this. As the disciples in the church following Christ in the harvest, we herald His offer until the number of the Gentiles is full, and then begins that final seven years of God redeeming Israel and using them to reach the world during the days of His judgment of mankind.

Revelation 17

There is so much that we don't know about what is being said in chapters 17 & 18. I'll share what we do know that makes sense to me. Really, it makes sense to read both chapters in order to get a fuller picture.

Since this chapter comes after the bowl judgments, and since it mentions *the blood of the saints* (v. 6) and that the Lamb conquered this person, I'm thinking there is a chronological significance to telling the destruction of this city/nation now. I think it is important that Satan and the beasts have sent out spirits challenging all those in opposition to come and fight. It looks like this city was used by the antichrist, but it was not in submission to the antichrist, and so was finally done away with by the antichrist and his nation (v. 16).

Vs. 1-2 This prostitute is a city as seen in v. 18. It is difficult to imagine that a single city could have a worldwide influence and involve the spreading of an immoral lifestyle. This influence is also commercial as seen in making and receiving the world's goods. It is hard to think a single city of the world could do all of this. In the OT, the cities of Tyre and Sidon had this reputation. I think that this "whore" is representative of a nation with world influence, just as the beast is the designation for a person (the antichrist) and for a nation.

The symbol of a prostitute has been used before in terms of being untrue to God and leading others away from Him. The mentions of sexual immorality are obviously figurative. These express her influence leading nations away from God to a lifestyle of self-absorption, sensuality and materialism. That the nations have become drunk, I would think, is the intoxicating fascination by all other nations of what she had to offer. For example, the only nation on the planet today that has this influence over the world is the U.S. People in other nations are drunk with our music, our movies, our sin, our sensuality, our influence, our materialism, our iPhones, iPods, iPads, etc. I'm not saying this is the U.S., but the U.S. serves as a great example of what is meant here. Maybe there is one city, New York or L.A., that would be representative of the U.S. Again, I'm not saying the U.S. is this city or nation. It could be some other nation or city, but the U.S. serves as a good example of this worldwide influence of corruption.

Vs. 3-4 The beast she is riding on is the nation of the antichrist. Verse 16 shows that the beast, the antichrist, and his nation will eventually hate her and destroy her. At this point they appear to be allies, using one another to serve their own purposes. Notice that the beast is red, probably with the blood of God's followers.

V. 5 That she is called *Babylon* is a mystery. Some people believe that the city of Babylon in Iraq will be rebuilt and become this. But that would be a huge mystery, since that area is so unstable and deeply conservative, that it would be beyond anyone's imagination that Iraq could become the center of such a sensual, materialistic and intoxicating influence. Rome is another guess, but again, unless the world changes drastically, Rome is known for its ruins and the Vatican.

During the years of King Nebuchadnezzar, Babylon was the home of a world wonder, but we don't hear of its influence in the world. The only other Babylon that had this influence over mankind came much earlier in the Bible. That was the Babel of Nimrod where all of mankind came together with one mind to go the wrong direction. God confused the languages, thereby slowing down the progress of the ruination of mankind. There was something about Babel that seemed to have a very human quality about it. Rather than being driven by Satan, it seemed to be driven by the soul of man to satisfy himself and fulfill his own desires his own way. I'm speculating. Whatever this Babylon is, it is used by Satan, but eventually it crosses purposes with Satan.

V. 6 So, this city/nation is guilty of killing the followers of Jesus. The very language shows that she is guilty of a great slaughter. Maybe that's why the beast is red, soaked in blood. Here, like Daniel, John is stunned by her ability to destroy God's people.

V. 7 The beast carries or supports her.

V. 8 This will be something that the people in the Tribulation will have to figure out. The only being I can think of where this could be true is Satan. He was, and "was not," in that he will be chained in the abyss for 1000 years, and then rises from the abyss to wreak havoc on earth one last time and then will be thrown into the lake of fire. If it isn't Satan, it will have to be someone or some nation that fits this description, that only those in the Tribulation will figure out.

Vs. 9-11 Every generation of people since this was written has tried to figure this out. So far no one has been convincing. This will make sense to the believers going through the Tribulation.

Vs. 12-14 Now this sounds more like Daniel and the 10 horns. This will be the nation of the antichrist, and though it wars against the Lamb by killing Jesus' people, the Lamb will conquer it through the following of His people.

Vs. 15-18 In the Old Testament the city of Tyre was written about in the same way as this city of Babylon. Both Isaiah 23 and Ezekiel 26 refer to the influence and destruction of Tyre. Also, it was told that the nations would cry when it was destroyed and its goods were no longer available. The thing that was interesting about Tyre in the OT is that it could remain independent

of other nations, and because of its trade, it had influence and grandeur and a kind of supreme arrogance. Egypt couldn't beat Tyre. Assyria couldn't defeat Tyre. Babylon couldn't humble Tyre. It was finally Alexander the Great who destroyed Tyre.

It appears to me that this nation is used as a willing tool of Satan and the antichrist, but is ultimately defiant because of its trade and wealth and influence. Since all men are drunk with the influence of this nation, it holds an addictive dominance over nations that rivals the antichrist. It appears that at the end of the seven years, the antichrist will make a play for full and complete world dominance. This nation "Babylon" will be standing in his way. I say that this nation must be motivated by humanness, because Jesus said it was impossible for Satan to be divided against himself. If men can oppose God in favor of their own desires, they can oppose Satan too, and for the same reasons. For Satan, all roads that lead away from God are good roads, even if they don't appear to lead to him.

Vs. 16-17 God will use an evil nation to destroy the whore. It seems that during all the disaster of the bowls, the nation of the antichrist will do something either spiritual or atomic to burn up that "Babylon." As Satan showed when He destroyed Job's children and herds, he has enough destructive spiritual force to destroy a nation if necessary.

Psalm 145

This is a great psalm. Look for words that have to do with David expressing his love and thanks. Then look for things that the *Lord is...* or what the Lord does.

Vs. 1-3 Is it ironic or prophetic that David sings out that he will praise and bless God's name *forever*? Did he actually know he would do that forever? This morning I was reading in Romans 11:33, *Oh, the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways!* Amen! David may not have known, but the Spirit inspiring David knew.

Vs. 4-7 Now it is not only David's praise, but generations will declare the greatness of God.

Vs. 8-9 This is not only stated elsewhere in Scripture, but David had lived this in those years running from Saul.

Vs. 10-13 What an amazing eternal perspective David had. Since Daniel and Isaiah hadn't been written yet, you have to think that this prophecy was given to him by the Holy Spirit.

Vs. 13-21 And not only does the Lord have eternal dominion and glory, He is compassionate and hears the voices of those who love Him and call upon Him.

All of this praise and all of David's recognition of God's love and favor only came, because David pursued God. This is part of what Paul meant in Philippians 3:12, when he said, *I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own.* Paul didn't endure life; he actively pursued Christ in the harvest. That's how we learn to trust and endure and grow. Then, when we have become like Him and have seen His salvation a thousand times through a thousand challenges to keep on following, we learn to proclaim and praise Him.

Proverbs 30:32

So, God makes the small and wise, and He makes the strong and proud. But, when we "make" ourselves, we shame ourselves. We need to let God make us who we are.