

# The Blue Collar Scholar's Bible Commentary

*Focusing on Prophecy*

by

Robert E. Cruickshank Jr.

**Watch Robert Cruickshank on YouTube**

<https://www.youtube.com/@recruickshank>

Arranged by Don Nobinger

<https://nobinger.com/>

This commentary was compiled from articles written by Robert E. Cruickshank Jr. This document is a work in progress. It will be updated shortly after Bob posts a new article so check back often to be sure that you have the latest version.

Last Revised on June 30, 2025

## **Old Testament Commentary**

**Leviticus 16:5** And he shall take from the congregation of the people of Israel two male goats for a sin offering, and one ram for a burnt offering.

### **The Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16)**

On the Day of Atonement, in Leviticus 16, two male goats were reserved for the atonement rituals (Lev. 16:5). One goat was sent aside for Yahweh, the other was set aside for Azazel (Lev. 16:8). The goat set aside for Yahweh was killed, and its blood was sprinkled on the mercy seat in the Holy of Holies inside the Tabernacle (Lev. 16:15). In the ritual ceremony, Israel's sins were transferred to the second goat (Lev. 16:21-22), commonly called the "scapegoat." The scapegoat then carried the people's sins away deep into the wilderness – "to Azazel" (Lev. 16:10).[23] The problem was, those sins always came back. As Micheal Heiser put it, the Day of Atonement was "essentially a reset button,"[24] and the Israelites had to reboot the whole thing and start over again every year (Lev. 16:29-32).

With Jesus, there is no "reset button." Christ's atoning work on the cross was a "finished" work, once and for all (Jn. 19:30). Zechariah says that the valley carved out by Jesus, when He splits the Mount of Olives in two (Zech. 14:4), will "reach to Azel" (Zech. 14:5). This is the theological messaging behind the imagery Zechariah is using: the finished work of Christ was going to cut all the way through to the other side where our sins were taken. His atoning work was that complete and that comprehensive – it reached to Azel. When we put our faith and trust in the finished work of Christ, He carries our sins away, and those sins never return.

<https://burrosofberea.com/zechariah-14-part-5-the-flight-to-the-mountains/>

**Numbers 24:7** Water shall flow from his buckets, and his seed shall be in many waters; his king shall be higher than Agag, and his kingdom shall be exalted.

**Septuagint:** Numbers 24:7 There shall come a man out of his seed, and he shall rule over many nations; and the kingdom of Gog shall be exalted, and his kingdom shall be increased.

### **Agag = Gog**

Just on the surface of it, the terms "Agag" and "Gog" appear similar at face value. And, in fact, they are equated in the Septuagint. The Septuagint is the ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, written during the intertestamental period between Malachi and Matthew. The New Testament writers quoted the Septuagint twice as often as they quoted the Hebrew Old Testament.[14]

If it's accurate to refer to "Agag" as "Gog," in light of the Septuagint translation of Numbers 24:7, then it would be equally accurate to refer to an "Agagite" as a "Gogite." And in fact, some Septuagint manuscripts do just this and refer to Haman as a "Gogite," instead of an "Agagite," in Esther 3:1 and 9:24.[16] Simply put, the terms are interchangeable. As Phil Kayser says: "Saying that Haman was an Agagite is (using a different national pronunciation) the same thing as saying that he is a Gogite." [17]

Haman the Gogite was the chief prince of the Persian nations who attacked God's people at a time when they were living in unwallled villages. The book of Esther makes Ezekiel's prophecy come alive with meaning, and it is the deathblow to the modern interpretation of Gog and Magog. With that said, Ezekiel 39:11 is final the nail in its coffin.

<https://burrosofberea.com/haman-hamas-and-the-headlines-getting-gog-magog-wrongagain/>

**See comments on Ezekiel 39:11.**

### **Agag = Gog in the LXX**

Just on the surface of it, the terms "Agag" and "Gog" appear similar at face value. And, in fact, they are equated in the Septuagint. The Septuagint is the ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew Old Testament, written during the intertestamental period between Malachi and Matthew. The Septuagint is quoted twice as often as the Hebrew Old Testament by the New Testament writers.[8]

The key takeaway here is this: if it's accurate to refer to "Agag" as "Gog," in light of the Septuagint translation of Numbers 24:7, then it would be equally accurate to refer to an "Agagite" as a "Gogite." In fact, some Septuagint manuscripts do just this, and refer to Haman as a "Gogite," instead of an "Agagite," at Esther 3:1 and Esther 9:24.[10] Simply put, the terms are interchangeable. As Phil Kayser says: "Saying that Haman was an Agagite is (using a different national pronunciation) the same thing as saying that he is a Gogite." [11]

<https://burrosofberea.com/gog-and-magog-part-1-from-saul-and-agag-to-mordecai-and-haman/>

**Numbers 24:20** Then he looked on Amalek and took up his discourse and said, "Amalek was the first among the nations, but its end is utter destruction."

That destruction came at the hands of a young orphan queen and her older cousin who took her in as his own. After centuries of conflict, the Amalekite storyline ends in the book of Esther. As Anne Wetter writes: "Esther and Mordecai, prove to be the worthiest bearers of the Jewish tradition: They have not forgotten to blot out Amalek (Deut. 25,19), and, unlike their forefathers, they have actually managed to perform the deed." [5]

<https://burrosofberea.com/gog-and-magog-part-1-from-saul-and-agag-to-mordecai-and-haman/>

**Numbers 29:12** "On the fifteenth day of the seventh month you shall have a holy convocation. You shall not do any ordinary work, and you shall keep a feast to the LORD seven days.

### **Why the Feast of Tabernacles?**

Finally, the question must be asked: of all the Old Testament feasts, festivals and rituals that signified these New Testament realities, why does Zechariah single out the Feast of Tabernacles specifically? Why is it this feast, in particular, that all the "families of the earth" (Zech. 14:17) are required to celebrate? Why did he focus on this one exclusively in conjunction with "the nations" (Zech. 14:18)?

Perhaps one could argue that Tabernacles was a pilgrimage festival and this best fits Zechariah's theme, but so were Passover and Pentecost.[6] So this narrows it down, but the question now becomes: of the three pilgrimage festivals, why is Zechariah's attention drawn solely to this one? With that in mind, there is one last aspect of the Feast of Tabernacles that provides the answer.

This final feature of the feast comes to us from Numbers 29:12-34. This passage "describes the sacrifices involved in the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles, called in Hebrew, the Feast of Sukkot ("Booths"). Included in those sacrifices were 70 bulls, a number that far exceeds any other Israelite festival."[7]

Scholars have long taken note of this number and determined that it can't be arbitrary. For example, Noga Ayali-Darshan, of the Hebrew University in Israel observes: "This huge number of offerings is striking, especially in comparison with other Pentateuchal festivals, none of which requires more than two bulls per day..."[8] As Yoel Halevi writes, "The Torah in Numbers 29:12-34 requires the Israelite priests to sacrifice 70 bulls during the great feast... the question standing before most people who read this text is why 70?"[9]

The answer to this question is found early on in the book of Genesis. The number 70 corresponds to the Table of Nations in Genesis 10. This is where the Lord divided the nations and "set the boundaries of the people," according to Moses (Deut. 32:8). Corresponding to this, Paul said that God set these "boundaries" so that people "should seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him..." (Acts 17:26-27). Thus, God divided the original peoples of the world into 70 distinct nations for the purpose of those nations finding their way back to Him.

The 70 bulls sacrificed during the Feast of Tabernacles corresponds to these 70 representative nations, and the Jews viewed the ritual as a means of intercession for those nations. According to Jewish tradition, "these 70 bulls were sacrificed for the sins of the 70 nations descended from the three sons of Noah." [10] Rabbi

Milgrom put it this way, "You find that on Sukkot, Israel offers to Him [God] seventy bulls as an atonement for the seventy nations." [11]

Putting this together, the sacrifice of the 70 bulls during the Feast of Tabernacles was a means of intercession for the surrounding Gentile nations. How fitting is it then that Zechariah chose this feast to picture the Gentiles coming to Christ? Under the New covenant, we don't need to sacrifice 70 bulls anymore. Jesus is our intercessor now (Rom. 8:34), and He is the only mediator between God and man (1 Tim. 2:5). His mediation and intercession for the Gentile nations was pictured during the Feast of Tabernacles, and our coming to Him is pictured as a Journey to Jerusalem to celebrate that feast. If a people don't make that journey to Him, Zechariah says no rain will fall upon them (Zech. 14:17).

<https://burrosofberea.com/zechariah-14-part-9-zechariah-1416-19/>

**Deuteronomy 28:68** And the LORD will bring you back in ships to Egypt, a journey that I promised that you should never make again; and there you shall offer yourselves for sale to your enemies as male and female slaves, but there will be no buyer."

Moses and Hosea had both foretold that the eventual fate of rebellious Israel would be a return to Egypt, not a return to their homeland (Deut. 28:68; Hos. 8:13). Uncoincidentally, this is exactly what happened. Josephus informs us that the survivors of the siege were taken to Egypt for free slave labor (Wars, 6.8.2; 6.9.2). On the other hand, those Jews who embraced Christ were part of the New Israel, and the land we inherit is now the entire earth (Matt. 5:5).

<https://burrosofberea.com/dispensationalism-strikes-out-again-three-more-verses-they-get-wrong/>

According to Josephus, 97,000 Jews were taken prisoner by the Romans.[19] As if this were not jarring enough, the reason they were taken as prisoners is even more jarring. When all was said and done, Titus' soldiers had "grown weary" and were "quite tired" of killing them.[20] From there, the story goes from jarring to saddening. Having lost the interest and strength to continue murdering the Jews, Josephus tells us that the soldiers had "hoped to get some money by sparing them" but ended up selling "the rest of the multitude, with their wives and children, at a very low price." [21]

The low price was because those to be sold "were very many" but "the buyers were few." [22] Thus, they were "sold for little or nothing." [23] In short, they were sold "for a trifling price per head, as supply was far in excess of demand," as Josephus puts it. [24] At that point, it wasn't even worth the Romans' time to try and sell them anymore. In the end, the vast multitude of Jews remaining alive were simply put into bonds and taken to the mines of Egypt to work as free labor. [25]

## Back to Egypt: Prophecy Comes Full Circle

When all was said and done, the remaining Jewish captives had come full circle and returned to where it all began with their ancestors so long ago. They returned to Egyptian oppression because no one else would even pay money to have them as slaves. Hauntingly, this fulfills the prophecy of Moses in Deuteronomy 28:68. Moses foresaw their apostasy centuries before and foretold of their eventual fate to the very last detail:

"And the Lord will bring you back to Egypt in ships, by the way about which I said to you, 'You will never see it again!' And there you will offer yourselves for sale to your enemies as male and female slaves, but there will be no buyer" (Deut. 28:68).

In the end, it ended where it all began – just as Moses had foreseen.

<https://burrosofberea.com/zechariah-14-part-2-the-siege-of-the-city/>

**(NASB) Deuteronomy 31:29** "For I know that after my death you will act corruptly and turn from the way which I have commanded you; and evil will befall you in the latter days, for you will do that which is evil in the sight of the LORD, provoking Him to anger with the work of your hands." **(New American Standard Bible)**

In this context, "the latter days" simply means the days following Moses's death. After Moses was gone, they would behave corruptly and do evil in the sight of the Lord. It didn't take long for this to happen. In fact, it happened rather quickly. In Judges 2:20-21, we read:

"So the anger of the Lord burned against Israel, and He said, "Because this nation has violated My covenant which I commanded their fathers, and has not listened to My voice, I in turn will no longer drive out from them any of the nations which Joshua left when he died" (Judg. 2:20-21).

As Gary DeMar writes, "In many cases, the Hebrew word often translated 'last days' means nothing more than 'in future days,' 'a later time,' or 'in days to come.' Old Testament Hebrew does not have a word for 'future' or 'in the distant future'... Moses isn't skipping over thousands of years of history to describe what will happen in the distant future. The 'the latter days' in Deuteronomy actually refers to the period of the Judges." [5]

<https://burrosofberea.com/gog-and-magog-part-5-the-time-of-the-attack/>

**Deuteronomy 33:24** And of Asher he said, "Most blessed of sons be Asher; let him be the favorite of his brothers, and let him dip his foot in oil.

Andy Woods gets the decoder ring out once again:

"A fascinating verse potentially predicting these very things is found in Deuteronomy 33:24. Here, Moses, while saying goodbye to the tribes just prior to his death on Mount Nebo on the plains of Moab, pronounced blessings upon and made predictions concerning Israel's tribes. Note Moses' words to the tribe of Asher: 'Of Asher he said, More blessed than sons is Asher; May he be favored by his brothers, And may he dip his foot in oil.' Now this is probably not talking about actual petroleum; or, on the other hand, maybe it is." [7]

Contra Woods' imaginative take on the passage, Deuteronomy 33:24 is not code for Asher hitting it big in Big Oil someday. In Biblical times, plant oils were considered precious commodities (Ps. 23:5). Thus, a wise man does not waste oil, but the fool swallows it up (Prov. 21:20). Oil was thought to make the heart glad and was the perfect complement to fine wine (Ps. 45:7; Prov. 27:9; Isa. 61:3; 65:6). As such, a land that was rich in oil was a richly valued land (Deut. 8:8). Consequently, Asher's blessing isn't difficult to understand.

As J.R. Porter writes, "the territory of Asher is so fruitful, especially in oil, that he can immerse his feet in oil, instead of merely anointing them with it." [8] Simply put, this has nothing to do with ExxonMobil.

In this regard, Deuteronomy 33 is no different than Ezekiel 38-39 in that both passages had their own meaning in their own time. As Gordon Fee famously said, "A text cannot mean what it could never have meant for its original readers/hearers." [9] It would seem that the pundits' decoder rings are broken. From the Pentateuch to the Prophets, the sellers of sensation turn the world of the Bible inside out and upside down.

<https://burrosofberea.com/gog-and-magog-part-8-the-goal-of-the-attack/>

**2 Kings 2:23** He went up from there to Bethel, and while he was going up on the way, some small boys came out of the city and jeered at him, saying, "Go up, you baldhead! Go up, you baldhead!"

It is another showdown between the prophets of YHWH and idolatrous Israel. "But in this particular showdown, they are questioning Elisha's very legitimacy as a prophet of YHWH to begin with. How could he lay claim to the prophetic line of Moses when it was Elisha's own ancestor who opposed Moses? And their taunt, "go up, baldie," is a veiled threat. Korah went down – all the way down into Sheol. The implication is that they are going to take him down, just like his ancestor, and Elisha is free to try and save himself if he can.

<https://burrosofberea.com/the-boys-the-bears-and-the-prophet-who-had-no-hair-2-kings-223-the-rest-of-the-story/>

**2 Kings 2:24** And he turned around, and when he saw them, he cursed them in the name of the LORD. And two she-bears came out of the woods and tore forty-two of the boys.

Vastly outnumbered and seemingly with no hope in sight, the turning point comes when Elisha turns around (2 Kg. 2:24). In an ever so ironic twist, it's this son of Korah's attackers who've inherited Korah's legacy of opposing a true prophet of God. And the two she-bears from the woods even out the odds. Just as Moses called upon the Lord and the earth opened its mouth swallowing Korah and his men (Num. 16:28-33), Elisha calls upon the Lord and the bears swallow them. To drive the rhetorical point home, the writer of 2 Kings uses the same word for the ground being "torn open" (baqa) in Numbers 16:31 to describe Elisha's assailants being "torn open" (baqa) in 2 Kings 2:24. In sum, past events are essential to understanding the turn of events in the Elisha story.

<https://burrosofberea.com/the-boys-the-bears-and-the-prophet-who-had-no-hair-2-kings-223-the-rest-of-the-story/>

**2 Chronicles 36:23** "Thus says Cyrus king of Persia, 'The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever is among you of all his people, may the LORD his God be with him. Let him go up.'"

Isaiah himself specifies that their "return" (Isa. 44:22) would come about through the hand of the Persian King, Cyrus (Isa. 44:28). This happened in 536 BC. Cyrus himself self-consciously understood that he was fulfilling God's will by calling the Israelites back home to rebuild their temple (2 Chr. 36:22-23).

<https://burrosofberea.com/dispensationalism-strikes-out-again-three-more-verses-they-get-wrong/>

**Ezra 1:2** "Thus says Cyrus king of Persia: The LORD, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and he has charged me to build him a house at Jerusalem, which is in Judah.

Isaiah himself specifies that their "return" (Isa. 44:22) would come about through the hand of the Persian King, Cyrus (Isa. 44:28). This happened in 536 BC. Cyrus himself self-consciously understood that he was fulfilling God's will by calling the Israelites back home to rebuild their temple (2 Chr. 36:22-23).

<https://burrosofberea.com/dispensationalism-strikes-out-again-three-more-verses-they-get-wrong/>

**Ezra 1:4** And let each survivor, in whatever place he sojourns, be assisted by the men of his place with silver and gold, with goods and with beasts, besides freewill offerings for the house of God that is in Jerusalem."

Ezekiel 38:12 speaks of Gog going after the Israelite's livestock and cattle. In Ezra 1:4, we're told that the Jewish exiles who returned under Cyrus's decree brought with them an enormous amount of "silver and gold," along with "goods and cattle" (see also: Ezra 1:5-11; 2:69; 5:14; 6:5; 7:15-16, 18, 22; Neh. 7:71-72). These are the exact same items mentioned by Ezekiel.[2]

<https://burrosofberea.com/gog-and-magog-part-6-mordecais-defiant-stand-and->

[gogs-evil-plan/](http://gogs-evil-plan/)

**Ezra 2:70** Now the priests, the Levites, some of the people, the singers, the gatekeepers, and the temple servants lived in their towns, and all the rest of Israel in their towns.

Ezra tells us that “all Israel” was once again in their own “cities” (Ezra 2:70) and “the people were gathered together as one man” (Ezra 3:1). And the clincher is that Isaiah himself had prophesied that Cyrus would be the one who would make it all happen:

26 Confirming the word of His servant And carrying out the purpose of His messengers. It is I who says of Jerusalem, ‘She shall be inhabited!’ And of the cities of Judah, ‘They shall be built.’ And I will raise her ruins again.

27 I am the One who says to the depth of the sea, ‘Dry up!’ And I will make your rivers dry up.

28 It is I who says of Cyrus, ‘He is My shepherd, And he will carry out all My desire.’ And he says of Jerusalem, ‘She will be built,’ And of the temple, ‘Your foundation will be laid’ (Isaiah 44:26-28).

Cyrus, in turn, attests to the fact that he was consciously fulfilling this prophecy:

“This is what Cyrus king of Persia says: ‘The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and He has appointed me to rebuild for Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever there is among you of all His people, may his God be with him! Go up to Jerusalem which is in Judah and rebuild the house of the Lord, the God of Israel; He is the God who is in Jerusalem” (Ezra 1:2).

<https://burrosofberea.com/isaiah-668-in-1948-dispensationalisms-warp-speed-hermeneutic/>

**Ezra 9:2** For they have taken some of their daughters to be wives for themselves and for their sons, so that the holy race has mixed itself with the peoples of the lands. And in this faithlessness the hand of the officials and chief men has been foremost.”

Regarding the phrase “holy seed,” the word “holy” is used 382 times in the OT, and the word “seed” is used 204 times. Yet, these two words occur together only one other time in the entirety of the OT. In Ezra 9:2, Ezra refers to the returning exiles of his own day as “the holy seed.”

Marvin Sweeney captures the significance of Ezra’s choice of words: “Indeed, Ezra-Nehemiah portrays Ezra’s return to Jerusalem as fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecies, particularly the restoration of the ‘holy seed’ of Israel (Ezra 9:2; Isa 6:13) and the new exodus from Babylonia...”[6] The possibility of this precise phrase being a mere coincidence in these two places is so unlikely that critics

argue that it was added to Isaiah by a later “editor” as a “final late-post-exilic addition to the pericope.”[7] But this is to portray things backwards.

As John N. Oswalt states, “...the book [of Isaiah] asserts that Isaiah ben Amoz (1:1) was solely responsible for the book.”[8] Isaiah (8th century BC) isn’t drawing from Ezra (6th to 5th century BC); Ezra is drawing from Isaiah. The problem is that textual critics don’t believe in predictive prophecy, i.e., they don’t believe in miracles. Isaiah’s sole author, Isaiah himself, had predicted the fall of Israel, the fall of Judah, and the return of the remnant – the “holy seed.” Ezra was living out what Isaiah predicted, and he knew it. He was well-versed in the word of God (Ezra 7:10), and his word choice was intentional.

This intentional, conscious effort to identify the returning exiles with the fulfillment of Isaiah’s prophecy is transparently noticeable in Ezra’s next phrase selection describing them. Looking prophetically forward to the return from exile, Isaiah depicts the “holy seed” (Isa. 6:13) as “the remnant of Israel, and those of the house of Jacob who have escaped...” (Isa. 10:20). Accordingly, Ezra repeatedly refers to the “holy seed” (Ezra 9:2) of his own time as the “escaped remnant” (Ezra 9:13-15). The parallels are unmistakable.

<https://burrosofberea.com/isaiah-668-in-1948-dispensationalisms-warp-speed-hermeneutic/>

**Ezra 9:4** Then all who trembled at the words of the God of Israel, because of the faithlessness of the returned exiles, gathered around me while I sat appalled until the evening sacrifice.

Ezra is specifically speaking of those who “tremble” at the “word” and “commandments” of God. With this in mind, the relevancy of Isaiah’s usage of the term in conjunction with Ezra’s is self-evident:

“For My hand made all these things, Thus all these things came into being,” declares the Lord. “But to this one I will look, To him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word” (Isa. 66:2).

“Hear the word of the Lord, you who tremble at His word: Your brothers who hate you, who exclude you for My name’s sake, Have said, ‘Let the Lord be glorified, that we may see your joy.’ But they will be put to shame” (Isa. 66:5).

These verses come from Isaiah’s final chapter, a chapter which the textual critics again argue was either heavily modified or completely added by a later editor “from the early Persian period.”[10] Why? Because of the undeniable “connection”[11] that “exists”[12] between the Ezra text and the Isaiah text. As Marvin Sweeney puts it, “‘those who tremble’ (charedîm) at the word of YHWH points to the interrelationship between Isaiah and Ezra-Nehemiah.”[13]

This “interrelationship” and “connection” between Ezra and Isaiah again leads the

textual critics to conclude that the phrases in Isaiah were added later in reaction to the words in Ezra. For the Evangelical, Ezra (being the student of God's word whom he was) was relying on the predictive prophecy of Isaiah, rather than a later editor of Isaiah plugging the words of Ezra into Isaiah's prophecy. Ezra was keenly aware of the fact he was living out fulfillment of Isaiah's words, and as such it was time for God's people to tremble at God's word. The textual critics see the connection but make the connection in reverse, thinking that the Isaiah text borrows from the Ezra text, but at least they see the connection to begin with. The Dispensationalist is too busy flying at light speed to even notice it.

For Ezra, those who trembled at God's word were the escaped remnant, the holy seed of whom Isaiah spoke. They returned under the decree of Cyrus, as Isaiah had foretold. Ezra knew this. Cyrus knew this. The modern-day prophecy pundits either don't know this or they are intentionally ignoring it to keep their narrative going and the book sales flowing. May 14, 1948 was not the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy. Cyrus's proclamation in 536 BC was the fulfillment. It's recorded on the very pages of Scripture itself, and the book of Ezra is filled with Echoes of Isaiah if we only have the ears to hear those echoes.

<https://burrosofberea.com/isaiah-668-in-1948-dispensationalisms-warp-speed-hermeneutic/>

**Ezra 9:13** And after all that has come upon us for our evil deeds and for our great guilt, seeing that you, our God, have punished us less than our iniquities deserved and have given us such a remnant as this,

Looking prophetically forward to the return from exile, Isaiah depicts the "holy seed" (Isa. 6:13) as "the remnant of Israel, and those of the house of Jacob who have escaped..." (Isa. 10:20). Accordingly, Ezra repeatedly refers to the "holy seed" (Ezra 9:2) of his own time as the "escaped remnant" (Ezra 9:13-15). The parallels are unmistakable.

<https://burrosofberea.com/isaiah-668-in-1948-dispensationalisms-warp-speed-hermeneutic/>

**Nehemiah 6:2** Sanballat and Geshem sent to me, saying, "Come and let us meet together at Hakkephirim in the plain of Ono." But they intended to do me harm.

Sanballat and his cohort Geshem wish to meet with Nehemiah under false pretenses (Neh. 6:2a). Nehemiah declines and informs the reader, "But they **intended (chashav)** to do me **harm (raah)**. Notice the correlation with Zechariah 8:17 – "let none of you **devise (chashav) evil (raah)** in your heart against another."

<https://burrosofberea.com/mordecai-or-the-millennium-ancient-history-pop-prophecy-and-the-meaning-of-zechariah-823-part-1-a-man-a-jew/>

**Nehemiah 6:9** For they all wanted to frighten us, thinking, "Their hands will

drop from the work, and it will not be done.” But now, O God, strengthen my hands.

The parallels with Zechariah are unmistakable: “...Fear (yare) not, but let your hands (yad) be strong (chazaq)” (Zech. 8:13). After admonishing his readers to show courage in the face of fear, Zechariah then charges them to “not love a false oath (shevuah)” – something which the Lord hates (Zech. 8:13).

<https://burrosofberea.com/mordecai-or-the-millennium-ancient-history-pop-prophecy-and-the-meaning-of-zechariah-823-part-1-a-man-a-jew/>

**Nehemiah 8:14** And they found it written in the Law that the LORD had commanded by Moses that the people of Israel should dwell in booths during the feast of the seventh month,

**Nehemiah 8:15** and that they should proclaim it and publish it in all their towns and in Jerusalem, “Go out to the hills and bring branches of olive, wild olive, myrtle, palm, and other leafy trees to make booths, as it is written.”

### **Nehemiah Commemorates Esther Comforting Jerusalem**

When Isaiah introduced the myrtle tree, he announced that it would be a “memorial to the Lord” and “an everlasting sign” that “would not be eliminated” (Isa. 55:13). Accordingly, when Nehemiah reinstituted the Feast of Tabernacles during the restoration, “myrtle branches” are added to the leafy branches used to make the tabernacles as directed in Leviticus 23:33-34 (Neh. 8:15), thus commemorating Hadassah’s achievement and victory for her people.

Consequently, when we read about God comforting Jerusalem as a mother comforts her child in Isaiah 66:13, we shouldn’t ignore where Isaiah had previously introduced the theme of comfort and how it played out in history. In the book of Esther, Haman’s attack was aimed at the Jews not only in Susa, but throughout the entire Persian Empire. Quite the uncomfortable thought!

This empire-wide attack obviously would have included Jerusalem, and Haman’s intent was even worse than that of Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian king who conquered Jerusalem. Nebuchadnezzar spared lives by taking captives and leaving a remnant behind.[5] Haman would have taken no prisoners and spared no lives.[6] His stated goal laid bare the full horror of the threat. Haman’s aim was the total and complete annihilation of the Jewish people (Esth. 3:13) – the children born to the woman in 66:7-9. Fittingly, God would raise up a heroine to protect those children.

<https://burrosofberea.com/isaiahs-new-heavens-and-new-earth-part-7-comforting-the-children-protecting-the-people/>

**Leviticus 23:33** And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,

**Leviticus 23:34** "Speak to the people of Israel, saying, On the fifteenth day of this seventh month and for seven days is the Feast of Booths to the LORD.

**Leviticus 23:40** And you shall take for yourselves on the first day the fruit of beautiful trees, branches of palm trees, the boughs of leafy trees, and willows of the brook; and you shall rejoice before the LORD your God for seven days.

**Leviticus 23:41** You shall keep it as a feast to the LORD for seven days in the year. *It shall be* a statute forever in your generations. You shall celebrate it in the seventh month.

**Esther 1:1** Now in the days of Ahasuerus, the Ahasuerus who reigned from India to Ethiopia over 127 provinces,

### **The Importance of Esther**

Esther is so important because we tend to look at Esther as an irrelevant book, tucked away in the corner of Biblical history. It's not. It's the thrilling climax of one of the most engaging meta-narratives in the entire Old Testament –including Ezekiel 38 and 39. And Esther and Mordecai emerge as two of the most heroic figures in Israel's history. But we can't see this unless we pay attention to the genealogies and understand who Mordecai was and who Haman was. As Rachael Adelman puts it: "Mordecai 'the Jew,' as the embodiment of Israel, refuses to bow down to Haman the Agagite, as the embodiment of Amalek." [6] Everything in the Bible is there for a reason. Mordecai was a descendant of King Saul, and Haman was a descendant of Agag, King of the Amalekites. [7]

<https://burrosofberea.com/gog-and-magog-part-1-from-saul-and-agag-to-mordecai-and-haman/>

**(YLT) Esther 2:5** A man, a Jew, there hath been in Shushan the palace, and his name *is* Mordecai son of Jair, son of Shimei, son of Kish, a Benjamite— **(Young's Literal Translation)**

In the opening sentence of Esther 2:5, he is simply "a man, a Jew" (ish Yehudi). This seemingly minor detail, however, becomes a major key in understanding Zechariah 8:23 and speaks to Mordecai's importance in Jewish history.

While the word "man" (ish) is used 1850 times in the Old Testament, and the word "Jew" (Yehudi) is used 69 times, the two words are coupled together in just two places – Esther 2:5 and Zechariah 8:23. [8] Rendered literally, Zechariah 8:23 says that the people from the other nations "will grab the garment of a man, a Jew" (ish Yehudi). [9] As Christopher Kou says, this "exact emphatic form occurs only" in these two passages. [10] Interpreting Scripture is about connecting dots, and the Biblical writers give us two dots to connect between Zechariah's prophecy and Mordecai's legacy. [11]

<https://burrosofberea.com/mordecai-or-the-millennium-ancient-history-pop->

[prophecy-and-the-meaning-of-zechariah-823-part-1-a-man-a-jew/](http://burrosofberea.com/prophecy-and-the-meaning-of-zechariah-823-part-1-a-man-a-jew/)

And Saul, who was supposed to kill Agag, was a son of Kish, a Benjamite (1 Sam. 9:1). This becomes very important when we jump to the book of Esther, and Mordecai is introduced. Scholars recognize that his lineage is given “in a level of detail that exceeds the description of any other character in the story.”[1] If a biblical writer includes a genealogy, there is a reason for it. And the reason for this genealogy is huge. Like Saul, Mordecai was “a son of Kish, a Benjamite” (Esth. 2:5). As William McKane writes:

“The writer [of Esther] was deliberately establishing a connection between Saul and Mordecai. Further, Haman, the Agagite, is the counterpart of Agag, king of the Amalekites, and the new situation in the book of Esther is contrasted with the old in 1 Samuel 15. Saul spares Agag, but Mordecai sees to it that the family of Haman is exterminated.”[2]

<https://burrosofberea.com/gog-and-magog-part-1-from-saul-and-agag-to-mordecai-and-haman/>

**Esther 3:1** After these things King Ahasuerus promoted Haman the Agagite, the son of Hammedatha, and advanced him and set his throne above all the officials who were with him.

### **Haman the Agagite**

Esther tells us that Haman was an “Agagite” (Esth. 3:1,10; 8:3,5; 9:24), referring to the descendants of Agag – the king of the Amalekites, whom Saul was supposed to kill back in 1 Samuel 15:2-3. As an “Agagite,” therefore, Haman was part of the royal bloodline of Israel’s ancient enemy – the Amalekites. Conversely, it’s no small coincidence that Mordecai was a descendant of Saul – as Mordecai and Saul were both Benjamites from the line of Kish (cf. 1 Sam. 9:1; Esth. 2:5). As James Jordan says, “The conflict between Saul and Agag (1 Samuel 15) is rejoined in Esther. What Esther records is the last great attack upon Israel by Amalek, and the final destruction of Amalek.”[12]

The final destruction should have come a long time ago. Apparently, no one before them had the tenacity or the resolve to get the job done. Anne Wetter puts it this way, “Esther and Mordecai prove to be the worthiest bearers of the Jewish tradition: They have not forgotten to blot out Amalek (Deut. 25,19), and, unlike their forefathers, they have actually managed to perform the deed.”[13]

Unlike Saul and the others who went before, Esther and Mordecai took out the Amalekites – all of them. This included the royal descendant of King Agag himself, Haman, along with his sons (Esth. 7:9-10). Like a magnet, Haman’s connection to Agag takes us straight back to the book of Ezekiel and links him to the prophet’s Gog of the Land of Magog.

<https://burrosofberea.com/haman-hamas-and-the-headlines-getting-gog-magog->

[wrongagain/](#)

**Esther 3:2** And all the king's servants who were at the king's gate bowed down and paid homage to Haman, for the king had so commanded concerning him. But Mordecai did not bow down or pay homage.

Haman's entire evil plot to eradicate the Jews and seize their possessions is triggered by one single event – Mordecai's refusal to bow.

When the king promoted Haman and advanced his authority over all the other princes (Esth. 3:1), all the king's servants and all who were at the gate "bowed down and paid homage to Haman" (Esth. 3:2a). All but one. "Mordecai," we are told, "neither bowed down nor paid homage" (Esth. 3:2b).

<https://burrosofberea.com/gog-and-magog-part-6-mordecais-defiant-stand-and-gogs-evil-plan/>

**Esther 3:3** Then the king's servants who were at the king's gate said to Mordecai, "Why do you transgress the king's command?"

When the king's servants asked Mordecai why he was transgressing the king's command, his reply was simply to tell them that he was a Jew (Esth. 3:3-4). Mordecai was a man of few words, but the few words he chose spoke volumes. There were a thousand years of history loaded into those three words. Haman was an Amalekite. The Jews and the Amalekites had been sworn enemies from the time of the Exodus. Thus, there is no mystery as to the reason for Haman's defiance.

When the Israelites left Egypt after hundreds of years of bondage, the first thing they encountered after their new-found freedom was Amalek – who came to fight with them at Rephidim (Exod. 17:8). And fight with him they did (Exod. 17:9-12). When it was all over, the Lord said to Moses: "Write this in a book as a memorial and recite it to Joshua: I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven" (Exod. 17:14). With a thousand-year-old grudge match between them, there was no way Mordecai was bowing down to this guy.

Mordecai was a faithful follower of the Lord, and he knew his history. As such, he had no interest in paying homage to the Amalekites. Much to the contrary, he wanted them destroyed. As we've seen, that's exactly what Mordecai and Esther did. They finished the job that was started back in Exodus 17 when their God vowed to utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven. Mordecai knew his Bible, and he knew what he had to do.

<https://burrosofberea.com/gog-and-magog-part-6-mordecais-defiant-stand-and-gogs-evil-plan/>

**Esther 3:4** And when they spoke to him day after day and he would not listen to them, they told Haman, in order to see whether Mordecai's words would stand,

for he had told them that he was a Jew.

It wasn't just ancient history behind those three words, "I'm a Jew." There was something more recent, in his own childhood, that molded Mordecai into the fearless and godly man that he was. Like Saul, He was a Son of Kish, a Benjamite. As such, the entire conflict between Saul and Agag (Gog) is rebooted with Mordecai the Benjamite and Haman the Agagite (Gogite).[4] In addition to this, the text gives us another important detail regarding Mordecai's background. According to Esther 2:6, Mordecai was one of the original captives taken to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar.[5] And Ezra 2:2 and Nehemiah 7:7 mention him by name as one of the returning exiles.

The exile lasted a long time, so Mordecai would have been a very young boy at the time and a much older man by now. But that young boy would witness something in Babylon and carry it with him for the rest of his life. Mordecai would have remembered three slightly older young men (Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego) who stood alone for their God while an entire empire bowed down to the idol of a false god. And he would have remembered how their God delivered those three young men from the fiery furnace and was right there with them in that furnace, as well. This time, it was an older man in Persia who wasn't going to bow. With his childhood memories from Babylon racing through his mind, and the courage that surged through his veins, the time had come for Mordecai to be the one to stand alone for his God.

Mordecai remembered two things from Babylon: 1) God's people don't bow to their enemies and, 2) when they're faithful to him, God delivers His people from their enemies. And that is exactly what the Lord did for Esther and Mordecai. And those three words, "I'm a Jew," said it all.

<https://burrosofberea.com/gog-and-magog-part-6-mordecais-defiant-stand-and-gogs-evil-plan/>

**Esther 3:10** So the king took his signet ring from his hand and gave it to Haman the Agagite, the son of Hammedatha, the enemy of the Jews.

Esther tells us that Haman was an "Agagite" (Esth. 3:1,10; 8:3,5; 9:24), referring to the descendants of Agag – the king of the Amalekites, whom Saul was supposed to kill back in 1 Samuel 15:2-3. But he doesn't do it, and because of his failure, God regrets that He made Saul king (1 Sam. 15:11). And, of course, Samuel has to finish the job by slaying Agag, king of the Amalekites, to pieces (1 Sam. 15:32-33). This episode in Samuel 15 gives us the background for Haman's lineage. As an "Agagite," he was part of the royal bloodline of Israel's ancient enemy – the Amalekites.

<https://burrosofberea.com/gog-and-magog-part-1-from-saul-and-agag-to-mordecai-and-haman/>

**Esther 3:13** Letters were sent by couriers to all the king's provinces with

instruction to destroy, to kill, and to annihilate all Jews, young and old, women and children, in one day, the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, which is the month of Adar, and to plunder their goods.

As an Agagite, Haman was part of the Royal bloodline of the Amalekites – Israel's most ancient enemy. His goal was to wipe the Jewish people out, all of them, in a single day (Esth. 3:23). As history would have it, a young orphan who became queen and her older cousin turned the tables on Haman – and turned history around.

<https://burrosofberea.com/mordecai-or-the-millennium-ancient-history-pop-prophecy-and-the-meaning-of-zechariah-823-part-1-a-man-a-jew/>

**Esther 7:6** And Esther said, "A foe and enemy! This wicked Haman!" Then Haman was terrified before the king and the queen.

**Zechariah 1:8** "I saw in the night, and behold, a man riding on a red horse! He was standing among the myrtle trees in the glen, and behind him were red, sorrel, and white horses.

Commentators recognize that the myrtle is relatively rare in the Old Testament up to this point. After this, "it appears as if indigenous." [5] The significance is impossible to miss. Esther's original Hebrew name (her real name) was Hadassah, and Hadassah means "myrtle tree." By his stance among the myrtle trees, Zechariah's heavenly messenger was signaling that the deliverance would come through Hadassah, God's myrtle tree. And it did.

Once she had uncovered and revealed Haman's entire plot to annihilate the Jews, Esther points to him and declares: "A foe and an enemy, is this wicked Haman!" And Haman became terrified before the king and the queen" (Esth. 7:6). And then, on the gallows at his own house which Haman had constructed to hang Mordecai, the king declares: "Hang him on it" (Esth. 7:9).

After this, the king grants the Jews the right to assemble, to defend themselves, and to annihilate the entire army of those who set out to annihilate them (Esth. 9:11). This includes five hundred men, along with the ten sons of Haman, in the capital city of Susa alone (Esth. 9:12) and an additional 75,000 more throughout the entire Empire (Esth. 9:16).

Both the battle itself and the resulting victory for God's People were huge. This more than meets the criteria for fulfilling something of the scope and size of Ezekiel's Gog of Magog Prophecy.

<https://burrosofberea.com/gog-and-magog-part-7-gods-myrtle-tree/>

**Esther 8:15** Then Mordecai went out from the presence of the king in royal robes of blue and white, with a great golden crown and a robe of fine linen and purple, and the city of Susa shouted and rejoiced.

The book of Esther opens with “a man, a Jew” (ish Yehudi) named Mordecai in the streets of the Persian capital city, Susa (Esth. 2:5). By the end of the story, this same Jewish man is clothed in royal robes, and fine garments, and showered with praise in the streets of that same city (Esth. 8:15).

<https://burrosofberea.com/mordecai-or-the-millennium-ancient-history-pop-prophecy-and-the-meaning-of-zechariah-823-part-2-the-words-of-peace-and-truth/>

**Esther 8:17** And in every province and in every city, wherever the king's command and his edict reached, there was gladness and joy among the Jews, a feast and a holiday. And many from the peoples of the country declared themselves Jews, for fear of the Jews had fallen on them.

Because of Mordecai's letter written with the king's approval, the Jews fearlessly and courageously annihilate the entire army of those who set out to annihilate them (Esth. 8:8-11). And then, the climax of the whole narrative, the direction “toward which this whole story is moving,”[4] is reached when “many of the peoples of the land became Jews, for the dread of the Jews had fallen on them” (Esth. 8:17).

Zechariah 8 and Esther 8 are mirror images of each other. The only difference is that Zechariah peered forward to the events of 510 BC while Esther's writer looked back upon them. The trifold motif of conflict, courage, and celebration underscores both narratives. And both accounts focus on “a man, a Jew” (ish Yehudi) who leads his own people to victory and leads “many” other “peoples” to the Jewish faith (Zech. 8:22; Esth. 8:17).

<https://burrosofberea.com/mordecai-or-the-millennium-ancient-history-pop-prophecy-and-the-meaning-of-zechariah-823-part-2-the-words-of-peace-and-truth/>

**(KJV) Esther 9:19** Therefore the Jews of the villages, that dwelt in the unwalled towns, made the fourteenth day of the month Adar *a day of* gladness and feasting, and a good day, and of sending portions one to another.

## **Unwalled Villages**

Ezekiel tells us that Gog would launch his assault at a time when the Jews were living in “unwalled villages” (Ezek. 38:11). We definitely cannot look to today's headlines to find the fulfillment of this verse. Modern-day Israel is protected by a 500-mile-long wall called the “West Bank Barrier.”[11] Where we can look to find its fulfillment is in the book of Esther. Esther 9:19 speaks of “the Jews of the rural towns, who live in the unwalled villages.” These are the very Jews whom Haman and his armies sought to exterminate. As such, the attack of Gog and his allies (in Ezekiel 38) comes at a time that accurately describes the unique living conditions of the Jews (“unwalled villages”), in the book of Esther, when Haman

and his forces set out to annihilate them.

Just as the timing of the attack helps us identify Haman as the attacker, Haman's identity in turn helps us understand why Ezekiel would refer to him as "Gog."

<https://burrosofberea.com/haman-hamas-and-the-headlines-getting-gog-magog-wrongagain/>

**Ezekiel 38:11** You will say, 'I will go up against a land of unwallled villages; I will go to a peaceful people, who dwell safely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having neither bars nor gates'—

Ezekiel 38:11 and Esther 9:19 speaks of those who live in "unwallled villages (perazah)." Outside of these two occurrences, the word perazah appears only one other time in the Old Testament, i.e., Zechariah 2:4. Zechariah was written during this unique time in Israel's history, i.e., after the return from exile, before the battle in the book of Esther, and before Nehemiah had rebuilt the walls. Gary DeMar puts it together:

"We learn that there were Jews who were living in relative peace in 'unwallled towns' (Esther 9:19, KJV) when Haman conspired against them. Israel's antagonists in Ezekiel are said to 'go up against the land of unwallled villages' (Ezek. 38:11). The Hebrew word perazah is used in Esther 9:19 and Ezekiel 38:11. There's a very good possibility that God did not want the returning exiles to build a wall before the temple was completed to remind them that He would be their wall and protector: Run, speak to that young man, saying, 'Jerusalem will be inhabited without walls because of the multitude of men and cattle within it. For I,' declares the Lord, 'will be a wall of fire around her, and I will be the glory in her midst'" (Zech. 2:4).[21]

The reference to "unwallled villages" is just one of the many connections that points to the fulfillment of Ezekiel 38-39 in Esther's time and not our own time.

<https://burrosofberea.com/gog-and-magogin-it-again-the-prophecy-pundits-remix-an-old-track/>

**Esther 9:26** Therefore they called these days Purim, after the term Pur. Therefore, because of all that was written in this letter, and of what they had faced in this matter, and of what had happened to them,

The victory achieved by Esther and Mordecai would see the end of the Amalekites and the inauguration of a new Jewish holiday to commemorate their accomplishment – the Feast of Purim (Esth. 9:26-29). As Anne Wetter writes, Esther and Mordecai prove "to be the worthiest bearers of the Jewish tradition: they have not forgotten to blot out Amalek (Deut. 25,19), and, unlike their forefathers, they have actually managed to perform the deed." [6]

<https://burrosofberea.com/mordecai-or-the-millennium-ancient-history-pop->

[prophecy-and-the-meaning-of-zechariah-823-part-1-a-man-a-jew/](#)

**Esther 9:30** Letters were sent to all the Jews, to the 127 provinces of the kingdom of Ahasuerus, in words of peace and truth,

In Esther chapter 9, Mordecai sends a second letter to the Jews of all 127 provinces of Ahasuerus's kingdom confirming the Feast of Purim as an officially appointed celebration – following Israel's four days of fasting over the events of the exile (Esth. 9:25-31).[7] Mordecai's words in this letter are specifically designated as the "words of peace and truth" (Esth. 9:30). The connection to Zechariah (written 10 years earlier) is all but transparent:

"And the word of the Lord of hosts came to me, saying, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts: The fast of the fourth month and the fast of the fifth and the fast of the seventh and the fast of the tenth shall be to the house of Judah seasons of joy and gladness and cheerful feasts. Therefore, love truth and peace' (Zech. 8:18-19).

<https://burrosofberea.com/mordecai-or-the-millennium-ancient-history-pop-prophecy-and-the-meaning-of-zechariah-823-part-2-the-words-of-peace-and-truth/>

**Esther 9:32** The command of Esther confirmed these practices of Purim, and it was recorded in writing.

In Zechariah 8:19, the fasts and lamentations over the events of the exile are turned into celebrations of joy and cheerful feasts. It is a reversal, restoration, and redemption from their previous state. This is precisely what happens in Esther.

Thomas Wetzels puts it all together:

"Esther notes that '[t]hese days of Purim shall be observed at their proper time, as Mordecai the Jew—and now Esther the queen—has obligated [the Jews] to do, and just as they have assumed for themselves and their descendants the obligation of the fasts with their lamentations' (9:31). The narrator clearly connects the process by which Purim is made a perpetual feast with that of the fasts and lamentations that are under discussion in Zechariah. The narrator also connects the observance of these celebrations with a way of life. The proper practice of these festivals requires *šālôm* and *'emet*, richly complex terms in Hebrew that convey the ideas of peace, balance, and right-orderedness, as well as honesty, a truthful life, and transparency or steadiness. Significantly, the revised celebrations instituted in Zechariah, like the new celebration of Purim, reflect a time in which mourning was turned to gladness, when (as MT Esther puts it) 'the opposite happened' (Esth. 9:1), and what seemed lost was recovered.[15]

Zechariah's prophecy of "peace and truth" finds its fulfillment in Mordecai's words of "truth and peace."

<https://burrosofberea.com/mordecai-or-the-millennium-ancient-history-pop-prophecy-and-the-meaning-of-zechariah-823-part-2-the-words-of-peace-and-truth/>

**Esther 10:3** For Mordecai the Jew was second in rank to King Ahasuerus, and he was great among the Jews and popular with the multitude of his brothers, for he sought the welfare of his people and spoke peace to all his people.

In the epilogue of the story, "the man, the Jew" (ish Yehudi), Mordecai, is "second only to King Ahasuerus" and is known as "the one who sought the good of his people and the one who spoke for the welfare of his whole nation".

**Job 41:8** Lay your hands on him; remember the battle—you will not do it again!

Every culture wanted to claim that it was their god who defeated, and/or defeats, the Chaos Monster. In Job 41:8, God addresses this. God asks Job to "remember the battle." What battle? The battle at the beginning of creation that all the ancient cultures were familiar with.

Yahweh says that He, and He alone, is the one who defeats Leviathan (vv. 9ff). Verse 25 says that, when Leviathan "raises himself up, the mighty fear." The word translated "mighty" is "EL," the ancient word for "god" or "goddess." Yahweh is saying that, contrary to the claims of the other cultures, their gods not only didn't defeat Leviathan...their gods are actually afraid of him!

<https://burrosofberea.com/identifying-the-sea-beast-of-revelation/>

**Job 41:25** When he raises himself up, the mighty are afraid; at the crashing they are beside themselves.

Yahweh says that He, and He alone, is the one who defeats Leviathan (vv. 9ff). Verse 25 says that, when Leviathan "raises himself up, the mighty fear." The word translated "mighty" is "EL," the ancient word for "god" or "goddess." Yahweh is saying that, contrary to the claims of the other cultures, their gods not only didn't defeat Leviathan...their gods are actually afraid of him!

<https://burrosofberea.com/identifying-the-sea-beast-of-revelation/>

**Psalms 102:1** **A Prayer of one afflicted, when he is faint and pours out his complaint before the LORD.** Hear my prayer, O LORD; let my cry come to you!

Known as The Prayer of an Exile, this Psalm's "center of Gravity" is "the crushing reality of exile" coupled with the hope of "divine deliverance." Written against the backdrop of the Babylonian captivity, Psalm 102 reflects "what God's people were experiencing when they were exiles, displaced from Jerusalem and under the

authority of pagan rulers.”

As the Psalm progresses, the Psalmist’s perspective progresses as well. His own lonely voice increasingly becomes the voice of the community. As the perspective progresses, so does the theme as the Psalmist moves from exile to expectation. Looking to the future, “the return from the captivity” is cast as “a new beginning.”

Given the exilic setting of Psalm 102, prominent figures of that era like Daniel, Nehemiah, or Jeremiah are commonly suggested as the author. Of the three choices, Jeremiah best fits the profile. Known as “the weeping prophet,” he clues us in right away with his own signature style. The Psalm opens with these words:

“Hear my prayer, Lord! And let my cry (shavah) for help come to You” (Ps. 102:1)

So, the unnamed Psalmist leads off with a petition for the Lord to hear his “cry” (shavah). This is a rare word in the Old Testament, occurring merely 11 times. Significantly, in the period leading up to and including the exile, it’s unique to Jeremiah alone. During this time, “cry” (shavah) appears only in Jeremiah 8:19 and Lamentations 3:56. With that said, the echo of Lamentations 3:56 in Psalm 102:1 is impossible to miss:

“Do not hide your ear from my prayer for relief, from my cry (shavah) for help” (Lam. 3:56).

<https://burrosofberea.com/a-walk-through-psalm-102/>

**Psalms 102:11** My days are like an evening shadow; I wither away like grass.

This is more stock vocabulary pointing to the exile as the context, and Jeremiah as the author. In Jeremiah 6:1-6, the prophet warns of the impending destruction of Jerusalem. He calls for the sons of Benjamin to flee to safety (Jer. 6:1) as “evil looks down from the north” and brings “great destruction” (Jer. 6:3). The “siege against Jerusalem” (Jer. 6:6) comes as the shadows lengthen:

<https://burrosofberea.com/a-walk-through-psalm-102/>

**Psalms 102:12** But you, O LORD, are enthroned forever; you are remembered throughout all generations.

The contrast between the “I” of Psalm 102:11 and “you” of Psalm 102:12 telegraphs “a dramatic shift in the psalm.” The focus moves from the Psalmist to the Lord Himself. Nonetheless, this shift in focus isn’t accompanied by a shift in style. Jeremiah’s contrast here, between man’s temporal nature and God’s eternal nature, is nearly identical to his words in Lamentations 5:19: “But you, O Lord, reign forever; your throne endures to all generations” (Lam. 5:19).

<https://burrosofberea.com/a-walk-through-psalm-102/>

**Psalms 102:13** You will arise and have pity on Zion; it is the time to favor her;

the appointed time has come.

Jeremiah moves forward in time from the dust of the Babylonian exile to the restoration of the Persian period. Jeremiah is very specific here in referring to “her dust,” and the “her” in this context is Zion. This again echoes the prophet’s own words in Lamentations and highlights the exilic context.

In Lamentations 2, the “elders of the daughter of Zion” sit in silence on the ground throwing “dust on their heads” (Lam. 2:10). The pity found in Zion’s “dust” is contrasted with the “pleasure” to be found in her “stones,” in the first half of Psalm 102:14. This anticipates the rebuilding of the temple after the return from exile. Ezra speaks of “the house of the great God” being “built with great stones” (Ezr. 5:8), and the new temple having “three layers of huge stones” (Ezr. 6:4).

<https://burrosofberea.com/a-walk-through-psalm-102/>

**Psalms 102:15** Nations will fear the name of the LORD, and all the kings of the earth will fear your glory.

Verse 15 of Psalm 102 continues this look forward in time. It’s a look forward to the time when the nations will fear the name and glory of the Lord (Ps. 102:15). The restoration after the exile is clearly in view – as Jeremiah’s words loop in with the events of Esther. In the book of Esther, Esther and Mordecai successfully secure the right of their people to defend themselves, and as a result we’re told: “many from the peoples of the earth declared themselves Jews, for fear of the Jews had fallen on them” (Esth. 8:15). The word “many” (*rav*) means “much, abundant, exceedingly great, more numerous than.” In short, this was no small victory, and the fear of the Lord spread throughout the entire Persian Empire. From the dust of Zion, to the stones of the temple, to the victory in the streets of Persia, these verses take us on a trek from the exile to the restoration. From here, the restoration theme kicks into high gear.

<https://burrosofberea.com/a-walk-through-psalm-102/>

**Psalms 102:18** Let this be recorded for a generation to come, so that a people yet to be created may praise the LORD:

After declaring the Lord’s name will be remembered throughout “all generations” (Ps. 102:12), Jeremiah opens the final stanza of Psalm 102 with words written for “a generation to come” (Ps. 102:18a ESV). This sounds a bit open-ended in the ESV. What generation to come? Is it just any generation? How can we know?

Actually, the phrase is a bit more specific than this, and in every other occurrence the ESV captures the meaning ... “the next generation” (Deut. 29:22; Ps. 48:14; 78:6). In other words, Jeremiah is now speaking to the generation after the return from exile – the generation born during the restoration. And his message for “the next generation” begins in verses 19-20:

To put this all into perspective then, Isaiah prophetically speaks to the generation of the exile concerning God using them in the restoration process. Starting in Psalm 102:18, Jeremiah prophetically speaks to the generation after the exile as they look back upon this redemptive act. The redemptive act itself is poetically characterized as an establishment of the heavens and a founding of the earth. This redemptive act was, specifically, the return from exile and the restoration of Jerusalem. Isaiah expands upon this same theme in his later chapters: "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; And the former things will not be remembered or come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create; For behold, I create Jerusalem for rejoicing, and her people for gladness" (Isa. 65:17-18).

<https://burrosofberea.com/a-walk-through-psalm-102/>

**Psalms 102:20** to hear the groans of the prisoners, to set free those who were doomed to die,

Jeremiah's purpose here is to ensure that the generation after the exile never forgets what happened to the generation of the exile. And again, we need to remind ourselves that the Psalms were songs – and songs get memorized.

In this way, verses 19-20 are very much Jeremiah's song lyrics to help "a people yet to be created" retain their history and "praise" their God (Ps. 102:18b). To compose these lyrics, Jeremiah borrows a few lines from a previous prophet. He mentions "prisoners" once "doomed to die" being "set free" (Ps. 102:20). Our lyricist is harkening back to Isaiah's prophetic promise to the exiles: "The exile will speedily be set free, and will not die in the dungeon, nor will his bread be lacking" (Isa. 51:14).

<https://burrosofberea.com/a-walk-through-psalm-102/>

**Psalms 102:26** They will perish, but you will remain; they will all wear out like a garment. You will change them like a robe, and they will pass away,

Eventually, the redemptive order set in motion by the return from exile would give way to this final redemptive order to be set in motion by Christ. Jeremiah telegraphs this to his readers as well. Regarding the heavens and earth of the Second Temple Period, he says, "Even they will perish, but Thou dost endure" (Ps. 102:26).

The rebuilt temple of the Restoration would ultimately be replaced by the true temple of New Covenant salvation. That final temple is Christ in us and us in Him (1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19-10; Rev. 21:22). This is where we come in. As believers in Jesus Christ, and participants in His perfect and final redemptive order, we are the children of His servants who "continue" and their "descendants" who are "established" before Him (Ps. 102:27-28) – long after the heavens and earth of the Second Temple Period perishes and wears out like a garment (Ps. 102:26) –

as the first temple did.

<https://burrosofberea.com/a-walk-through-psalm-102/>

**Isaiah 2:2** It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be lifted up above the hills; and all the nations shall flow to it,

**Isaiah 2:3** and many peoples shall come, and say: "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob, that he may teach us his ways and that we may walk in his paths." For out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

Touching on the themes of both Zechariah 14:10 and Isaiah 2:2, Ken Gentry writes:

"The mountain of the house of the LORD. The 'house of the LORD' refers to the new covenant church (1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19; 2 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 2:19-22; 1 Pet. 2:5), which was 'established' (Heb., kun implies of permanent duration) on earth 'in the last days'... It is a 'mountain' in that it is a city set on a hill (Matt. 5:14; Heb. 12:22). It is to be "the chief of the mountains" (v. 2d) in that it will eventually be the world's leading influence. Contrary to dispensationalism, this is not to be taken literalistically, as if Jerusalem will physically be elevated higher than Mount Everest (with all the health difficulties that would bring)."[14]

The rising of the mountain is simply imagery meant to capture the preeminence and prominence of the work accomplished by Jesus Christ in and through His people. Since no mountain in the world can truly depict the magnitude of that accomplishment, Isaiah describes it as being higher than any other mountain. In more modern terms, Marvin Gaye and Tammy Terrell would say, "There Ain't No Mountain High Enough." The work of Christ takes His people to new levels, and everything else is like a flat plain beneath them. Zechariah and Isaiah are using visual illustrations to paint the wonder of the reality of fulfillment in Christ.

<https://burrosofberea.com/zechariah-14-part-7-zechariah-149-11/>

**Isaiah 6:11** Then I said, "How long, O Lord?" And he said: "Until cities lie waste without inhabitant, and houses without people, and the land is a desolate waste,

**Isaiah 6:12** and the LORD removes people far away, and the forsaken places are many in the midst of the land.

### **From Isaiah's Prophecy to Ezra's Fulfillment**

The prophetic fulfillment of Isaiah during the time of the Restoration can be seen by comparing several key phrases in Ezra that are lifted from the pages of Isaiah. Ezra is plugging in the same coordinates as Isaiah and their ship lands in a completely different time zone than does the Dispensational ship.

From the very beginning of Isaiah's commission, it's evident that his prophetic

message was to cover more ground than simply the events of his own day in the 8th century BC. But it's equally evident that he wasn't opening a worm hole to the 20th and 21st century AD. Isaiah asks, "How long Lord?" (Isa. 6:11a), and the Lord replies by forecasting the two-fold fate of His ancient people:

11b Until cities are devastated and without inhabitant, Houses are without people  
And the land is utterly desolate,  
12 The Lord has completely removed people, And there are many forsaken places  
in the midst of the land.  
13a Yet there will still be a tenth portion in it, And it will again be subject to  
burning, Like a terebinth or an oak... (Isaiah 6:11b – 13a).

Verses 11 -12 correspond to the conquest of northern ten tribes by the Assyrians in 722 BC, and verse 13 corresponds to the devastation brought to the remaining two southern tribes by the Babylonians in 586 BC. Then, verse 13 speaks of a remnant as a "stump" and a "holy seed":

13b ...Whose stump remains when it is cut down. The holy seed is its stump  
(Isaiah 6:13b).

Regarding the phrase "holy seed," the word "holy" is used 382 times in the OT, and the word "seed" is used 204 times. Yet, these two words occur together only one other time in the entirety of the OT. In Ezra 9:2, Ezra refers to the returning exiles of his own day as "the holy seed."

Marvin Sweeney captures the significance of Ezra's choice of words: "Indeed, Ezra-Nehemiah portrays Ezra's return to Jerusalem as fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecies, particularly the restoration of the 'holy seed' of Israel (Ezra 9:2; Isa 6:13) and the new exodus from Babylonia..."[6] The possibility of this precise phrase being a mere coincidence in these two places is so unlikely that critics argue that it was added to Isaiah by a later "editor" as a "final late-post-exilic addition to the pericope." [7] But this is to portray things backwards.

As John N. Oswalt states, "...the book [of Isaiah] asserts that Isaiah ben Amoz (1:1) was solely responsible for the book." [8] Isaiah (8th century BC) isn't drawing from Ezra (6th to 5th century BC); Ezra is drawing from Isaiah. The problem is that textual critics don't believe in predictive prophecy, i.e., they don't believe in miracles. Isaiah's sole author, Isaiah himself, had predicted the fall of Israel, the fall of Judah, and the return of the remnant – the "holy seed." Ezra was living out what Isaiah predicted, and he knew it. He was well-versed in the word of God (Ezra 7:10), and his word choice was intentional.

This intentional, conscious effort to identify the returning exiles with the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy is transparently noticeable in Ezra's next phrase selection describing them. Looking prophetically forward to the return from exile, Isaiah depicts the "holy seed" (Isa. 6:13) as "the remnant of Israel, and those of the

house of Jacob who have escaped..." (Isa. 10:20). Accordingly, Ezra repeatedly refers to the "holy seed" (Ezra 9:2) of his own time as the "escaped remnant" (Ezra 9:13-15). The parallels are unmistakable.

While many more intertextual connections can be and have been made,[9] the most striking would be Ezra's reference to "everyone who trembled at the words of the God of Israel" (Ezra 9:4), and "those who tremble at the commandment of our God" (Ezra 10:3). The word, "tremble" (chared), is only used in four other places in the Old Testament.

The final two Old Testament usages of "tremble" (chared) come to us from Isaiah, and they are especially germane.

Ezra is specifically speaking of those who "tremble" at the "word" and "commandments" of God. With this in mind, the relevancy of Isaiah's usage of the term in conjunction with Ezra's is self-evident:

"For My hand made all these things, Thus all these things came into being," declares the Lord. "But to this one I will look, To him who is humble and contrite of spirit, and who trembles at My word" (Isa. 66:2).

"Hear the word of the Lord, you who tremble at His word: Your brothers who hate you, who exclude you for My name's sake, Have said, 'Let the Lord be glorified, that we may see your joy.' But they will be put to shame" (Isa. 66:5).

These verses come from Isaiah's final chapter, a chapter which the textual critics again argue was either heavily modified or completely added by a later editor "from the early Persian period." [10] Why? Because of the undeniable "connection" [11] that "exists" [12] between the Ezra text and the Isaiah text. As Marvin Sweeney puts it, "'those who tremble' (charedîm) at the word of YHWH points to the interrelationship between Isaiah and Ezra-Nehemiah." [13]

This "interrelationship" and "connection" between Ezra and Isaiah again leads the textual critics to conclude that the phrases in Isaiah were added later in reaction to the words in Ezra. For the Evangelical, Ezra (being the student of God's word whom he was) was relying on the predictive prophecy of Isaiah, rather than a later editor of Isaiah plugging the words of Ezra into Isaiah's prophecy. Ezra was keenly aware of the fact he was living out fulfillment of Isaiah's words, and as such it was time for God's people to tremble at God's word. The textual critics see the connection but make the connection in reverse, thinking that the Isaiah text borrows from the Ezra text, but at least they see the connection to begin with. The Dispensationalist is too busy flying at light speed to even notice it.

For Ezra, those who trembled at God's word were the escaped remnant, the holy seed of whom Isaiah spoke. They returned under the decree of Cyrus, as Isaiah had foretold. Ezra knew this. Cyrus knew this. The modern-day prophecy pundits

either don't know this or they are intentionally ignoring it to keep their narrative going and the book sales flowing. May 14, 1948 was not the fulfillment of Isaiah's prophecy. Cyrus's proclamation in 536 BC was the fulfillment. It's recorded on the very pages of Scripture itself, and the book of Ezra is filled with Echoes of Isaiah if we only have the ears to hear those echoes.

<https://burrosofberea.com/isaiah-668-in-1948-dispensationalisms-warp-speed-hermeneutic/>

**Isaiah 6:13** And though a tenth remain in it, it will be burned again, like a terebinth or an oak, whose stump remains when it is felled." The holy seed is its stump.

Verses 11 -12 correspond to the conquest of northern ten tribes by the Assyrians in 722 BC, and verse 13 corresponds to the devastation brought to the remaining two southern tribes by the Babylonians in 586 BC. Then, verse 13 speaks of a remnant as a "stump" and a "holy seed":

Regarding the phrase "holy seed," the word "holy" is used 382 times in the OT, and the word "seed" is used 204 times. Yet, these two words occur together only one other time in the entirety of the OT. In Ezra 9:2, Ezra refers to the returning exiles of his own day as "the holy seed."

<https://burrosofberea.com/isaiah-668-in-1948-dispensationalisms-warp-speed-hermeneutic/>

**Isaiah 8:3** And I went to the prophetess, and she conceived and bore a son. Then the LORD said to me, "Call his name Maher-shalal-hash-baz;

**Isaiah 8:4** for before the boy knows how to cry 'My father' or 'My mother,' the wealth of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria will be carried away before the king of Assyria."

## Following Isaiah's Timetable

God Himself gives Isaiah the "timetable" for Damascus's destruction:

Then the Lord said to me, "Take for yourself a large tablet and write on it [a]in ordinary letters: Maher-shalal-hash-baz. 2 And I will take to Myself faithful witnesses for testimony, Uriah the priest and Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah." 3 So I approached the prophetess, and she conceived and gave birth to a son. Then the Lord said to me, "Name him Maher-shalal-hash-baz; 4 for before the boy knows how to cry out 'My father' or 'My mother,' the wealth of Damascus and the spoils of Samaria will be carried away before the king of Assyria" (Isaiah 8:1-4).

The fall of Damascus, in the book of Isaiah, is as far in the ancient past as the prophetess's baby's first words. As John N. Oswalt comments, "...it is said that Isaiah's son will not be able to speak clearly before Damascus and Samaria are plundered" and "within three years Damascus had been destroyed and most of

Samaria's holdings had been plundered.”[13] Unless there is a 2700+ year-old infant alive somewhere in the world today who still hasn't learned to speak, this prophecy has been fulfilled.

<https://burrosofberea.com/1755-2/>

Past fulfillment is the case with regard to the fall of Damascus in Isaiah 17. According to Hibbs, “That should happen at any time.” However, based on historical records and the book of Isaiah, it already took place long ago. Isaiah's prophecies spanned a range of years between 739 BC to 701 BC.[5] Damascus fell to the Assyrians in 732 BC.[6] Isaiah was specifically told by the Lord that the fall of Damascus would happen in his own time. In Isaiah 8:3, Isaiah approaches a prophetess who gives birth to a baby. In verse 4, the Lord says: “... before the boy knows how to cry out ‘My father’ or ‘My mother,’ the wealth of Damascus and the spoils of Samaria will be carried away before the king of Assyria.” The fall of Damascus, in the book of Isaiah, is as far in the ancient past as that prophetess' baby's first words.

Even more alarming than the actual misunderstanding of these prophecies is the enthusiasm that accompanies their misuse. The wars of Isaiah's and Ezekiel's prophecies were ancient wars battled out long ago, and they are not ours to fight. Yet, the mishandling of these prophecies has been used to justify unjust war in our day and age.[7] God's People should be opposing involvement in any of these foreign entanglements. We should not be looking at the loss of human life as a hopeful sign that we're going to soon be whisked away on the clouds. We are His image bearers in this world, and we should be image bearers of peace. To get excited about the current conflicts and crises in the world, as Hibbs does, sends the wrong message.

It's just wrong to get excited and hopeful over war. Death and destruction should not cause joy and delight. The news headlines should not be our interpretive grid through which we read the Bible. Instead, the conflicts in this world should bring us to our knees and cause us to pray for peace.

<https://burrosofberea.com/war-its-good-for-dispensationalism/>

**Isaiah 8:7** therefore, behold, the Lord is bringing up against them the waters of the River, mighty and many, the king of Assyria and all his glory. And it will rise over all its channels and go over all its banks,

**Isaiah 8:8** and it will sweep on into Judah, it will overflow and pass on, reaching even to the neck, and its outspread wings will fill the breadth of your land, O Immanuel.”

In Isaiah 8:7, the “King of Assyria” comes in “all his glory” as he sweeps through Judah's land with overwhelming force.[16] The imagery is completely flipped around in Isaiah 66:12 as the post-exilic conditions are the polar opposite of the pre-exilic conditions. In this verse, the “glory of the nations” is an “overflowing stream” that supports and sustains God's people.

Isaiah specifically mentions the “king of Assyria” as the sweeping force of destruction. A little over 200 years later, the new “king of Assyria” was part of the healing stream of reconstruction (Ezra 6:22). The role-reversal imagery between Isaiah 8:7 and 66:12 helps anchor Isaiah 66 to its historical context and demonstrates its role in Biblical context. Like all that precedes it, this firmly secures the fulfillment of these prophecies in the restoration period after the return from exile.

<https://burrosofberea.com/2227-2/>

**Isaiah 11:1** There shall come forth a shoot from the stump of Jesse, and a branch from his roots shall bear fruit.

Investment of time and study into Isaiah 11 yields the return of seeing how God made good on His word to His ancient people. If there was any further fulfillment of Isaiah 11, beyond the restoration from exile in the Old Testament, it's to be found in the finished work of Christ in the New Testament – and not the re-establishment of Israel in 1948.

### **A Shoot Springing from Jesse**

Isaiah 11:1-5 speaks of a shoot springing from Jesse, who would lead the restoration effort. This accurately describes Zerubbabel, the governor of Judeah, who oversaw the rebuilding of the temple. As a descendant of David, Zerubbabel was a “shoot” or “stem” of Jesse. As such, he prefigured Christ, and Paul applies this prophecy to Jesus (Rom. 15:12), who was the ultimate restorer of all things (Acts 3:21). In both its immediate fulfillment (Zerubbabel) and larger fulfillment (Jesus), the prophecy is in fact fulfilled. As David Chilton wrote, “Isaiah’s prophecy of a ‘golden age’ when the wolf dwells peaceably with the lamb (Isa. 11:1-10) is condensed and cited by St. Paul as a present fulfillment, in the New Covenant age (Rom. 15:12)!”

[Isaiah 11 and The Mandela Effect: How Today’s Prophecy Pundits See Things That Aren’t There](#)

**Isaiah 11:6** The wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the young goat, and the calf and the lion and the fattened calf together; and a little child shall lead them.

**Isaiah 11:7** The cow and the bear shall graze; their young shall lie down together; and the lion shall eat straw like the ox.

**Isaiah 11:8** The nursing child shall play over the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child shall put his hand on the adder's den.

**Isaiah 11:9** They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea.

In both its immediate fulfillment (Zerubbabel) and larger fulfillment (Jesus), the prophecy is in fact fulfilled. As David Chilton wrote, “Isaiah’s prophecy of a

'golden age' when the wolf dwells peaceably with the lamb (Isaiah 11:1-10) is condensed and cited by St. Paul as a present fulfillment, in the New Covenant age (Romans 15:12)!"

## **The Animal Imagery**

The nonviolent conditions prophesied by Isaiah are an apt description of the restoration period once the Jews returned under Cyrus' decree. According to Nehemiah, all the sons of Israel were back home in their own cities (Neh. 7:73), and everyone "lived securely on his own property" (Neh. 11:3). The Persians, who had liberated Judah from Babylon, were fully assisting the Jews in the restoration effort (Ezra 1). And even the Assyrians, who had taken the ten northern tribes captive 136 years prior to Babylon doing the same thing to Judah, were aiding the Jews in the restoration effort. Ezra 6:22 says "the Lord" had "turned the heart of the king of Assyria toward them to encourage them in the work of the house of the God of Israel."

In short, things couldn't have been better for God's people at this time. Their most recent enemy, Babylon, was no longer a threat. Their more ancient enemy, Assyria, was now their ally. And they had the full support of Persia, the empire that was now in power. Everyone who wanted to return was back home, and the other nations were no longer a danger to them.

## **Leaving Uber-Literalism Behind**

In contrast to the uber-literalism of Dispensationalism, the passage does not mean that wolves are going to stop preying on lambs someday or that we should let our children play by a cobra's hole. As Joshua J. Van Ee puts it: "...it is obvious that the details of the imagery — domestication of the predatory animals, peace between predatory and domestic animals, and a vegetarian diet for predatory animals — were never expected to find a literal fulfillment." [12] Isaiah 11 "is about prey (Jews) and predators (the nations) lying down together and not devouring one another," writes Gary DeMar. [13]

The peace of the restoration period served as a shadow, type or symbol of the work of Christ — who unifies all people under the New Covenant. In Jesus, there is neither Jew nor Greek (Gal. 3:28), and "He Himself is our peace, who made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall" (Eph. 2:14). As Paul said, "He came and preached peace to you who are far away, and peace to those who are near" (Eph. 2:15). The peace that Jesus brings in the New Testament was prefigured under the peace that was brought through Zerubbabel's leadership in the Old Testament.

The imagery of a young child leading them (Isa. 11:6) is a fitting description of Zerubbabel. According to Peloubet's Bible Dictionary, the name Zerubbabel means "born in Babylon." [14] Unlike Mordecai (Ezr. 2:2; Neh. 7:7; Esth. 2:5) for

instance, Zerubbabel was not part of the elder generation who were taken into exile. As such, Zerubbabel had never seen Solomon's original temple nor set foot on the soil of Jerusalem until Cyrus' decree. Yet, he was God's chosen vessel to oversee the rebuilding of the temple (Zech. 4:6-10) and appointed as the governor of Judah (Hag. 2:2, 21). As Sarah Schultz writes, "The governor held the highest Persian administrative position at the provincial level and... the most politically influential office in the province." [15] This child of the exile had never even been home until a Persian King called his people home.

<https://burrosofberea.com/isaiah-11-and-the-mandela-effect-how-todays-prophecy-pundits-see-things-that-arent-there/>

**Isaiah 11:11** In that day the Lord will extend his hand yet a second time to recover the remnant that remains of his people, from Assyria, from Egypt, from Pathros, from Cush, from Elam, from Shinar, from Hamath, and from the coastlands of the sea.

In Isaiah 11:11, the prophet speaks of God recovering Israel "a second time." According to Jack Kelley, "The first time was after the Babylonian captivity and the 2nd time became official in 1948." [6] Kelley then claims that "there's a very complicated mathematical formula based on a prophecy in Ezekiel 4 that points to 1948." [7] If Kelley's "mathematical formula" is anything like Hal Lindsey's fuzzy math in The Late Great Planet Earth, things just don't "add up" (pun intended). The expiration date for '48 was up in '88 and Christians didn't make the "great escape." The prophecy pundits keep coming up with the wrong answers when it's test time because they are plugging the wrong variables into the equation about Israel's recovery "a second time."

The truth is that the return from Babylonian captivity *was* the second recovery (Isaiah. 11:11), and the Exodus from Egypt was the first recovery (Isaiah 11:16). This is seen clearly when Verse 11 is read in conjunction with verse 16.

"And there will be a highway from Assyria For the remnant of His people who will be left, Just as there was for Israel On the day that they came up out of the land of Egypt" (Isaiah 11:16).

All the Biblical prophecies about a regathering into the land take place prior to this second recovery. [8] In other words, the prophecies have been fully fulfilled. Dispensationalism attempts to empty the fullness of the fulfillment by making the second recovery (the return from exile) into the first recovery – as if the real first recovery (the Exodus) is absent from the text. But the Exodus isn't a result of the Mandela Effect – it's right there in verse 16 for all to see.

The great irony here is that even if we look at the return from the Babylonian exile as the first recovery instead of the Exodus, it still wouldn't make 1948 the second recovery. The return from exile took place in two phases. The first came under the decree of Cyrus (Ezra 1:1-7) and was led by Zerubbabel and Nehemiah

(Ezra 2:1-2) in 536 BC. The second came under the reign of Artaxerxes (Ezra 7:1) and was led by Ezra (Ezra 7:11-13) in 458 BC. So even if we take Egypt (Isa. 11:16) out of the equation and make Cyrus' decree (Ezra 1:1-7) the first recovery of Israel, the second recovery would be the second return to Jerusalem under Ezra. No matter how we want to work the equation, the final answer has the return and regathering being fulfilled by 458 BC rather than 1948 AD.

## **An Incomplete Recovery?**

When pushed into the proverbial corner with the prophetic facts, the Dispensationalist will argue that the restoration was only "a partial return during the time of Ezra and Nehemiah." [9] This is another example of the Mandela Effect when it comes to the Bible. Believers by and large believe that the return from exile was incomplete and unfinished. This gives way to bizarre doctrines like the Lost 10 Tribes myth.

We've all read that not all the tribes returned... right? The Bible talks about the Lost 10 Tribes...doesn't it? Wasn't it only the tribes of Benjamin and Judah that came back under Cyrus' decree? Just the opposite, actually. Ezra says that "all Israel" returned to "their own cities" (Ezra 2:70), and "the sons of Israel" were "gathered together as one man in Jerusalem" (Ezra 3:1). The unity of the tribes in Ezra was envisioned by Isaiah [10] when he said:

"Then the jealousy of Ephraim will depart, And those who harass Judah will be eliminated; Ephraim will not be jealous of Judah, And Judah will not harass Ephraim" (Isa. 11:13).

Isaiah also speaks of "the earth" being full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters covering the seas" (Isa. 11:9), and "the nations" resorting "to the root of Jesse" (Isa. 11:10). Accordingly, Esther tells us that during the time of the restoration: "In each and every province and in each and every city, wherever the king's commandment and his decree arrived, there was joy and jubilation for the Jews, a feast and a holiday. And many among the peoples of the land became Jews, because the dread of the Jews had fallen on them" (Esth. 8:17). [11]

When the Israelites returned home at the time of Ezra and Nehemiah, no part of Isaiah's words were fulfilled in part. Nonetheless, partial fulfillment is what the Dispensationalist leaders maintain, and the Mandela Effect goes into effect as the prophetic hucksters spin the Scriptures to their own financial gain.

That investment of time and study into Isaiah 11 yields the return of seeing how God made good on His word to His ancient people. If there was any further fulfillment of Isaiah 11, beyond the restoration from exile in the Old Testament, it's to be found in the finished work of Christ in the New Testament – and not the re-establishment of Israel in 1948.

<https://burrosofberea.com/isaiah-11-and-the-mandela-effect-how-todays->

[prophecy-pundits-see-things-that-arent-there/](#)

**Isaiah 11:12** He will raise a signal for the nations and will assemble the banished of Israel, and gather the dispersed of Judah from the four corners of the earth.

Regarding Isaiah 11:12, the passage is indeed about the Jewish exiles being gathered back to their land, but the context has to do with the Babylonian exile and the restoration that followed. Isaiah's prophesied regathering finds its fulfillment in the pages of the Old Testament.

Isaiah prophesied in 760 BC. The Assyrians carried to the Northern Kingdom of Israel into captivity in 722 BC, and the Babylonians carried the Southern Kingdom of Judah away in 586 BC. Isaiah himself specifies that their "return" (Isa. 44:22) would come about through the hand of the Persian King, Cyrus (Isa. 44:28). This happened in 536 BC. Cyrus himself self-consciously understood that he was fulfilling God's will by calling the Israelites back home to rebuild their temple (2 Chr. 36:22-23).

It seems that this ancient Persian King had a better grasp of Bible prophecy than today's Bible prophecy experts. If Cyrus were a modern Bible college student, he would have failed his Eschatology class. The book of Ezra records Cyrus' decree inviting God's ancient people back to their homeland (Ezra 1:1-4), and the Israelites' return in answer to that invitation (Ezra 2:70; 3:1).

Any Old Testament prophecy, regarding the Jews returning to the land and rebuilding their temple, was written prior to the Jews returning to the land and rebuilding temple. These are historical events that already happened, and these were the events about which Isaiah was prophesying.

The following is a chronology of the prophets as they coincide with these pivotal, prophesied events:[26]

837 BC: Joel

787-746 BC: Jonah

760 BC: Isaiah, Amos

750 BC: Hosea

724 BC: Micah

722 BC: Captivity of Israel

640 BC: Zephaniah

630 BC: Nahum

612 BC: Habakuk

604 BC: Jeremiah

586 BC: Captivity of Judah

586 BC: Obadiah

592 – 570 BC: Ezekiel

580 – 570 BC: Daniel

536 BC: The Return from Exile (Ezra 1:1-3; 3:1ff)

520 BC: Zechariah, Haggai

516 BC: Temple Rebuilt (Ezra 6:15)

510 BC: Battle in Esther[27]

458 BC: Ezra Leads Second Return (Ezra 7-8; cf. Isa. 11:11)

445 BC: Nehemiah Rebuilds Wall of Jerusalem (Neh. 1:1 – 7:73)

430 BC: Malachi

As one can see, all of the critical predictions and fulfillments, regarding the return to the land and the rebuilding of the temple, have been historically fulfilled. The only Old Testament prophet in the lineup after these events was Malachi, and one will search Malachi in vain for any mention of a return or a rebuilding. Why? Because these prophecies had been fulfilled by the time Malachi wrote. As William Cox noted, "When a vessel has been filled full (the literal meaning of fulfill) it is impossible to add more in that vessel." [28]

<https://burrosofberea.com/dispensationalism-strikes-out-again-three-more-verses-they-get-wrong/>

**Isaiah 11:13** The jealousy of Ephraim shall depart, and those who harass Judah shall be cut off; Ephraim shall not be jealous of Judah, and Judah shall not harass Ephraim.

We've all read that not all the tribes returned... right? The Bible talks about the *Lost 10 Tribes*... doesn't it? Wasn't it only the tribes of Benjamin and Judah that came back under Cyrus' decree? Just the opposite, actually. Ezra says that

"all Israel" returned to "their own cities" (Ezra 2:70), and "the sons of Israel" were "gathered together as one man in Jerusalem" (Ezra 3:1). The unity of the tribes in Ezra was envisioned by Isaiah.

<https://burrosofberea.com/isaiah-11-and-the-mandela-effect-how-todays-prophecy-pundits-see-things-that-arent-there/>

**Isaiah 11:16** And there will be a highway from Assyria for the remnant that remains of his people, as there was for Israel when they came up from the land of Egypt.

The truth is that the return from Babylonian captivity was the second recovery (Isa. 11:11), and the Exodus from Egypt was the first recovery (Isa. 11:16). This is seen clearly when Verse 11 is read in conjunction with verse 16.

<https://burrosofberea.com/isaiah-11-and-the-mandela-effect-how-todays-prophecy-pundits-see-things-that-arent-there/>

**Isaiah 17:1** An oracle concerning Damascus. Behold, Damascus will cease to be a city and will become a heap of ruins.

Fulfilled in 732 BC.[5] That's the year that Damascus fell to the Assyrians.[6]

The fulfillment of Damascus's demise is recorded for us in the very pages of Scripture itself: "...and the king of Assyria went up against Damascus and captured it and led the people of it into exile to Kir and put Rezin to death" (2 Kg. 16:9). Rezin was "the head of Damascus" (Isa. 7:8). The city was taken, its people were exiled, and its leader was put to death. For all intents and purposes, it was "removed from being a city" (Isa. 17:1). Davide Nadali gives a nice overview of the historical situation and the way in which things played out:

"The conquest of Damascus by Tiglath-Pileser III (733-732 BC) is the final result of the Assyrian intervention against the anti-Assyrian coalition of Rezin of Damascus and Pekah of Israel against Ahaz of Judah. Rezin and Pekah tried to capture Jerusalem, capital city of the kingdom of Judah, but they failed (about 735-734 BC). Tiglath-Pileser III came to the aid of Ahaz of Judah, who promptly asked for the help of the Assyrian king. He finally destroyed the power of Damascus, by besieging the city, forcing king Rezin to surrender, as well as by conquering the whole region once under the control of Damascus. Rezin of Damascus died during the siege, according to the Bible (II Kings 16:9). After the conquest by Tiglath-Pileser III, Damascus was no longer the capital of the independent and rich kingdom of Aram." [7]

In an effort to dismiss and downplay the destruction of Damascus in 732 BC, Dispensationalist Britt Gilbert writes:

"The prophet Isaiah says Damascus will disappear, become a heap of ruins, and see its power and influence end forever (Isaiah 17:1-3). Now, some scholars

claim the Assyrian king, Tiglath-pileser, fulfilled this prophecy in 732 B.C. when he conquered Damascus and killed its king (2 Kings 16:9). However, Tiglath-pileser did not make the city 'a ruinous heap' ... He simply attacked the city and enslaved its people.”[8]

This certainly isn't the way that Tiglath-Pileser remembered things. The Assyrian king himself, who was responsible for the siege, paints a completely different picture in his Annals:

“I took 800 people together with their property, their cattle (and) their sheep as spoil. I took 750 captives of the cities of Kurussa (and) Sama (as well as) 550 captives from the city of Metuna as spoil. I destroyed 591 cities from the 16 districts of Damascus like ruins from the Flood.”[9]

Once again, the Dispensationalists take a prophecy, zoom right past its historical fulfillment at warp speed,[10] and transplant the prophecy into our own day and age to fit their agenda and narrative. As Gary DeMar writes, “Damascus was utterly destroyed in fulfillment of what was predicted in Isaiah 17. The destroyer himself —Tiglath-pileser — said so in his Annals ... Tiglath-pileser 'destroyed' Damascus — made it a 'heap' — just like Isaiah predicted. The Bible is true, and all modern-day prophecy writers who claim that the Isaiah 17 passage has not been fulfilled have unwittingly aligned themselves with skeptics and promoters of war because prophecy demands it.”[11]

## **Following Isaiah's Timetable**

To their credit, DeMar lists several Dispensational commentators, like Charles Dyer and Mark Hitchcock, who are honest enough to concede that Isaiah 17:1 was in fact fulfilled in the Assyrian invasion of the 8th century BC.[12] They need to get the memo out to Hibbs. Again, Hibbs says, “...if I understand my Bible right, and my timetable right, Isaiah 17:1's gotta take place.” One must wonder what version of the Bible Hibbs is reading? God Himself gives Isaiah the “timetable” for Damascus's destruction:

Then the Lord said to me, “Take for yourself a large tablet and write on it [a]in ordinary letters: Maher-shalal-hash-baz. 2 And I will take to Myself faithful witnesses for testimony, Uriah the priest and Zechariah the son of Jeberechiah.” 3 So I approached the prophetess, and she conceived and gave birth to a son. Then the Lord said to me, “Name him Maher-shalal-hash-baz; 4 for before the boy knows how to cry out 'My father' or 'My mother,' the wealth of Damascus and the spoils of Samaria will be carried away before the king of Assyria” (Isaiah 8:1-4).

The fall of Damascus, in the book of Isaiah, is as far in the ancient past as the prophetess's baby's first words. As John N. Oswalt comments, “...it is said that Isaiah's son will not be able to speak clearly before Damascus and Samaria are plundered” and “within three years Damascus had been destroyed and most of

Samaria's holdings had been plundered.”[13] Unless there is a 2700+ year-old infant alive somewhere in the world today who still hasn't learned to speak, this prophecy has been fulfilled and Hibbs's "timetable" is way off.

<https://burrosofberea.com/1755-2/>

**Isaiah 28:15** Because you have said, "We have made a covenant with death, and with Sheol we have an agreement, when the overwhelming whip passes through it will not come to us, for we have made lies our refuge, and in falsehood we have taken shelter";

Judah is warned against making a covenant with death and a pact with Sheol in secret places (Isa. 28:15, 17-18).[8] Isaiah had already called God's people to task on necromancy. For example, Isaiah notes that people were turning to necromancy instead of God:

"And when they say to you, 'Inquire of the mediums and the necromancers who chirp and mutter,'" should not a people inquire of their God? Should they inquire of the dead on behalf of the living?" (Isaiah 8:19).

<https://burrosofberea.com/isaiahs-new-heavens-and-new-earth-part-1-former-things-and-new-things/>

**Isaiah 34:4** All the host of heaven shall rot away, and the skies roll up like a scroll. All their host shall fall, as leaves fall from the vine, like leaves falling from the fig tree.

In context, Isaiah is talking about the time when the sword of the Lord would "descend in judgment upon Edom" (Isa. 34:5),[8] which occurred in the fifth century BC.[9] Obviously, the sky didn't literally roll up like a scroll because it's still spread out over top of us. Isaiah's cosmic language indicates that the judgment would not only be upon the people of Edom, but upon Edom's gods as well. This is similar to the Exodus, where God's judgment came upon "both man and beast and against all the gods of Egypt" (Exod. 12:12).

<https://burrosofberea.com/theres-a-rusty-moon-rising/>

**Isaiah 43:27** Your first father sinned, and your mediators transgressed against me.

In Luke 1:73, Abraham is singled out as the father of the nation of Israel. Accordingly, the Jews of Jesus's day considered Abraham to be their Father (Jn. 8:53). As did Stephen, who speaks of "our father Abraham" (Acts 7:2). Paul likewise refers to Abraham "who is the father of us all" (Rom. 4:16), and James identifies "Abraham our father" (Js. 2:2). The NT writers' perception of Abraham as the progenitor of their nation is rooted in OT texts which say the same, none of which take Israel's national ancestry back to Adam.

As with the NT passages, it begins with Abraham. And Isaiah himself says unequivocally: "Look to Abraham your father, and to Sarah who gave you birth in pain" (Isa. 51:2).

The ancestral sin that Isaiah speaks of, however, takes us back a generation before Father Abraham. The prophet refers to Israel's "first father" – the key word here being "first" (ri' shon), meaning "former or previous" in a context like this.

So, Isaiah is speaking of the sin of their "former (ri' shon) father." In other words, it's their father prior to Abraham. The question is: who was their father prior to Abraham, and how does this fit Isaiah's context regarding the sin of idolatry?

To unlock the meaning of Isaiah's words, we must go back further than Abraham. We must back up further in the Biblical narrative. We must go all the way back to the book of Joshua. Like the other recitations of Israel's history, Joshua speaks of "your father Abraham" (Josh. 24:3), but he backs up one more generation and includes Abraham's own father as well: "Joshua said to all the people, This is what the Lord, the God of Israel says: 'From ancient times your fathers lived beyond the Euphrates River, namely, Terah, the father of Abraham and the father of Nahor, and they served other gods'" (Josh. 24:2).

Notice the indictment: Abraham's fathers are also their fathers. Next, notice Joshua's ultimatum, referring specifically to the idolatry of their fathers:

"Now, therefore, fear the Lord and serve Him in sincerity and truth; and do away with the gods which your fathers served beyond the Euphrates River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord" (Josh. 24:14).

Israel's "former father," their "first father," was Abraham's father, Terah, and he worshipped false gods. The Israelites of Joshua's day were worshiping those same false gods (Josh. 24:15). And the Israelites of Isaiah's own day were still doing the very same thing. Isaiah's reference to their "first" or "former" father loops back to Joshua's context and makes sense out of his own context.

<https://burrosofberea.com/the-sins-of-the-first-father/>

**Isaiah 44:28** who says of Cyrus, 'He is my shepherd, and he shall fulfill all my purpose'; saying of Jerusalem, 'She shall be built,' and of the temple, 'Your foundation shall be laid.'"

Isaiah prophesied in 760 BC. The Assyrians carried to the Northern Kingdom of Israel into captivity in 722 BC, and the Babylonians carried the Southern Kingdom of Judah away in 586 BC. Isaiah himself specifies that their "return" (Isa. 44:22) would come about through the hand of the Persian King, Cyrus (Isa. 44:28). This happened in 536 BC. Cyrus himself self-consciously understood that he was fulfilling God's will by calling the Israelites back home to rebuild their temple (2

Chr. 36:22-23).

<https://burrosofberea.com/dispensationalism-strikes-out-again-three-more-verses-they-get-wrong/>

**Isaiah 47:3** Your nakedness shall be uncovered, and your disgrace shall be seen. I will take vengeance, and I will spare no one.

The fact that the Babylonians killed Judean children (a tactic of warfare at the time) is evident in Isaiah 47. In Isaiah 47:3, God says that he will enact na'qam against the "daughter of Babylon" (cf. Isa. 47:1). Usually translated as "vengeance," the full force of the word conveys the idea of "restoring justice" by bringing "consequences in the form of proportionate evil upon those who enacted them." [19] In other words, there is a sense that the punishment would follow in a similar manner to the crime that was committed – let the punishment fit the crime (to borrow a line from the music of Gilbert and Sullivan's operetta *The Mikado*). This being the case, part of Babylon's daughter's punishment would be that she would incur "loss of children and widowhood" (Isa. 47:9).

<https://burrosofberea.com/isaiahs-new-heavens-and-new-earth-part-1-former-things-and-new-things/>

**Isaiah 51:9** Awake, awake, put on strength, O arm of the LORD; awake, as in days of old, the generations of long ago. Was it not you who cut Rahab in pieces, who pierced the dragon?

Just as Yahweh defeated Leviathan at the beginning of creation, so too He defeats Leviathan at the Exodus event, which is described as a new creation. This is brought out clearly in Psalm 74 and Isaiah 51. Isaiah 51:9-10 says: "Was it not You who cut Rahab in pieces (Rahab is another Hebrew name for Leviathan), Was it not you who pierced the dragon? Was it not You who dried up the sea, the waters of the great deep; Who made the depths of the sea a pathway for the redeemed to cross over?"

<https://burrosofberea.com/identifying-the-sea-beast-of-revelation/>

**Isaiah 51:16** And I have put my words in your mouth and covered you in the shadow of my hand, establishing the heavens and laying the foundations of the earth, and saying to Zion, "You are my people."

The great puritan theologian, John Owen, noted that the Exodus event, and the establishment of the Covenant with Israel, is described in this passage in terms of **a creation of the heavens and earth**.

If the establishment of the Old Covenant is described in these terms, it is no surprise then that the calling out of God's New Covenant People would be accompanied by a defeat of the Chaos beast (Rev 19) and followed by the creation of a New Heaven and New Earth (Rev 21-22).

<https://burrosofberea.com/identifying-the-sea-beast-of-revelation/>

**Isaiah 55:13** Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress; instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle; and it shall make a name for the LORD, an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off."

In the context of the everlasting covenant that the Lord would make because of His love for David, Isaiah says, "...the myrtle will come up; And it will be a memorial to the Lord, an everlasting sign which will not be eliminated" (Isaiah 55:12-13). The book of Esther, which records her actions for all time, is that "memorial to the Lord" – that "everlasting sign" which has not been "eliminated," even to this day. Esther was the myrtle that God raised up to bring Gog of Magog down.

Esther's given name in Hebrew is Hadassah, which is the feminine form of ha'das (or hadac), which means "myrtle."

The pop-prophecy pundits of our day can't see this because they eliminate Esther as a possibility for the fulfillment of Ezekiel 38-39.

<https://burrosofberea.com/gog-and-magog-part-7-gods-myrtle-tree/>

**Isaiah 60:10** Foreigners shall build up your walls, and their kings shall minister to you; for in my wrath I struck you, but in my favor I have had mercy on you.

Isaiah 60:10 portended the events of Nehemiah. Isaiah said that "foreigners will build up your walls" (Isa. 60:10), and fittingly, Nehemiah completed the wall with the Persian Empire funding it all. Once that happened, Isaiah says, "...you will call your walls salvation and your gates praise" (Isa. 60:18). Then, and only then, "the days of your mourning will be finished" (Isa. 60:20).

<https://burrosofberea.com/2227-2/>

**Isaiah 62:2** The nations shall see your righteousness, and all the kings your glory, and you shall be called by a new name that the mouth of the LORD will give.

### **More Than the Names Will Change**

In the opening chapter (the first bookend), Isaiah says that Jerusalem would be "called (qa'ra) the city of Righteousness" and the "faithful city" after God "restores their judges" and "counselors" (Isa. 1:26). This would come at a time when Zion is "redeemed with justice and her returnees[8] with righteousness" (Isa. 1:27). The future returnees (coming back from exile) are contrasted with Isaiah's present generation who forsook the Lord and who would "come to an end" (Isa. 1:28). Their specific actions, by which they forsook the Lord, are described as desiring the pagan rituals which took place among the "oaks" in the "gardens" (Isa. 1:29).

These practices were among the "influences" that "came from the east" (Isa. 2:6)

[9], and these are the practices which sent them into exile (Isa. 65:3-12).[10] Once the exile is over and the restoration begins, and Jerusalem is purged of these idolatrous practices, the name change would go into effect. Jerusalem would then be "called" (qa'ra) the "righteous" and "faithful" city (Isa.1:26).

Between the name change bookends of Isaiah 1:26 and 65:13, Isaiah also makes this prophecy in chapter 62:2.

Dovetailing with chapter 1, Isaiah actually gives the city two new yet related names here in chapter 62, and the contrast of the new names with the old names again points to the restoration in the land after the exile in foreign lands:

"It will no longer be said to you, 'Forsaken,' Nor to your land will it any longer be said, 'Desolate'; But you will be called (qa'ra), 'My delight is in her,' [LXX: 'My Will'] And your land, 'Married'; [LXX: 'Inhabited'] For the Lord delights in you, And to Him your land will be married" (Isaiah 62:4).

The new names, "my delight" (LXX: "My will") and "married," (LXX: "Inhabited") are contrasted with the old names, "forsaken" and "desolate," and everything here is in the context of the Israelites' "land." Fittingly, in the context of everything that happened to their land (during the Assyrian and Babylonian incursions), there could not be a more apt description of their land than "desolate" and "forsaken." This is almost too obvious to require proof.[11] <https://burrosofberea.com/isaiahs-new-heavens-and-new-earth-part-2-old-names-and-new-names/>

**Isaiah 65:2** I spread out my hands all the day to a rebellious people, who walk in a way that is not good, following their own devices;

**Romans 10:21** But of Israel he says, "All day long I have held out my hands to a disobedient and contrary people."

**Isaiah 65:3** a people who provoke me to my face continually, sacrificing in gardens and making offerings on bricks;

In verses 3-4, Isaiah speaks of those who offer sacrifices in gardens, burn incense on the bricks, spend the night among the graves in secret places, and drink the broth of unclean meat. These are the very "things" that sent both houses into exile. Rather than being the light to the nations around them as they should have been (Deut. 4:7-10), the opposite happened. The Israelites had let those nations drag them down into darkness, apostasy, and rebellion.

In the pagan cultures surrounding ancient Israel, sacrifices "offered in gardens and orchards"[5] was a common practice.[6] Here in chapter 65, Isaiah picks up on an earlier theme of disdain for these rituals. In the opening chapter, the

prophet hits the ground running by expressing Yahweh's extreme displeasure in this regard:

"You certainly will be ashamed of the oaks which you have desired, and you will be embarrassed by the gardens which you have chosen" (Isa. 1:29).

<https://burrosofberea.com/isaiahs-new-heavens-and-new-earth-part-1-former-things-and-new-things/>

**Isaiah 65:4** who sit in tombs, and spend the night in secret places; who eat pig's flesh, and broth of tainted meat is in their vessels;

Isaiah mentions spending the night among the graves in secret places (Isa. 65:4). This highlights ancient Israel's penchant toward necromancy, a pagan practice strictly forbidden by Moses (Deut. 18:11). As Paul Shalom comments, "They would sit for vigils at burial sites so that they may inquire of the dead." [7] Once again, Isaiah is reiterating an earlier theme. In chapter 28, Judah is warned against making a covenant with death and a pact with Sheol in secret places (Isa. 28:15, 17-18). [8] Isaiah had already called God's people to task on necromancy. For example, Isaiah notes that people were turning to necromancy instead of God:

"And when they say to you, 'Inquire of the mediums and the necromancers who chirp and mutter,' should not a people inquire of their God? Should they inquire of the dead on behalf of the living?" (Isaiah 8:19).

<https://burrosofberea.com/isaiahs-new-heavens-and-new-earth-part-1-former-things-and-new-things/>

**Isaiah 65:11** But you who forsake the LORD, who forget my holy mountain, who set a table for Fortune and fill cups of mixed wine for Destiny,

Isaiah hones in on another pagan practice that the Israelites had adopted, namely, the festal celebrations in honor of Gad and Meni – "the deities of fortune and destiny." [9] As George Mitrov writes, "The prophet deepens the nation's forsaking of Yhwh via the worship of Gad and Meni, both pan-Semitic deities." [10] Whereas the previous indictments mentioned are associated with the "Baalistic practices of Canaanite religion," Gad (Fortune) and Meni (Destiny) were most popular among the gods of the "Babylonian pantheon." [11]

The trajectory of the two forced exile events would reflect the directional points from which these pagan influences came, i.e., Assyria to the north and Babylon to the east. [12] It is as if the Lord was saying, "If you want to worship these gods, fine. I'll exile you to the lands where those gods are worshipped." These are the "things" that God's people were spending their time doing, and these are the "things" for which God would be sending them into exile.

<https://burrosofberea.com/isaiahs-new-heavens-and-new-earth-part-1-former-things-and-new-things/>

[things-and-new-things/](#)

**Isaiah 65:15** You shall leave your name to my chosen for a curse, and the Lord GOD will put you to death, but his servants he will call by another name,

According to Isaiah, the apostate Israelites would be sent into exile for their festal celebrations to pagan gods (Isa. 65:3-4,11). These were the former works (Isa. 65:7), the former troubles (Isa. 65:16), and former things for which they would "bow down to the slaughter" (Isa. 65:12). They would be "hungry" and "thirsty," and "put to shame" (Isa. 65:13). They would "cry with a heavy heart" and "wail with a broken spirit" (Isa. 65:14). And their name would be "left for a curse" to God's "chosen ones" (Isa. 65:16) – at the time when the "former troubles are forgotten," in the "new heavens and new earth" (Isa. 65:17).

Those "chosen ones" would be the new generation of returnees, also called His "servants" (Isa. 65:13,14,15). In stark contrast to those being exiled, the chosen ones of the future would eat and drink (Isa. 65:13), rejoice and shout (Isa. 65:14), and be blessed by the Lord (Isa. 65:16). And they'd be given "another name" (Isa. 65:13) while the apostasies of the cursed generations would fade from memory (Isa. 65:15).

### **What's in a Name?**

Isaiah is reiterating a theme that he had introduced earlier when he says that His people would be given "another name" (Isa. 65:15). "God had promised in Isaiah 1:26 that one day he would give Jerusalem a new name,"[2] and Isaiah 62:2 says that God's people themselves would be "called (qa'ra) by a new name." [3] The concept of the new name in Isaiah 65:15 previews the "new heavens and new earth" in Isaiah 65:17 and echoes the earlier verses where it was introduced (i.e., Isa.1:26, 62:2). Assigning names to created things was an intrinsic part of the original creation story. As such, assigning a new name to God's people would only be natural in the re-creation motif that Isaiah employs. It would likewise only be natural for Isaiah to expect his readers to recall what he previously said about the new name as he introduces the concept of the new creation.

The de-creation and re-creation language used by the prophets, to frame their narrative about exile and restoration, utilizes the original creation narrative – order out of chaos – as its template:[5]

A return to sin = a return to chaos. Hence, the resulting exile is spoken of in terms of de-creation.

A return to the Lord = a return to order. Hence, the resulting restoration is spoken of in terms of re-creation.

With this in mind, let's take a quick look at the key step of naming the elements

of creation in the original process of establishing order from chaos. From there, we can see how it fits into Isaiah's re-creation narrative.

On day one, God called (qa'ra) the light day and the darkness night (Gen.1:5). On day two, God called (qa'ra) the expanse heaven (Gen. 1:8). On day three, God called (qa'ra) the dry land earth and the waters seas (Gen. 1:9-10). Once God placed the man in the garden, He brought him every living creature "to see what he would call (qa'ra) them" (Gen. 2:19a), and "whatever the man called (qa'ra) every living creature, that was its name" (Gen. 2:19b).[6]

Assigning names to the features of creation signaled that they were now part of an orderly world and no longer in a chaotic state. God's creation (Gen. 1:1), which was "formless and void" (Gen. 1:2) now had meaning, function, and purpose. This then shows the importance of God's people being "called (qa'ra) by a new name" (Isa. 62:2) in the new creation after the return from exile. They would no longer be in a chaotic state (exile), but their lives would now have meaning, function, and purpose (restoration).

In simple terms, the act of naming was an integral part of the original creation of the world – when God brought order out of chaos. In the new creation, consequently, the new name is part and parcel with God bringing His people out of the chaos of the exile and into the new order of the restoration period.

Isaiah is recapping a theme that he introduced earlier, noting that by renaming His chosen people (His new creation), He is effectively distancing them from the apostasy and idolatry that had overshadowed their forefathers and caused their exile. By indicating a new name, the old, with all its implications and baggage, is set aside and put out of mind. Chaos dismissed, order achieved. This name-change concept[7] bookends Isaiah's prophecy. The restoration period, after the return from exile, is strategically positioned as the bookend edges that hold the entire prophecy in place (i.e., Isa. 1:26; 65:15).

### **More Than the Names Will Change**

In the opening chapter (the first bookend), Isaiah says that Jerusalem would be "called (qa'ra) the city of Righteousness" and the "faithful city" after God "restores their judges" and "counselors" (Isa. 1:26). This would come at a time when Zion is "redeemed with justice and her returnees[8] with righteousness" (Isa. 1:27). The future returnees (coming back from exile) are contrasted with Isaiah's present generation who forsook the Lord and who would "come to an end" (Isa. 1:28). Their specific actions, by which they forsook the Lord, are described as desiring the pagan rituals which took place among the "oaks" in the "gardens" (Isa. 1:29).

These practices were among the "influences" that "came from the east" (Isa. 2:6) [9], and these are the practices which sent them into exile (Isa. 65:3-12).[10]

Once the exile is over and the restoration begins, and Jerusalem is purged of these idolatrous practices, the name change would go into effect. Jerusalem would then be "called" (qa'ra) the "righteous" and "faithful" city (Isa.1:26).

Between the name change bookends of Isaiah 1:26 and 65:13, Isaiah also makes this prophecy in chapter 62:

"The nations will see your righteousness, And all kings your glory; And you will be called (qa'ra) by a new name [LXX: by your new name] Which the mouth of the Lord will designate" (Isaiah 62:2).

Dovetailing with chapter 1, Isaiah actually gives the city two new yet related names here in chapter 62, and the contrast of the new names with the old names again points to the restoration in the land after the exile in foreign lands:

"It will no longer be said to you, 'Forsaken,' Nor to your land will it any longer be said, 'Desolate'; But you will be called (qa'ra), 'My delight is in her,' [LXX: 'My Will'] And your land, 'Married'; [LXX: 'Inhabited'] For the Lord delights in you, And to Him your land will be married" (Isaiah 62:4).

The new names, "my delight" (LXX: "My will") and "married," (LXX: "Inhabited") are contrasted with the old names, "forsaken" and "desolate," and everything here is in the context of the Israelites' "land." Fittingly, in the context of everything that happened to their land (during the Assyrian and Babylonian incursions), there could not be a more apt description of their land than "desolate" and "forsaken." This is almost too obvious to require proof.[11]

Speaking of the third and final Babylonian incursion, Jeremiah echoes Isaiah's concepts of becoming forsaken and desolate:

"Behold, I am going to give a command,' declares the Lord, 'and I will bring them back to this city, and they will fight against it and take it and burn it with fire; and I will make the cities of Judah a desolation without inhabitant'" (Jeremiah 34:22).

This is the only time in history when it could be said that Jerusalem was completely and totally abandoned and forsaken. We learn from Jeremiah that Nebuchadnezzar chose to leave a remnant (the poorest of the land) behind in Judah (Jer. 39:10), and Jeremiah subsequently chose to remain behind with them (Jer. 40:1-5). Then, in Jeremiah chapters 42-44, Jeremiah relates how even that remnant didn't want to stay in the land but flee to Egypt – against Jeremiah's advice (Jer. 44:11-14). The remnant tells Jeremiah pointblank:

"Then all the men who were aware that their wives were burning sacrifices to other gods, along with all the women who were standing by, as a large assembly, including all the people who were living in Pathros in the land of Egypt, responded to Jeremiah, saying, 'As for the message that you have spoken to us in the name

of the Lord, we are not going to listen to you! But rather we will certainly carry out every word that has proceeded from our mouths, by burning sacrifices to the queen of heaven and pouring out drink offerings to her, just as we ourselves, our forefathers, our kings and our princes did in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem; for then we had plenty of food and were well off and saw no misfortune" (Jer. 44:15-17).

So, even the remnant left behind by Nebuchadnezzar didn't want to stay behind. Their fellow citizens were taken to Babylon, and they left for Egypt. They left, specifically, to worship false gods and avoid further misfortune. The reference to "misfortune" is the Hebrew word *ra'* and literally means "trouble". The idea that they "saw no trouble" is reminiscent of the false gods of Gad ("fortune") and Meni ("destiny"), with whom the apostates were aligning themselves. Along with "the queen of heaven," God's people were turning to other gods in hopes of good fortune and having "plenty of food" (Jer. 44:17).

However, Isaiah prophesies against that rebellious generation, stating that they would instead be hungry, thirsty, and put to shame (Isa. 65:13). Their gods can't help them, and the feasting and fortune they hoped to achieve by worshipping those gods would turn to famine and misfortune.[12]

In stark contrast, it was the generation of the restoration who would eat, drink, rejoice, and feast in the blessings of God's presence (Isa. 65:13,14,16). Everything would change with the name change. The things that the apostate Israelites sought and hoped for when they turned to false gods would only be found by those who turned their hearts to the One True God, who would bring them back, restore their fortunes, and bestow them with blessings reflected in a changed name. They would be "called (*qa'ra*) by another name" (Isa. 65:15b). They will be called (*qa'ra*) "My delight is in her" (Isa. 62:4). They would be called (*qa'ra*) "married" (Isa. 62:4). Jeremiah echoes this, but even more simply, stating that "at that time, Jerusalem shall be called (*qa'ra*) the throne of the Lord" (Jer. 3:17). The new name signaled a new day. Old things would pass away, behold, all things would become new (cf. 2 Cor. 5:17).

### **Cursed Memories and Forgotten Troubles**

As for the previous rebellious generations, Isaiah says they would be a "curse" to God's new generation of "chosen ones" (Isa. 65:15a) when the "former troubles are forgotten" (Isa. 65:16). Similarly, Jeremiah tells the apostate generation of his time:

"...they will fall by the sword and meet their end by famine. Both small and great will die by the sword and famine; and they will become a curse, an object of horror, an imprecation and a reproach" (Jeremiah 44:12).[13]

The contrasts couldn't be greater, and the context couldn't be clearer. The grim

future that Isaiah foresaw in his day became the harsh reality of Jeremiah's day. The bright future of a new day that both prophets envisioned became a reality in the restoration.

The hunger of the cursed generations is replaced with the feasting of the new generation. A vivid picture of this can be seen in the reinstitution of the Passover (Ezra 6:19-12) and the new institution of Purim (Esther 9:25-29). The rebellion of the cursed generations is replaced by the righteousness of the new generation. This is likewise pictured in the contrite prayers of confession in Ezra 9 and Nehemiah 9. The names of the false gods of the cursed generations are replaced with the name of the one, true God when the Generation of the Restoration is given its "new name."

## **Summation and Application**

The contrasts between famine and feast, old name and new name, desolation and delight, all anchor this prophecy to the events leading up to and including the exile – and the restoration after the return from exile.

While this prophecy was fulfilled in the past, it is filled full of implications that last. God's Word isn't dead and stagnant, it's "living and active" (Heb. 4:12). As such, it comes to life and speaks to every new generation and every new situation. If we want to be called delightful by the Lord, we must delight ourselves in the Lord (Ps. 37:4; Isa. 65:12). We must strive to emulate the behavior of the returning generation, not the exiled generation.

We might not worship Gad ("fortune") and Meni ("destiny") anymore, but our destiny is exile when we seek our fortunes apart from the Lord. We destine ourselves to spiritual exile, away from His presence and blessing in our lives, when we walk in the way of those who went astray rather than focusing on the Lord.

Like the new beginning for those who returned from captivity, a return to the Lord is a new beginning for everyone in all ages (2 Cor. 5:17). And like the returnees who were given a "new name" (Isa. 1:26; 62:2; 65:15), we will be given a "new name" as well when we overcome through His grace and mercy (Rev. 2:17).[14] <https://burrosofberea.com/isaiahs-new-heavens-and-new-earth-part-2-old-names-and-new-names/>

**Isaiah 65:17** "For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered or come into mind.

The Biblical prophets used the original creation narrative (order out of chaos) to frame their own narrative regarding judgment and restoration. A return to sin = a return to chaos, and a return to the Lord = a return to order. This being the case, judgment is often expressed in de-creation language, and restoration is

often expressed in re-creation language. Hence the prophets used de-creation language to denounce the sinful state that would send God's Old Testament people into exile, and Isaiah uses re-creation language to demonstrate their renewed state after the return from exile. He says, God will create a "new heavens and new earth," and the "former things will not be remembered or come to mind." [2]

Many today read this passage and think that it's talking about "a complete memory wipe" in the "Christian eternal future." [3] As Richard Middleton reminds us, however, this passage is part of Isaiah's "prophetic visions of God's renewal of people and land after the exile" [4] – so believers today need not worry about their hard drives crashing and spending eternity as blank slates. Neither did the returning Jewish exiles, for that matter.

## **The Former Things**

The "former (*ri'shon*) things" being contrasted with the "new heavens and new earth" are fairly easy to identify. Isaiah had introduced these "things" earlier in the chapter and identified them as "former (*ri'shon*)" twice already (Isa. 65:7, 16). The "former (*ri'shon*) things" are the pagan practices which would send the Israelites into exile, and the "new heavens and new earth" would be the new beginning after the return from exile – the restoration period.

### **See the Comments on Isaiah 65:3-4.**

In 65:11, Isaiah hones in on another pagan practice that the Israelites had adopted, namely, the festal celebrations in honor of Gad and Meni – "the deities of fortune and destiny." [9] As George Mitrov writes, "The prophet deepens the nation's forsaking of Yhwh via the worship of Gad and Meni, both pan-Semitic deities." [10] Whereas the previous indictments mentioned are associated with the "Baalistic practices of Canaanite religion," Gad (Fortune) and Meni (Destiny) were most popular among the gods of the "Babylonian pantheon." [11]

The trajectory of the two forced exile events would reflect the directional points from which these pagan influences came, i.e., Assyria to the north and Babylon to the east. [12] It is as if the Lord was saying, "If you want to worship these gods, fine. I'll exile you to the lands where those gods are worshipped." These are the "things" that God's people were spending their time doing, and these are the "things" for which God would be sending them into exile. These were the "*ri'son*) things."

## **From Former Things to New Things**

Dovetailing with the "former (*ri'son*) things" of verse 17, Isaiah calls these pagan practices their "former (*ri'shon*) works" in verse 7 and their "former (*ri'shon*) troubles" in verse 16 (Isa. 65:7, 16). But those "former (*ri'shon*) troubles" would

one day be “forgotten” (Isa. 65:16). The Hebrew word Isaiah uses for “forgotten,” *shakach*, refers to the act of hiding, neglecting, or disregarding something. The “former troubles” would be disregarded or put out of mind.

This is where the framework of the chapter draws us as the “new heavens and new earth,” which God is going to “create,” are contrasted with the “former” (*ri’shon*) things” in verse 17. The context has everything to do with the two upcoming exiles (Israel in 722 BC and Judah in 586 BC) and the reasons for those exiles. In verse 17, Isaiah begins to look forward to the restoration after the return from exile that will begin with the declaration of Cyrus – calling the exiles back home from all over his kingdom in 536 BC (Ezra 1:1-7). This is what Isaiah’s prophecy of “new heavens and new earth” was all about.

As John D. Watts comments, Isaiah’s “new heavens and new earth” refers to the “new age with Cyrus and his successors” and “the new order that is being created.”<sup>[13]</sup> It is the age “in which Persia holds sway over the entire area so that Jerusalem can be rebuilt.”<sup>[14]</sup> It is “the new order,” continues Watts, “divinely instituted, which chaps. 40–66 have revealed, and in which the Persian Empire has YHWH’s sanction, and Israel is called to be a worshiping and pilgriming people with Jerusalem as its focus.”<sup>[15]</sup>

Jerusalem indeed became that focus, with Isaiah mentioning it six times in the prophecy that follows (Isa. 65:18, 19; 66:8, 10, 13,20).

<https://burrosofberea.com/isaiahs-new-heavens-and-new-earth-part-1-former-things-and-new-things/>

**Isaiah 65:18** But be glad and rejoice forever in that which I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem to be a joy, and her people to be a gladness.

The creation of the new heavens and new earth in Isaiah 65:17 is synonymous with the creation of Jerusalem in verse 18. The theme of Jerusalem being rebuilt was introduced earlier in Isaiah, in the same chapter and verse where Cyrus is introduced. God calls Cyrus his “shepherd” who “will perform all my desire” and declares of Jerusalem, “she shall be built” (Isa. 44:28).

**(NKJV) Isaiah 44:28** Who says of Cyrus, 'He is My shepherd, And he shall perform all My pleasure, Saying to Jerusalem, "You shall be built," And to the temple, "Your foundation shall be laid." ' **(New King James Version)**  
<https://burrosofberea.com/isaiahs-new-heavens-and-new-earth-part-1-former-things-and-new-things/>

**Isaiah 65:19** I will rejoice in Jerusalem and be glad in my people; no more shall be heard in it the sound of weeping and the cry of distress.

## **The Voice of Weeping**

After the city is rebuilt and reinhabited under Cyrus, Isaiah says, "There will no longer be heard in her the voice of weeping (be'khi) and the sound of crying" (Isa. 65:19). These words immediately remind us of Jeremiah's words coming on the cusp of the exile:

"This is what the Lord says: 'A voice is heard in Ramah, Lamenting and bitter weeping (be'khi). Rachel is weeping (be'khi) for her children; She refuses to be comforted for her children, Because they are no more'" (Jer. 31:15).[16]

Ramah was "the place where Nebuzara-dan collected all the Jews in chains, previous to their removal to Babylon (Jer 40:1)."[17] It was the "deportation point for the second exile on the road north from Jerusalem to Babylon." [18] The rhetorical Rachel (representing the mother of Israel and Judah, just as Jacob was their father in Isaiah 65:9) is weeping because her children, who were taken to Ramah, "are no more." The fact that the Babylonians killed Judean children (a tactic of warfare at the time) is evident in Isaiah 47. In Isaiah 47:3, God says that he will enact na'qam against the "daughter of Babylon" (cf. Isa. 47:1). Usually translated as "vengeance," the full force of the word conveys the idea of "restoring justice" by bringing "consequences in the form of proportionate evil upon those who enacted them." [19] In other words, there is a sense that the punishment would follow in a similar manner to the crime that was committed – let the punishment fit the crime (to borrow a line from the music of Gilbert and Sullivan's operetta *The Mikado*). This being the case, part of Babylon's daughter's punishment would be that she would incur "loss of children and widowhood" (Isa. 47:9). This implies that the Babylonians did in fact kill Jewish children during the deportation process as they were traversed through Ramah on their way to Babylon, hence Rachel's weeping for the loss of her children in that place.

Isaiah and Jeremiah, therefore, are both tracking on the same theme and, as such, the historical circumstances match. Upon the deportation, Rachel's children would either be killed or they'd live out the rest of their lives in the fields of Babylon rather than the streets of their homeland. Neither outcome was desirable, and she'd be laboring "in vain" and bearing her children "for calamity" (Isa. 65:23). Conversely, both prophets also look forward in hope to the restoration after the return from exile when such would no longer be the case. Jeremiah promises that Rachel's children "shall return to their own territory" (Jer. 31:17) and Isaiah assures his readers that the time will come when the weeping and crying will "no longer be heard" (Isa. 65:19).

<https://burrosofberea.com/isaiahs-new-heavens-and-new-earth-part-1-former-things-and-new-things/>

**Isaiah 65:20** No more shall there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not fill out his days, for the young man shall die a hundred years old, and the sinner a hundred years old shall be accursed.

## **Long Life and A New Hope**

Not only were their children once again to be born back in their homeland and live their lives out there, but their lives were going to be meaningful and full of purpose. Isaiah employs a common literary trope of the ancient world where quantity of life symbolizes quality of life.

The most well-known example of this length-of-life motif would, of course, be the Sumerian King's Lists. In these lists, various kings were said to have had impossibly long reigns, to the tune of 28,000 years, 36,000 years, 43,000 years, etc. Obviously, everyone in the ancient world understood that these kings didn't actually live, much less reign, for tens of thousands of years. Rather, this was a rhetorical device meant to highlight the importance of their time on the throne. The stated duration of their reign symbolized the significance of their reign; it was not intended to be understood literally. This rhetorical device, where length of life signifies strength of life, was frequently employed in the literature of the time.

In ancient Egypt, for example, the phrase "he died at the age of 110" referred to someone who lived life to the fullest and offered important contributions to society. Craig Olson summarizes the usage of the phrase:

"When you were alive, they would say, 'I hope you live to 110.' After you died—if you were an honorable person—they said, 'He lived to be 110,' even though you probably only made it to 40, if you were lucky... So, in Egypt, the people knew what a normal lifespan would be, yet they consistently spoke of 110 as an ideal age and exaggerated even more the lifespan of kings..."[20]

With this in mind, it's no small coincidence that the Egyptian ideal age makes its way into the pages of Scripture in conjunction with the Israelites' time in Egypt. Olson explains:

"The lifespans of Joseph (Gen 50:22, 26) and Joshua (Josh 24:29, Judg 2:8), who represent the first generation and last generation of Israelites in Egypt, seems an obvious use of the symbolic Egyptian lifespan of 110 years..."[21]

When the Biblical writers said that Joseph and Joshua both "died being 110 years old," their point may not have been simply that these two men literally lived almost three times as long as the average lifespan back then. Their point may also have been polemical in nature. It was to say that the peace, order, and stability of the Egyptian society came through the presence of God's people, rather than through Pharaoh or the Egyptian people themselves – specifically, that peace, order, and stability came with Joseph and left with Joshua. God blesses His people with lives of substance and significance, and it overflows to all with whom they interact. Olson captures the significance of the possible use of this rhetorical device in the Bible, when he writes:

"Many people do not appreciate that there is a biblical purpose behind the use of

hyperbolic lifespans. The exaggerated lifespans make sense when we realize that the Bible itself presents long lifespans as intentional representations of honor.”[22]

Looping back to the Sumerian King’s Lists, Olson notes that a “regular person” could not “wish” for his/her life’s worth to be expressed with numbers this large. [23] But Isaiah says, “For as the lifetime of a tree, so shall be the days of my people” (Isa. 65:22). This telegraphs the idea that God’s faithful people are all kings and priests in His eyes.

## **Kings and Priests Then and Now**

Isaiah is picking up on a common literary device of his time, in his 65th chapter, to drive his point home. The blessings upon the faithful returning at the restoration are typified through the long-lifespan imagery. This is similar to Jesus’s statement in the New Testament: “The thief comes only to steal, kill and destroy, but I have come that they might have life, and have it more abundantly” (John 10:10). This does not mean that believers will necessarily live longer lives than non-believers. In many cases, the Lord’s faithful servants on this earth are “gone too soon,” to borrow a line from Scott Stapp’s fantastic song.[24] But believers in Jesus live a lifetime in His abundant grace and mercy, and those who don’t know him never really live at all. To quote Psalm 23:6, “Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life, and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord forever.”

So, the good news is that we won’t be getting our memories wiped in eternity after all! And while this passage has been historically fulfilled in the past, Isaiah packed it full of meaning that would last. We can live life to the fullest when we serve God to the fullest. Like the Israelites being sent into exile for idolatry, we need to forsake our own “former things” which “amount to idolatry” (Col. 3:5) – so we can live that life and be all that God wants us to be.

<https://burrosofberea.com/isaiahs-new-heavens-and-new-earth-part-1-former-things-and-new-things/>

**Isaiah 65:24** Before they call I will answer; while they are yet speaking I will hear.

As is true when dealing with any Scriptural prophecies, it is imperative that we always keep in mind how the prophecy is intended to relate to the target audience. This being the case, we will continue to target Isaiah’s context, so we don’t veer off target.[1]

Throughout our study of Isaiah’s “new heavens and new earth,” Isaiah has continually reiterated themes introduced earlier in his prophecy, while simultaneously contrasting the current faithless generation that would incur God’s wrath through destruction and displacement, with the future faithful generation

that would receive God's blessings through reparation and resettlement. Verses 24-25 continue this trend, parsing exile and restoration.

## **Contrast and Comparison**

A comparison of verse 12 with verses 24-25 once again sets up a dramatic difference between those to be exiled and those who were going to be returning from exile. Isaiah drives his point home by utilizing three striking contrasts.

First, the unfaithful of Isaiah's day are told: "I called but you did not answer; I spoke, but you did not hear" (Isa. 65:12). Using the exact same words, and flipping everything around in perfect contrasting symmetry, Isaiah says of the faithful of the new day: "...before they call, I will answer; and while they are still speaking, I will hear" (Isa. 65:24).

Second, speaking further of the chosen generation of returnees, Isaiah says, "they will do no evil or harm in all my holy mountain" (Isa. 65:25). Again, this contrasts with the apostate generation who "did evil in my sight" (Isa. 65:12).

Third, whereas the rebellious generation is pictured with the violent image of slaughter (Isa. 65:12), the obedient generation is pictured with the tranquil image of animals at peace with each other (Isa. 65:25).

<https://burrosofberea.com/isaiahs-new-heavens-and-new-earth-part-3-wolves-and-lambs-serpents-and-dust-and-the-chosen-young-man/>

**Isaiah 65:25** The wolf and the lamb shall graze together; the lion shall eat straw like the ox, and dust shall be the serpent's food. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain," says the LORD.

## **Of Wolves and Lambs**

True to his style of tracking on earlier themes, Isaiah imports this peaceful animal imagery from chapter 11, where he poetically described the blessings of the restoration period after the return from exile.[2] The wolf and the lamb grazing together, and the lion eating straw like the ox, are nearly verbatim restatements of his phrases from the earlier chapter:

"And the wolf will dwell with the lamb, And the leopard will lie down with the young goat, And the calf and the young lion and the fattened steer will be together; And a little boy will lead them. Also the cow and the bear will graze, Their young will lie down together, And the lion will eat straw like the ox" (Isaiah 11:6-7).

Isaiah 11:6 specifically pairs a wolf with a lamb, a leopard with a goat, and a lion with a calf. In each case, we have a predatory animal coupled with a docile animal in a peaceful relationship. With that said, Jeremiah also mentions these

same three predatory animals – but in his account, these animals are fierce and rapacious rather than peaceful and tame:

“Therefore a lion from the forest will kill them, A wolf of the deserts will destroy them, A leopard is watching their cities. Everyone who goes out of them will be torn in pieces, Because their wrongdoings are many, Their apostasies are numerous” (Jeremiah 5:6).

Thus, the same three animals that are devouring and destroying in Jeremiah are docile and domesticated in Isaiah. Jeremiah then goes on to inform his readers that these aren’t really animals at all; rather, the dangerous animals are being used as symbols for Israel’s enemies who would conquer and exile them:

“Behold, I am bringing a nation against you from far away, Oh house of Israel,’ declares the Lord. ‘It is an enduring nation, It is an ancient nation, A nation whose language you do not know, Nor can you understand what they say” (Jeremiah 5:15).

Putting two and two together, what conclusions can be drawn? The implications seem all too obvious. If Jeremiah is talking about a time when Israel was in conflict with her enemies, then Isaiah is talking about a “new” and better time when Israel would be at peace with her enemies. And this “new” time Isaiah describes perfectly fits the time of the restoration period after the return from exile.[3] When that time comes, their most recent enemy, Babylon, wouldn’t be a threat anymore. Their more ancient enemy, Assyria, would be their ally (Ezra 6:22). And they would have the full support of Persia – the nation that would subsequently rise to power (Ezra 1:1-7). In both Jeremiah and Isaiah, the animal imagery in these prophetic passages symbolizes Israel’s relationship with its neighbors at different points in her history.

### **Another One Bites the Dust**

In addition to the wolf and the lamb grazing together, and the lion eating straw like the ox, Isaiah also adds that “dust shall be the serpent’s food” (Isa. 65:25).

It is only natural that Isaiah would incorporate this image into his “new heavens and earth” motif. In the Genesis creation narrative, the original divine rebel is portrayed as a serpent destined to eat dust as a result of his deceit (Gen. 3:14). God brought order from chaos, and Satan sought to reinsert chaos into God’s orderly world. The portrayal of the serpent crawling on his belly and eating dust conveys the idea that, despite all his efforts, Satan is still subjugated to the orderly rule and authority of God and will not prevail.[4]

This theme of eating dust, originating from Genesis, then becomes a template of its own in conjunction with God’s restorative efforts through His people in other parts of Scripture. Psalm 72, for example, paints a picture of the righteous

judgments of the king (Ps. 72:1) who will vindicate the afflicted, save the needy, and crush the oppressor (Ps. 72:2-4). Then the Psalmist says:

"May the nomads of the desert bow before him, And his enemies lick the dust. May the kings of Tarshish and of the islands bring gifts; May the kings of Sheba and Seba offer tributes. And may all kings bow down before him, All nations serve him" (Psalm 72:9-11).

In this passage, the nations are serving the servant of the Lord while his enemies are left to "lick the dust." The imagery is borrowed from Genesis 3:14 and is apropos.[5] The agents of chaos who attempt to thwart the king's efforts at order and stability in God's society will suffer the same fate as the original chaos serpent.

Fittingly, Isaiah's contemporary, Micah, looks ahead to the restoration period when the "nations" which opposed God's people "will see and be ashamed" (Mic. 7:16) and "lick the dust like a serpent" (Mic. 7:17). Isaiah likewise looks forward to the restoration when "dust shall be the serpent's food" (Isa. 65:25). Tracking on these other usages of the idiom, serpents lick dust when those who attempt to hinder God's purposes are "ashamed" (Mic. 7:17), and the other nations serve God's people by bringing "gifts" and offering "tribute" (Ps. 72:9-11). Suitably, this is another picture-perfect portrayal of the restoration period following the return from exile.

### **The Young Man Chosen to Lead**

Looping back to Isaiah 11:6, the serpent eats the dust while the wolf, the leopard, and the lion lie down with the lamb, the goat, and the calf, respectively – symbolizing the restoration period when Israel would be at peace with her neighbors. In this context, Isaiah prophesies that a "young man" (qa'ton na'ar) [6] would lead this peaceful movement at this point in Israel's history (Isa. 11:6). In Isaiah 11:1, this "young man" is described as "a shoot from the spring of Jesse" and a "branch from his roots."

As a descendant of David at the time of the restoration, this is an apt description of Zerubbabel – a key leader of the restoration movement after the return from exile. Zerubbabel was among those who led the first wave of exiles back in 536 BC (Ezra 2:1-2), having been specifically chosen by God as a signet ring and governor of Judah:

"Then the word of the Lord came a second time to Haggai on the twenty-fourth day of the month, saying, 'Speak to Zerubbabel governor of Judah, saying, 'I am going to shake the heavens and the earth. And I will overthrow the thrones of kingdoms and destroy the power of the kingdoms of the nations; and I will overthrow the chariots and their riders, and the horses and their riders will go down, every one by the sword of another. On that day,' declares the Lord of

armies, 'I will take you, Zerubbabel, son of Shealtiel, My servant,' declares the Lord, 'and I will make you like a signet ring, for I have chosen you,' declares the Lord of Hosts" (Haggai 2:20-23).

The mention of the "signet ring" is a major key to the story and highlights Zerubbabel's status and destiny. His grandfather was King Jehoiachin, "the prisoner" (1 Chr. 3:17; 2 Kings 24:12 ) carried away by Nebuchadnezzar to Babylon (2 Kings 24:15). Jehoiachin "did evil in the sight of the Lord" and God removed him as "his signet ring" (Jer. 22:24-27, using his alternate name of Coniah[7]). In chapter 51, Isaiah looks forward to the time when the exiled prisoners would be set free (Isa. 51:14), and the story arches full circle when the prisoner's grandson is the one who leads the prisoners to freedom (Ezra 2:2; see also Matt. 1:12). As God's chosen "signet ring," the "young man" Zerubbabel had redeemed his family name.

But that's not all he would do as the Lord's chosen one.

Zechariah said that the hands of Zerubbabel had laid the foundation of the temple, and his hands would also finish that temple (Zech. 4:9). This is only fitting since his ancestor Solomon built the first temple (1 Kings 6:1, 14). Accordingly, Zerubbabel and Jeshua (or Joshua) the priest led the rebuilding of the temple in 516 BC (Ezra 6:15; cf. Ezra 5:2, 11; Zech. 4:9, Hag. 2:2).

### **The Chosen Young Man in Israel's History**

The Septuagint provides a story where Zerubbabel distinguishes his wisdom before King Darius. In this extended version of Ezra[8], Zerubbabel is called a "young man" three times (1 Esdras 3:4, 16; and especially 4:58) and is called into the council chamber to give advice to the King. As a reward for his sage counsel[9], he is appointed governor of Judah and given control to oversee the rebuilding of Jerusalem (1 Esdras 4:47-57).

According to Dr. Jordan Grant, "1 Ezra 3-4 in the LXX recounts the story of three men giving riddles to Darius, the third of which is Zerubbabel, and his "riddle" wins the king over. Darius calls him 'the wisest' of the three and then grants his requests. Zerubbabel then requests several things and Darius grants them. Zerubbabel is called "the young man" there. He then blesses YHWH and thanks Him for giving him 'wisdom', etc." [10]

In addition, in keeping with Isa. 11:1, the prophecies of Zechariah also specifically call Zerubbabel "The Branch" (Zech. 3:8; 6:12; see also 4:8-14) who would rebuild the temple. As such, he also prefigured Christ, and Paul thematically applies this prophecy from Isaiah to Jesus (Rom. 15:12),[11] who was the ultimate restorer of all things (Acts 3:21), and built His own temple – with living stones without hands (Acts 7:47; 1 Peter 2:5).[12]

At first glance, however, this chosen “young man” and leader of the restoration movement in Isaiah 11 seems to be missing in chapter 65. But is he? Not at all.

### **From Resistance to Assistance**

This is where the strategically placed idiom of the serpents eating dust in 65:25 comes in. In keeping with the idiom’s usage in Scripture, this imagery aptly captures the events detailed in Ezra 4-6, where Zerubbabel encounters harsh resistance to the temple-rebuilding project in Jerusalem following the return from exile.

After Zerubbabel wisely passes on their disingenuous offer to help in the restoration effort (Ezra 4:2-3), the Jews’ enemies succeed in first stalling (Ezra 4:5) and then completely halting the whole project (Ezra 4:6-22). The Jews were “stopped by armed force” (Ezra 4:23), and “the work on the house of God in Jerusalem ceased” (Ezra 4:24). But all of that was about to change. The Lord would raise two more prophets to propel Zerubbabel to do what he was born to do – and finish the work that he started (Zech. 3:8; 4:6-9; 6:12; Hag. 2:20-23).

The thrust of the prophetic words of Haggai and Zechariah (Ezra 5:1) reinvigorate Zerubbabel and Joshua to arise and “rebuild the house of God which is in Jerusalem; and the prophets of God were with them” (Ezra 5:2). Their adversaries then redouble their efforts to shut the whole thing down (Ezra 5:3-10). This time, however, Zerubbabel and Joshua aren’t backing down. Quite the opposite, they double down: “We are servants of the God of heaven and earth, and we are rebuilding this temple” (Ezra 5:11). Taken aback by his newfound resilience, Zerubbabel’s opponents turn to King Darius for help, but Darius subsequently turns the tables on them.

To resolve the problem in Jerusalem, Darius orders that a search be made of the official records to see who was in the right in this matter, and Cyrus’s original decree is found (Ezra 6:1-3). Not only did Zerubbabel and the Jews have every right to rebuild under previous Persian law, but the entire “cost” was “to be paid from the royal treasury” (Ezra 6:4).

Next, Darius issues a decree of his own: “Let the governor of the Jews (i.e., Zerubbabel) and the elders of the Jews rebuild the house of God on its site” (Ezra 6:7). Not only that, but Darius orders that the “total cost be paid to these people from the royal treasury out of the taxes of the provinces of the river, and that it be done without delay” (Ezra 6:8). The Jews were to be given “whatever is needed... daily without fail” (Ezra 6:9). If anyone failed to comply in funding Zerubbabel’s restoration project in Jerusalem, the results would be extremely unpleasant: “a timber shall be drawn from his house and he shall be impaled on it; and his house shall be turned into a refuse heap on account of this” (Ezra 6:11).

Darius then closes his decree with these words: "May the God who has caused His name to dwell there overthrow any king or people who attempts to change it, so as to destroy that house of God in Jerusalem. I, Darius, have issued this decree; it is to be carried out with all diligence" (Ezra 6:12)!<sup>[13]</sup> When all was said and done, even the Assyrian king was encouraging the Jews "in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel" (Ezra 6:22).

In keeping with the spirit of the usage of the serpent/dust imagery, the other nations were now servicing God's people by bringing them gifts and tributes (Ps. 72:9-11), and those that opposed God's people were put to shame (Mic. 7:17). In short, the serpents who attempted to stop the restoration project in Jerusalem licked the dust (Isa. 65:25), having been put in their place.

To recap, Isaiah 65:24-25 is a vivid portrayal of the restoration period following Israel's exile, emphasizing God's closeness to the faithful in a future period of peace and harmony. Formerly hostile nations (symbolized by predatory animals and the serpent) become peaceful allies or are subdued, reflecting a broader biblical theme of divine order triumphing over chaos. Isaiah paints a poetic picture of the historical events led by Zerubbabel, showing how God empowered his people to overcome all opposition and fulfill His restoration plans and purposes.

### **Takeaways for Today**

Understanding audience relevance helps us to understand the relevance of the prophecy in its own time, and understanding the historical fulfillment of the prophecy helps make the core themes and ideas of the prophecy relevant to our time – and our lives.

From these passages, we learn that God's people should strive to be what God has called them to be, despite all opposition. Isaiah prophesied that while the apostate generation would suffer, the faithful people who would return would enjoy God's blessings. As such, Ezra shows how that was ultimately fulfilled. Zerubbabel and Joshua were first discouraged by the naysayers, then encouraged by the Prophets who spoke God's word. In the same way, we must look to God's word for the strength and inspiration we need to accomplish God's purpose in our own lives.

By targeting Isaiah's original context, we can stay on target with regard to that context, and this helps us stay on target in the context of our own lives personally, as the principles laid out in Isaiah's day are equally applicable today. <https://burrosofberea.com/isaiahs-new-heavens-and-new-earth-part-3-wolves-and-lambs-serpents-and-dust-and-the-chosen-young-man/>

**Isaiah 66:1** Thus says the LORD: "Heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool; what is the house that you would build for me, and what is the place of

my rest?

Chapter 66 opens with God proclaiming His control – Heaven is my throne and earth is the footstool for my feet. Nothing in heaven above or on the earth below can constrain or restrict Him.

Isaiah's prophecy then applies this to the temple. "Where is the house you would build me?" and "Where is the place of my rest?" In other words, by using these rhetorical questions, God is telling those who would return that He does expect them to rebuild the temple, but simply rebuilding wouldn't be enough. He also expects them to understand what that rebuilt temple is and isn't all about. In short, He expects them to not fall into the same mistakes as their ancestors had with the first temple, by focusing more on the temple and the rituals than on God Himself. Ultimately, He is larger than any temple or physical structure.

### **To Build or Not to Build: What is Isaiah Saying?**

With that said, some actually see Isaiah 66:1 as Isaiah opposing the future plans of rebuilding the temple after its destruction.[1] However, this would put Isaiah at odds not only with the future prophets Haggai and Zechariah, but with himself as well. God wasn't opposed to His temple. He was opposed to a false view of the temple and the false worship that took place in the temple during the time of the apostate generations.

Earlier in his prophecy, Isaiah anticipates the day when God will once again be glorified in His "glorious house" (Isa. 60:7). His "sanctuary" would be beautified (Isa. 60:13), after the current "holy and beautiful house where our fathers praised thee has been burned with fire" (Isa. 64:11). Isaiah looked forward to the day when even "foreigners" would "join themselves to the Lord" (Isa. 56:6), and the new and improved temple would be "a house of prayer for all nations" (Isa. 56:7).[2] Opposing the building of the future temple would make Isaiah a schizophrenic prophet while also clashing with the later prophets. This is not at all the case. Much to the contrary, Isaiah 66:1 is an uplifting verse, providing the returnees with leadership and direction. He was projecting neither an accusation nor a reproof of the Temple-building effort. A Biblically consistent approach sees Isaiah's statement as a call to the future returnees to rebuild with a proper understanding of the true nature and purpose of the temple. At the same time, it is also a rebuke of the present generation's misunderstanding in this same regard.

Isaiah's pronouncement was "directed against a too materialistic understanding of the deity and the location of the deity," writes Joseph Blenkinsopp, "reflecting the same concern as in Solomon's prayer at the dedication of the first temple: 'Will God indeed dwell on earth? Heaven itself, the highest heaven, cannot contain you, how much less this house I have built?' (1 Kgs 8:27)."[3] As Isaiah had

said in chapter 60, God's "glorious house" (Isa. 60:7) on earth is merely "the place" of His "feet" (Isa. 60:13). This theme is prevalent in the Old Testament (1 Chr. 28:2; Ps. 99:5; 132:7; Lam. 2.1) and echoed in the New Testament, as well (Matt. 5:35).[4]

Recognizing Isaiah's intent also helps us recognize that Isaiah's statement, here in 66:1, reflects the whole warp and woof of the direction in which redemptive history was moving – away from the external and toward the internal, as it progresses from the physical to the spiritual. As Jesus told the Samaritan woman in answer to her question about which temple was the true temple, He replied that the Jewish location in Jerusalem was the correct one (Jn. 4:22), but pretty soon it wouldn't matter either way. The "hour is coming and now is," He tells her, "when the true worshipers will worship God in Spirit and truth" (Jn. 4:23).

Isaiah 66:1 is not a rejection of temple rebuilding but a call to understand the temple's true nature, function, and purpose. Isaiah affirms God's transcendence above any physical structure. While the temple should be rebuilt after the return from exile, true worship must be internal, humble, and reverent. Isaiah wants to make sure that the future returnees know this, as opposed to those of his day who had turned a blind eye and a deaf ear to the Lord.

The connections between Isaiah's message and the post-exilic period can also be seen by focusing on the rare Hebrew word *ha'rad* ("tremble"), which links Isaiah 66:2, 5 with Ezra 9:4 and 10:3. The faithful returnees (the tremblers) fulfilled Isaiah's prophecy through heartfelt repentance and reverence for God's word.

Isaiah continues to follow his pattern of comparison and contrast between the apostates (those to be taken into exile) and the faithful (those who would return from exile).

He continues to contrast the disobedience and idolatry of the apostate generation in his day with the obedience and loyalty of the coming generation beginning with Zerubbabel's day.

And Isaiah continues to condemn participation in pagan rituals, including necromancy and animal sacrifices tied to cultic deities. Isaiah's prophecy is a forward-looking call to worship God in spirit and truth, while also foreshadowing New Testament times, and leaving the sins of the exiled generation behind.

## **Takeaways for Today**

As New Testament believers, we want to emulate the behavior of those who returned from exile and not those who were taken into exile. The apostate generation lost sight of the original intent, and focused instead on the external

and the physical. The returnees were called upon to focus on the internal and the spiritual.

Today, there is no external or physical temple – as we are the true and final temple on earth. It is all about Christ in us and us in Christ. With this in mind, we should not be mesmerized with materialism or fads. The Body of Christ is not a building, and “God does not dwell in temples made with hands” (Acts 7:48: 17:24). While there is nothing inherently wrong with nice buildings and beautiful architecture, we’ve constructed our own “temples” if we lose sight of what the Body of Christ is really all about.

With regard to the pagan worship practices of the apostate generation, it should go without saying that believers have no business dabbling into forms of “spirituality” that don’t conform to the dictates of God’s word. He, and He alone, is the God of gods and the Lord of lords. His word teaches us to refrain from focusing on the material and instead to focus on what is truly spiritual – as opposed to the counterfeits or trappings. Keep your focus on the Most High God.

<https://burrosofberea.com/isaiahs-new-heavens-and-new-earth-part-4-the-temple-the-tremblers-and-true-and-false-worship/>

**Isaiah 66:2** All these things my hand has made, and so all these things came to be, declares the LORD. But this is the one to whom I will look: he who is humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word.

### **From Temples to Trembling**

The true worshipers whom Jesus referred to in His day were foreshadowed by the returning exiles of Ezra’s day – the very exiles whom Isaiah looked forward to in his day. After denouncing those whose focal point was the flamboyant externalities and rituals of the first temple in his time, Isaiah looks ahead to those who would make the Lord the focal point of the second temple in a new time.

Verse 2 mentions those who are humble and contrite, and who “tremble” (ha’red) at God’s word. Isaiah mentions those who “tremble” (ha’red) again in verse 5. His word choice here is key to properly understanding the time of the prophecy’s fulfillment. At first glance and reading from English translations, however, the significance of trembling at God’s word doesn’t necessarily seem to point to any particular period in Israel’s history. After all, the idea or concept of trembling before the Lord is almost commonplace in the Old Testament. How does this point, specifically, to the return from exile?

In Psalm 96, for example, God’s people are called to “worship the Lord in splendor” and “tremble before Him” (Ps. 96:9). In Psalm 114, all the earth is called to “tremble before the Lord” (Ps. 114:7). This is a fairly common theme

and these passages use a fairly common Hebrew word for “tremble” (chul).[5] In contrast, however, the word “tremble” (ha’red) in Isaiah 66:2 and 5 is more pointed and indicative, and its usage distinctly and specifically dovetails with the restoration period after the exile.

“Tremble” (ha’red) is a rare word used sparsely and sparingly in the Old Testament. It occurs only 6 times total,[7] with two of those times being here in Isaiah 66. Of the other 4 occurrences, the specific form of the word that Isaiah uses is only found elsewhere in two other places – Ezra 9:4 and 10:3.[8] According to Gesenius’ Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon, this form of the word carries the additional nuance of reverence.[9] Putting two and two together, the fact that Isaiah refers to the group of the faithful as those who “tremble” (ha’red) at God’s word (Isa. 66:2, 5) is a “clear indication” of a connection between “Ezra/Nehemiah” and the group prophesied about in Isaiah.[10]

As Marvin Sweeney observes, “the entire book of Isaiah underlies the reform program of Ezra and Nehemiah.”[11] As such, Ezra’s word choice in Ezra 9:4 and 10:13 is careful, deliberate, and meant to telegraph the fact that Isaiah’s prophecy was being fulfilled in his day. The “terminological correspondence” between Isaiah 66:2, 5 and Ezra 9:4 and 10:13, writes Ulrich Berges, is “hardly mere coincidence” and deals with the “contemporary events” of Ezra’s time.[12]

Additionally, Isaiah says that those who “tremble” (ha’red) do so upon hearing “the word of God,” specifically, in Isaiah 66:2 and 5. They “tremble” (ha’red) after God’s word is heard. “Only in Ezra 9:4 and 10:3,” writes John Watts, “are these words otherwise used to describe the faithful in Jerusalem.”[13]

In Ezra 9:4, Ezra and others “trembled (ha’rad) at the words of the God of Israel,” on account of the faithlessness of some of their fellow exiles, and “sat appalled until the evening sacrifice.” Ezra then offers an intercessory prayer of confession (Ezra 9:5-15), upon which all the people then threw themselves down before the temple that Zerubbabel had built and “wept bitterly” (Ezra 10:1). Following this, they then committed to enacting the Restoration Covenant (Ezra 10:3). The repentant people are characterized as “those who tremble (ha’rad) at the commandment of our God” (Ezra 10:3). These passages in Ezra (Ezra 9:4; 10:3) clearly echo the passages in Isaiah (Isa. 66:2, 5), as the precise form of the rare word ha’rad (to tremble with reverence)[14] is only used by these two authors, and in both Isaiah and Ezra, the trembling is pointedly and emphatically in reaction to hearing God’s word.

In short, the returning, repentant exiles of Ezra’s day were the ones prophesied about in Isaiah’s day. Unlike the apostate, unrepentant generation sent into exile, the repentant, retuning generation of exiles amended their ways – trembling when they heard what God had to say.

<https://burrosofberea.com/isaiahs-new-heavens-and-new-earth-part-4-the-temple-the-tremblers-and-true-and-false-worship/>

**Isaiah 66:3** "He who slaughters an ox is like one who kills a man; he who sacrifices a lamb, like one who breaks a dog's neck; he who presents a grain offering, like one who offers pig's blood; he who makes a memorial offering of frankincense, like one who blesses an idol. These have chosen their own ways, and their soul delights in their abominations;

## **Mixing and Matching their Gods**

Isaiah circles back to his earlier theme of denouncing the pagan practices that would send them into exile. These are the very things that made their ears dull and would bring about their fall.

The astute reader will quickly notice that the word "like" is in italics every time it's used in this verse in some versions.[16] When translators do this, they are being honest and letting the reader know that the particular word being used is not there in the original text. In other words, Isaiah's original audience would have read the sentence this way: "The one who slaughters an ox *IS* the one who kills a person." [17] As Lena-Sofia Tiemeyer explains:

"The syntax of verse 3 is best understood as containing four sets of subjects and predicates: 'The one who does X (also) does Y.' The person who performs the legitimate ritual act (X) is the same as the one who performs the illegitimate acts (Y). Verse 3 thus describes a situation where the person who slaughters an ox (also) kills a man, the one who sacrifices a lamb (also) breaks a dog's neck, the one who presents a cereal offering (also) offers swine's blood, and the one who makes a memorial offering of incense (also) worships idols. As to the identity of these people, the priesthood is the natural choice, as they would be the only ones who were able to perform the legitimate rituals." [18]

This would indicate that the same Hebrew priests who were sacrificing oxen to Yahweh were also murderers.[19] Christophe Nihan puts it this way: "...the verse should then be translated as follows (according to the MT): 'The slaughterer of oxen kills a man, / the sacrificer of sheep breaks a dog's neck, / the offerer of (cereal) offerings offers swine's blood, / the offerer of incense blesses an idol.' [20] Isaiah charges "the priests currently serving in the temple with practicing various abominations," thereby profaning the "task entrusted to them." [21] As to whether the apostate priests were in fact murderers, one only needs to read of the many instances where Israelite children were sacrificed to Baal and Molech to see how this played out. [22]

Basically, the apostate Israelites were mixing and matching their gods, as if they felt the need to cover all their bases. Ultimately, however, it reflected a lack of reliance on God.

## **The Dog Days of Ancient Times**

The next line in verse 3 is a picture-perfect example of this mix and match. Taking the translators' imposed "like" out of the sentence once again, Isaiah says, "He who sacrifices a lamb IS the one who breaks a dog's neck."

Regarding this, it is well-recognized among scholars that dogs were associated with "chthonic deities" in ancient times.[23] Archaeologists routinely "discover animal bones" in cultic contexts within temple complexes.[24] One of the most significant examples was the discovery of the massive dog graves within the Temple of Isis in Egypt.[25] The fact that the ancient Israelites were not immune to this cultic practice of their neighbors was confirmed by the "graves of dogs with broken necks" discovered in "Tel Haror (Israel)."[26]

In the first article in this series, we observed how ancient Israel's necromancy problem was highlighted and condemned in Isaiah 65:3-4.[27] Trying to contact the dead via rituals and ceremonies in gardens and secret places was among the "former (ri'shon) things" that wouldn't be remembered in the "new heavens and new earth" after the exile was over (Isa. 65:7, 16, 17). With that said, the association of the pagan deity Hecate, "the goddess of ghosts and purifications,"[28] highlights the connection between necromancy and dog rituals and makes sense out of Isaiah's words here in the context of his time.[29]

As Rick Strelan says, "The association of Hecate with dogs" is well-known and "needs little elaboration." [30] Her cult was "widespread" and particularly "popular" in the ancient world – continuing even into New Testament times in the area of "Asia Minor,"[31] especially in Ephesus.[32] She is usually pictured with two ghost hounds as her servants, the hound is her sacrificial animal, and she is represented as having a dog's head.[33] Strelan elaborates on the association of this chthonic goddess with canines:

"In the magical papyri, Hecate is known as the dog lover (4.2813) and leader of the dog-packs (4.2722). She is invoked while the dogs howl (4.2260), and howls herself like a dog (4.2549); she has a voice like a dog's bark (4.2810); and she is a dog who can assume the form of a maiden (4.2251). Simply, Lady Hecate of the Crossroads is a black dog (4.1434), and in some spells, pitch-and-wax images of dogs are to be made along with invocations to Hecate who is attended by the ghostly pack (4.1876-1926, 2944-66)."[34]

All of this sounds bizarre to our modern ears, and indeed, bizarre it was. But these were the sorts of things that God's people were messing with, which messed them up, and got them into a mess (i.e., the exile). Along with other pagan practices like offering "swine's blood" and blessing "idols," these are the cultic ritual customs for which the Lord says, "...they have chosen their ways, and their soul delights in the abominations" (Isa. 66:3). For this, God would "chose their punishments and bring on them what they dread" (Isa. 66:4).

## Keeping it “Relevant” by Keeping the Original “Relevance”

It is imperative to stress the fact that most of these practices that Isaiah notes that were prevalent in his day were absent in Judah after the restoration, as well as in New Testament times. These overtly pagan practices vanished after the Jews returned from exile. This squarely pinpoints the people to whom Isaiah was speaking.

This is important to note because many try to warp-speed Isaiah’s prophecy to modern times or even New Testament times. In each case, however, Isaiah’s concerns and context don’t match the time in question. The Jews of today aren’t sacrificing to Molech and Baal, nor are they breaking dogs’ necks trying to contact the dead. Neither were the Jews of Jesus’s day.

We must keep in mind that audience relevance is just as relevant in the Old Testament as it is in the New Testament. And that’s extremely relevant for us as well when we’re reading either Testament.

The context of Isaiah 65-66 constantly and continually points us in the direction of the exile, the reasons for the exile, and the return from exile as the backdrop for these chapters. Isaiah continues to contrast the apostates taken into exile with the faithful remnant returning home from exile.

<https://burrosofberea.com/isaiahs-new-heavens-and-new-earth-part-4-the-temple-the-tremblers-and-true-and-false-worship/>

**Isaiah 66:4** I also will choose harsh treatment for them and bring their fears upon them, because when I called, no one answered, when I spoke, they did not listen; but they did what was evil in my eyes and chose that in which I did not delight.”

### Ears to Hear or Not to Hear?

Unlike the future generation of returnees who would “tremble” (ha’rad) in reverence when they heard God’s word, the current generation of Isaiah’s day would not listen, and their ears were dull. In 66:4, Isaiah repeats what he said back in verse 65:12.

I will destine you for the sword, And all of you will bow down to the slaughter. Because I called, but you did not answer; I spoke, but you did not listen. Instead, you did evil in My sight And chose that in which I did not delight” (Isaiah 65:12).

The pattern is exactly the same, and the context is exactly the same. Punishment will be meted out because they didn’t answer when God called, they didn’t listen when He spoke, they did evil in His sight, and they chose the things in which He did not delight. Isaiah contrasts this with the future returnees, saying: “...before they call, I will answer; and while they are still speaking, I will hear” (Isa. 65:24).

[15] And as just pointed out above, this was definitely true in Ezra's day, as those who returned from exile trembled in reverence to God's voice, rather than turning a deaf ear to His voice – like the previous generations who were taken into exile had done.

<https://burrosofberea.com/isaiahs-new-heavens-and-new-earth-part-4-the-temple-the-tremblers-and-true-and-false-worship/>

**Isaiah 66:5** Hear the word of the LORD, you who tremble at his word: "Your brothers who hate you and cast you out for my name's sake have said, 'Let the LORD be glorified, that we may see your joy'; but it is they who shall be put to shame.

The phrase "tremble (ha'red) at His word" is distinct terminology connecting Isaiah's "new heavens and earth" to the restoration period after the return from exile.[2] Just about any scholarly treatment of Isaiah will point out that the phraseology is used to characterize the returning exiles at the time of Ezra and Nehemiah.[3] What makes this connection particularly significant is that the exact form of the rare Hebrew word "ha'red"[4] appears in only two biblical contexts:

Isaiah's prophecy (Isaiah 66:2, 5)  
Ezra's historical account (Ezra 9:4 and 10:3)

In both Isaiah and Ezra, the trembling takes place in reverent reaction to God's word. When the returnees renew their covenant with the Lord, they "tremble" (ha'red) at the commandments of God and commit to following His law (Ezra 10:3).

However, not all of the returnees supported the reform program. Ezra mourned "over the unfaithfulness" of some of his fellow "exiles" (Ezra 10:6) and made a proclamation that any "exiles" who did not "assemble at Jerusalem" within "three days" would be "excluded from the assembly of the exiles" (Ezra 10:7-8). Isaiah 66:5 echoes and reverses this. Isaiah speaks of "your brothers who hate you" and seek to "exclude you." As John D. Watts observes, Isaiah's words accent "the bitterness of the fraternal struggle that had occasioned their previous expulsion."[5] In other words, having been earlier excluded by the faithful exiles, and filled with hate, the unfaithful returnees now sought to exclude those who were faithful. In simple terms, it was all about payback.

In Isaiah, the hateful brothers say, "Let the Lord be glorified (ka'ved), so that we may see your joy." This doesn't seem to make sense. As Goldingay points out, "...one would expect something more negative."[6] Once again, however, the original intent gets lost in translation. "Glorified" probably isn't the best rendering of ka'ved here. As Goldingay notes, "the verb usually signifies 'be heavy,' and the Old Testament refers a number of times to Yhwh's hand being heavy on people (e.g. Ps 32.4)."[7] In essence, the hate-filled brothers are saying, "May

the Lord come down heavily upon you, and we'll see how happy you are then."

Basically, as the events of the restoration period unfolded and played out, there arose a schism between the returning exiles. The unfaithful exiles were excluded by Ezra, and they aimed to turn it back around on the faithful exiles and exclude them instead. This schism, in turn, comes to a head in the book of Nehemiah, as the conspiracy against him to halt the rebuilding project in Jerusalem appears to reflect the words of Isaiah 66:5-6.[8]

## **Nehemiah in Isaiah**

If Isaiah 66:5-6 is indeed referring to the events of Nehemiah's day, this would be the second appearance of those events in the Prophecy.[9] The Judean governor made his first appearance back in chapter 60, where the prophet looks ahead to the day when "foreigners will build up your walls, and their kings will minister to you" (Isa. 60:10). This is a fitting description of the restoration period as Nehemiah had the full support and funding of the Persian Empire to rebuild and restore Jerusalem's fallen wall.

Nehemiah was granted Permission by King Artaxerxes to go to Jerusalem and make the needed repairs (Neh. 2:8). He was provided with royal letters ensuring safe travel (Neh. 2:7), and an official military escort (Neh. 2:9). He was appointed as governor of Judah (Neh. 5:14), and the king's forest would provide the resources required for the project (Neh. 2:8). All of this was "granted" to Nehemiah because "the good hand of God" was upon him (Neh. 2:8).

But nothing good ever comes easy, and the wall didn't go up without Nehemiah's enemies trying to take him down. Like Zerubbabel before him, when he rebuilt the temple, Nehemiah would encounter much resistance during his efforts to rebuild the wall. Unlike Zerubbabel, however, Nehemiah's resistance would come from both within and without. While he sought the welfare of his own people (Neh.2:10), not everyone would be on board with Nehemiah's plans. His own "brothers" who "hate" him would seek to "exclude" him in God's very "name" (Isa. 66:5), but his enemies would ultimately be "put to shame" (Isa. 66:6).

## **The Exiled Community as "Brothers"**

The word "brothers" in Isaiah 66:5 and 66:20 is a frequent designation in Nehemiah for the returned community of exiles.[10] Examples include:

"...their Jewish brothers" (Neh. 5:1).

"...our brothers..." (Neh. 5:5).

...his brother..." (Neh. 5:7).

"...our Jewish brothers..." (Neh. 5:8a).

"...your brothers..." (Neh. 5:8b).

"...I and my brothers..." (Neh. 5:10).

"...I nor my brothers..." (Neh. 5:14).

Earlier, Nehemiah had inspired his armed men stationed behind the wall (Neh. 4:13) to "fight for your brothers" against impending threat (Neh. 4:14). In the closing chapter, Nehemiah restores the tithe and appoints "reliable" men to "distribute to their brothers" (Neh. 13:13). From these examples, we can see that it was common to refer to the Judean returnees as "brothers" during this time.

But Isaiah speaks to this future community and refers to "your brothers who hate you, who exclude you for my name's sake" (Isa. 65:5). At first, this doesn't seem to fit. In every instance cited above, Nehemiah uses "brothers" in a positive light rather than a negative one. In chapter 4, he stations armed guards to defend them. He doesn't hate his brothers, and they don't hate him. In chapter 5, he takes a stand against those who would misuse them through usury and over-taxation. In chapter 13, he ensures that their needs are met. In none of these instances does Nehemiah speak negatively of his Judean "brothers," nor do they "hate" him.

So, what is going on? How do we make sense out of Isaiah's prophetic statement? How does Isaiah's statement match what is going on in the post-exilic book of Nehemiah? The key is in Nehemiah 6 and the conspiracy against Nehemiah's efforts to finalize the restoration by rebuilding Jerusalem's wall.

### **With Brothers Like These, Who Needs Enemies?**

In Nehemiah 6, Nehemiah's three "enemies" Tobiah, Sanballat, and Geshem (Neh. 6:1) send a letter asking him to "meet" with them "at Chephirim in the plain of Ono" (Neh. 6:2a). Nehemiah wisely passes on the offer, perceiving that they were "planning" to do him "harm" (Neh. 6:2b). Tobiah, Sanballat, and Geshem then accuse Nehemiah of plotting a rebellion against Persia in which he would take the reigns as the new king of Judah (Neh. 6:6,7). Nehemiah flatly denies the charges, which are nothing more than inventions of their own minds (Neh. 6:8). The express purpose of the false accusation was to induce fear and halt the restoration effort (Neh. 6:9). Their goal was to "frighten" Nehemiah and cause him to "sin" in order that they might have an "evil report" to use against him (Neh. 6:13).

The leader of the treacherous trio was "Tobiah the Ammonite," who was "very angry (ra'a) that someone had come to seek the good of the sons of Israel" (Neh. 2:10).[11] Unfortunately, many of those "sons of Israel" were in league with Tobiah and his cohorts – and at odds with their own "brother," Nehemiah:

"Also in those days many letters went from the nobles of Judah to Tobiah, and Tobiah's letters came to them. For many in Judah were bound by oath to him because he was the son-in-law of Shecaniah the son of Arah, and his son Jehohanan had married the daughter of Meshullam the son of Berechiah.

Moreover, they were speaking about his good deeds in my presence and reported my words to him. Then Tobiah sent letters to frighten me" (Neh. 6:17-18).

As shown above, Nehemiah repeatedly refers to his fellow Judeans as his "brothers." This verse reveals that some of these same Judean brothers, the very "nobles of Judah" in fact, were in collusion with Tobiah to bring Nehemiah down. One of Tobiah's chief co-conspirators was "Shemaiah the son of Delaiah, son of Mehetabel" (Neh. 6:10a). Based on his name and genealogy, Shemaiah was a Jew. He was one of the Jews "bound by oath" to Tobiah (Neh. 6:17) trying to induce fear on the part of Nehemiah (Neh. 6:18) and halt the rebuilding project.

Over a decade earlier,[12] the Restoration Prophet Zechariah admonished the people not to give into that fear, and to ignore that oath, when the time came (Zech. 8:13-17).[13]

Shemaiah didn't listen. Under the guise of concern for his Jewish brother, Shemaiah advises to Nehemiah to hide in the temple so Tobiah's forces wouldn't come and kill him in the dead of night (Neh. 6:10b). This, however, would have been the very "sin" by which Tobiah and his henchmen could have crafted the "evil report" against Nehemiah (Neh. 6:13). Since Nehemiah wasn't a priest, he would have violated temple laws by entering the sanctuary. Nehemiah wisely rejects Shemaiah's plan by responding, "Could one such as I go into the temple to save his life? I will not go in" (Neh. 10:11).

At this point, Nehemiah realizes that Shemaiah, his own Judean brother, was not his friend at all – and had no interest in trying to help him. (Neh. 6:12a). Just the opposite. Shemaiah was hired by Tobiah to betray him (Neh. 6:12b). Shemaiah was a sellout. He was a traitor. He was the Judas of Nehemiah's day. This dovetails perfectly with Isaiah's prophetic words concerning "your brothers who hate you" and "exclude you for my name's sake" (Isa. 66:5).

### **Exclude You for My Name's Sake**

The phrase "exclude you," in Isaiah 66:5, is a translation of the Hebrew na'dah, and carries the idea of "to cast out" or to "put away." [14] This is exactly what Nehemiah's detractors were attempting to do. They wanted him excluded. They wanted him gone. They wanted him out of the picture. The idea of exclusion in Isaiah 66:5 fits the situation in Nehemiah 6 like a hand in a glove, as does the idea that they were disingenuously doing this for God's "name's sake" – also used in Isaiah 66:5.

Once Nehemiah had figured out the plot against him and uncovered Shemaiah's true intentions, he says, "I perceived that surely God had not sent him" when "he uttered his prophecy" (Neh. 6:12). Therein lies the rub. Shemaiah was masquerading as a prophet of God, coming in the name of God. And he wasn't the only one.

Among the ilk of cronies trying to intimidate him, Nehemiah calls out “Noadiah the prophetess and the rest of the prophets who were trying to frighten me” (Neh. 6:14b). Prior to this, the title “prophetess” (nevi’ah) was reserved for women who truly served God in a prophetic role (e.g., Miriam in Exodus 15:20, Deborah in Judges 4:4, Huldah in 2 Kings 22:14). This “prophetess” and these “prophets” were falsely acting in God’s name out of hate for their own Jewish “brother.”

## **Doing the Lord’s Dirty Work**

But the idea that Nehemiah’s adversaries were supposedly acting in God’s “name” when they sought to “exclude” him runs even deeper than this. Again, throughout the narrative, the lead antagonist is Tobiah. The name Tobiah (Toviyyah) literally means, “Yahweh is good” or “The Lord is good.”[15] The tense conflict between Tobiah and Nehemiah is an important subplot in the Nehemiah storyline. With that said, there is an equally important wordplay on Tobiah’s name when the nefarious character is introduced – the importance of which gets lost in translation. Tobiah (Toviyyah), whose name means “Yahweh is good,” is very displeased or “angry” (ra’a) that someone else had come to “seek the good” (l ebaqqes to’bah) of the sons of Israel.”

This sets the stage and tone for all that follows, and the returning exiles would have to decide which one really sought their “good” (to’bah) and was honestly following the Lord. Was it the one whose name literally means “the Lord is good” (Tobiah) or the one who literally sought the good of the Lord’s people (Nehemiah)? The play on words is transparent when the top layer (the English translation) is peeled back and the full force of the text shows through. Likewise, the clear connection to Nehemiah regarding those who “hate” and “exclude” the righteous under the banner of God’s “name’s sake,” in Isaiah 66:5, becomes equally transparent.

This concept of inclusion versus exclusion (echoing Isaiah 66:5) undergirds the Nehemiah storyline, as two bitter rivals angrily battle it out.

The first chapter opens with Nehemiah becoming “angry” (ra’a) upon hearing of the distress and reproach of those who had survived the captivity living in Jerusalem, which was still in shambles while its wall remained in ruins (Neh. 2:3). As stated above, Tobiah (cast as one disingenuously seeking Israel’s good) becomes very “angry”(ra’a) himself when Nehemiah truly sought Israel’s good (Neh. 2:10). The story arcs full circle when Nehemiah becomes “angry” (ra’a) once again upon hearing that his enemy, Tobiah, had taken up residence in the courts of the house of the Lord (Neh. 13:8a). Upon that, Nehemiah kicks Tobiah out – along with all of his belongings (Neh. 13:8b). In the end, the one who sought to exclude and cast out Nehemiah, in the name of the Lord, was the one who was himself cast out and excluded – as Nehemiah faithfully served the Lord.

<https://burrosofberea.com/isaiahs-new-heavens-and-new-earth-part-5-your-brothers-who-hate-you-nehemiah-and-the-enemies-within/>

**Isaiah 66:6** "The sound of an uproar from the city! A sound from the temple! The sound of the LORD, rendering recompense to his enemies!

### **Trouble in the Temple**

Tobiah's expulsion from the temple links back to Isaiah 66:6 where "an uproar is heard from the city, a voice from the temple, the voice of the Lord who is rendering recompense to his enemies." As Goldingay comments, "So the prophet is aware of hearing a sound of uproar from the city, then realizes that more specifically it comes from the temple." [16]

As history would have it, Nehemiah made quite the uproar when he learned that Tobiah had free room and board "in the courts of the house of God" (Neh. 13:7). A "large room was prepared for him" where they "formerly kept the grain offerings, the frankincense, the tithes of grain, wine and oil, prescribed for the Levites, the singers and the gatekeepers, and the contributions for the priests" (Neh. 13:5). This was all made possible by Eliashib the priest, who was "related to Tobiah" (Neh. 13:4).

Earlier it was pointed out that Tobiah's name means "Yahweh is good," but he's introduced in the narrative as an "Ammonite" (Neh. 2:10). This is a strange mixture, and most scholars conclude that Tobiah "was of mixed ancestry," and this would account for his "Yahwist" name. [17] As David Clines explains, Tobiah was "a half-Jew who had insinuated himself into the confidence of the upper classes of Jerusalem." [18]

Tobiah was most likely the product of the intermarrying that took place when many Judeans fled to Ammon and Moab during the Babylonian incursions (Jer. 40:11a). When they learned that Nebuchadnezzar's campaign was over, and that he had "left a remnant in Judah" (Jer. 40:11b), they returned home "and came back to the land of Judah" (Jer. 40:12). An Ammonite with a Judean name is strong evidence that Tobiah was a result of the mixed marriages that ensued during this time. Hence, Nehemiah closes his book being appalled that "the Jews had married women from Ashod, Ammon, and Moab" (Neh. 13:23), and makes the people swear by God that they would no longer give their children to foreign marriage. He reminds them of Solomon, saying: "...the foreign women caused even him to sin" (Neh. 13:24).

Upon reading "aloud from the book of Moses," Nehemiah learns that "no Ammonite or Moabite should ever enter the assembly of God" (Neh. 13:1). That's when Nehemiah takes action, kicks Tobiah out along with his belongings, and orders that the room be cleaned (Neh. 13:8-9). After cleaning house, Nehemiah then restores the temple chambers to their true purpose, restores the tithe, and

reinstates the Sabbath (Neh. 13:10-18). With Jerusalem's temple rebuilt, her wall restored, and God's law reestablished, the restoration was now complete.

The "uproar" that Isaiah heard in the "temple" was the future voice of Nehemiah, as he looked in outrage over what it had become as opposed to what it should have been. And just like he restored the wall around Jerusalem, Nehemiah restored the temple inside Jerusalem to its true purpose and function. His "brothers" who tried to "exclude" him for God's "name's sake" were "put to shame" (Isa. 66:5), and "recompense" was "rendered" to the Lord's "enemies" (Isa. 66:6). In the end, Tobiah, Sanballat, and Geshem failed, and Nehemiah prevailed.

### **Recap of Isaiah 66:5-6**

Like all that precedes it in Isaiah's final two chapters, Isaiah 66:5-6 is best understood through the lens of the post-exilic period. Isaiah's prophetic words about "your brothers who hate you" and seek to "exclude you for My name's sake" align closely with the opposition Nehemiah faced during the rebuilding of Jerusalem's wall.

As wonderful as this time in Israel's history was, the restoration period was still marked by internal strife among the returnees — specifically between faithful and unfaithful exiles. Nehemiah's opponents, including Tobiah, along with some supposed "brothers," conspired against him under a false pretense of serving God, echoing Isaiah's portrayal of betrayal cloaked in religious language. The odds seemed to have been stacked against Nehemiah, as many in Judeah had unwisely bound themselves by an oath to Tobiah.

In the end, Nehemiah's steadfast commitment to the Lord paid off. Supported by God and Persian authorities, he resisted manipulation, rooted out corruption, and ultimately restored both the temple and the wall around Jerusalem. Nehemiah's actions vindicated the faithful and fulfilled Isaiah's vision of God meting out retribution against the enemies within.

### **Takeaways For Today**

Isaiah 66:5-6, along with Nehemiah's story, reminds us that not everyone who claims to act in God's name truly follows Him. We must use discernment when choosing who to listen to and who not to listen to.

The Judeans' oath to Tobiah also reminds us of Jesus's warning about oath-taking in the New Testament (Matt. 5:34). Oaths can entrap us and compromise our integrity when they tie us to the wrong people or purposes. We must always be cautious regarding who and what we're committing ourselves to.

Nehemiah's example teaches us to stand firm – even amidst betrayal, lies, and

fear tactics. He refused to violate God's law, and his loyalty to God's word outweighed any pressure to compromise. Like Nehemiah, believers today are called to do the right thing even when it's unpopular, risky, or lonely. Faithfulness often means standing apart from the crowd.

Finally, despite fierce opposition, Nehemiah succeeded because "the good hand of God" was upon him. His unwavering trust in God brought victory, vindication, and restoration. Trusting God in hard times leads to lasting results. Our calling is to remain faithful and leave the outcome to Him. God honors steadfast obedience. Sometimes, the voices tempting us to disobey come from without and sometimes they come from within. We need to blot those voices out and listen to Him.

<https://burrosofberea.com/isaiahs-new-heavens-and-new-earth-part-5-your-brothers-who-hate-you-nehemiah-and-the-enemies-within/>

**Isaiah 66:7** "Before she was in labor she gave birth; before her pain came upon her she delivered a son.

In Isaiah 65:17, the "new heavens and new earth" (return from exile) are introduced and contrasted with the "former things" that would send the Israelites into exile. The "former things" included pagan garden rituals (Isa. 65:3), necromancy (Isa. 65:4), and festal celebrations to false gods (Isa. 65:11-12). For this unfaithfulness, they would "bow down to the slaughter" (Isa. 65:12).[1]

Throughout Isaiah 65:1 to 66:6, the prophet oscillates between the unfaithful who would be taken into exile and the faithful who would return from exile, continually contrasting the two. Along the way, he notes the challenges the faithful returnees would face. These challenges would come from within and without, and the books of Ezra and Nehemiah show how it historically played out. Fittingly, Isaiah's narrative up to this point culminates with Nehemiah's success and his rivals being put to shame in Isaiah 66:5-6,[2] completing the restoration process.

Next, the words that follow in verse 7 appear unexpected, disjointed, and out of place: "Before she was in labor, she delivered; Before her pain came, she gave birth to a boy" (Isa. 66:7).

At first glance, Isaiah's words here seem like an abrupt change from all that precedes them. So much so that commentators generally see the prophecy "suddenly" taking on "a new direction" in this verse.[3] But is Isaiah really making a sharp turn? As we've seen, Isaiah is replete with repetition, reinforcing his points, and refreshing his themes. The same thing is going on here in Isaiah 66:7-9. Isaiah isn't veering off course, he's expressing the new beginning of 65:17 in a fresh way to drive home his point.

In 65:17, the restoration is expressed in terms of a new heavens and earth. In 66:7-9, it's a new birth. In 66:8, it's a nation born in a day (Isa. 66:8).

<https://burrosofberea.com/2227-2/>

**Isaiah 66:8** Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things? Shall a land be born in one day? Shall a nation be brought forth in one moment? For as soon as Zion was in labor she brought forth her children.

## **The Miracle of 536 BC**

While Isaiah 66:8 does indeed speak of the miracle of Israel's rebirth, that miracle happened when the nation was reborn in 536 BC – under Cyrus's decree. In that year, the Persian King called God's people "throughout all his kingdom" back home (Ezra 1:1-4; see also: 2 Chr. 36:22-23). Upon receiving this proclamation, Ezra tells us that "all Israel" was once again in their own "cities" (Ezra 2:70) and "the people were gathered together as one man" (Ezra 3:1). And the clincher is that Isaiah himself had prophesied that Cyrus would be the one who would make it all happen:

26 Confirming the word of His servant And carrying out the purpose of His messengers. It is I who says of Jerusalem, 'She shall be inhabited!' And of the cities of Judah, 'They shall be built.' And I will raise her ruins again.

27 I am the One who says to the depth of the sea, 'Dry up!' And I will make your rivers dry up.

28 It is I who says of Cyrus, 'He is My shepherd, And he will carry out all My desire.' And he says of Jerusalem, 'She will be built,' And of the temple, 'Your foundation will be laid' (Isaiah 44:26-28).

Cyrus, in turn, attests to the fact that he was consciously fulfilling this prophecy:

"This is what Cyrus king of Persia says: 'The Lord, the God of heaven, has given me all the kingdoms of the earth, and He has appointed me to rebuild for Him a house in Jerusalem, which is in Judah. Whoever there is among you of all His people, may his God be with him! Go up to Jerusalem which is in Judah and rebuild the house of the Lord, the God of Israel; He is the God who is in Jerusalem'" (Ezra 1:2).

## **The Restoration Period**

Just as Cyrus understood his role as the instrument of prophetic fulfillment, Ezra also clearly understood that he and his contemporaries were witnessing Isaiah's words coming true. In fact, he purposely used many of Isaiah's own words to drive home the point. The intuitive reader can't miss it, and it would seem that Ezra expected his readers to be intuitive and familiar with the Scriptures.

The final chapters of Isaiah, especially, bear such a close resemblance to the Restoration period that many scholars believe these chapters couldn't possibly have been written by Isaiah himself in 760 BC. These scholars argue that

chapters 56-66 were added by a later redactor in support of the reform efforts by Ezra and Nehemiah between 520 BC and 445 BC.[5] For an Evangelical with a high view of Scripture, the restoration language of Isaiah 56-66 isn't a problem. Isaiah was a prophet, after all. But the key takeaway here is the recognition that these chapters are a clear reflection of the Restoration period. Those who argue that the events didn't begin to transpire until 1948 AD completely sidestep the events of the Restoration and how those events coincide with Isaiah's prophecy. <https://burrosofberea.com/isaiah-668-in-1948-dispensationalisms-warp-speed-hermeneutic/>

## **See Comments on Isaiah 6:11**

### **A New Nation Born on a New Day**

Just as Isaiah's context reboots in these verses, the formerly dead nation rebooted once the exile was over. Israel was reborn the day Cyrus called the Jews back home from all over his kingdom (Ezra 1:1-7).[4] Like his contemporary Isaiah, Micah also casts the captivity and return from exile in childbirth imagery:

"Agony has gripped you like a woman in childbirth. Writhe and groan, O daughter of Zion, like a woman in labor, for now you shall go out from the city and dwell in the open country; you shall go to Babylon. But there you shall be rescued; there the LORD will redeem you from the hand of your enemies" (Mic. 4:9-10).

Isaiah and Micah both track on the same theme, and they illustrate how the dual metaphor of labor and childbirth functioned in the pre-exilic period.[5] It was an image of exile and restoration, as to be expected. In each passage, the woman in labor is Zion, and her "children" (ben) are finally brought forth in Isaiah 66:8.

### **Children of the New Nation**

Comporting with the picture Isaiah paints, Nehemiah refers to the returning exiles as "children" (ben) twenty-five times in Nehemiah 11. Strikingly, the number of returning "children" (ben) more than doubles the number of captives taken – fulfilling the double-restoration prophecy of Zechariah 9:12.[6]

But their troubles would also be doubled before the restoration was complete. Actually, their troubles would be tripled.

With that said, it's precisely those upcoming troubles to which Isaiah's strange birth order speaks. Isaiah says that the woman brought forth "before she travailed" and gave birth "before her pain came" (Isa. 66:7). Once again, we have a fitting description of the restoration period after the return from exile.

While the image of painless childbirth signifies the exiles returning without struggle, the struggle would come, nonetheless. During the restoration, the

rebirth of the nation took place before the challenges they'd face. Isaiah's picture of a mother giving birth before her labor begins perfectly portrays how it all played out.

We've previously noted the harsh resistance encountered by restoration leaders like Zerubbabel and Nehemiah as they fulfilled their God-given roles.[7] But between the rebuilding of the temple and the rebuilding of the wall, the Jewish returnees would face the greatest challenge of all – the attempt to wipe them out completely.

The survivors (Neh. 1:2) had returned from captivity (Ezra 1:1-11). Relatively speaking, that was the easy part. Now, they must fight for their survival. That would be the hard part. And that fight would begin in the Persian capital city of Susa and extend throughout the entire empire (Esth. 3:12-15; 8:9; 9:2-3).

### **Now for the Hard Part**

The exiles returned peacefully and prosperously under Cyrus's decree, bringing back an enormous amount of "silver and gold," along with "goods and cattle" (Ezra 1:5-11; 2:69; 5:14; 6:5; 7:15-16, 18, 22; Neh. 7:71-72).[8] This would entice their enemy, Haman the Agagite (Gog of Magog)[9] "to capture spoils," "seize plunder," and "carry away" the Jews' "silver and gold" and "livestock and goods" (Ezekiel 38:12-14).[10] His goal was to "annihilate, kill, and destroy all the Jews, both young and old, women and children," in a single "day" (Esth. 3:13). He wanted them eradicated.

We all know the rest of the story, as Paul Harvey might have said. God raised up His Myrtle Tree (Esther) to take Gog of Magog (Haman) down.[11] Once again, the tables would be turned. Haman wanted to eliminate the Jewish race. But it was the corpses of Haman's forces that littered the ground, instead of the other way around (Esth. 9:11-16). To be exact, there were 80,000 of those corpses when all was said and done. Like Zerubbabel before her, and Nehemiah after her, Esther prevailed – and her enemies failed.

In all three cases (Zerubbabel, Esther, Nehemiah), this fits the profile of Isaiah 66:7. The birth of the nation came before the resistance to the restoration. Mother Zion brought forth her children before her actual labor pains started, just as Isaiah had imparted (Isa. 66:7-9).

<https://burrosofberea.com/2227-2/>

**Isaiah 66:10** "Rejoice with Jerusalem, and be glad for her, all you who love her; rejoice with her in joy, all you who mourn over her;

### **The Gates and the Wall, The Mourning, and the Rejoicing**

Following the birth (return from exile) and labor pains (opposition to Zerubbabel,

Esther, and Nehemiah), we have a description of resultant joy: “Be joyful with Jerusalem and rejoice for her, all you who love her; Be exceedingly glad with her, all you who mourn over her” (Isa. 66:10). This is a theme Isaiah uses repeatedly throughout his prophecies,[12] and this verse speaks of the joy in Jerusalem’s future once the restoration is complete. Only then would the time of mourning officially end, and the rejoicing begin. The completion came when Nehemiah rebuilt the wall.

As John Watts notes, “The achievements of Zerubbabel and Joshua were memorable. They accomplished more in a short period than anyone could have expected.”[13] After the temple was rebuilt, Esther eliminated the Jews’ greatest threat, and Ezra led the second major wave of exiles back (Ezra 7:1ff) but the time of mourning wasn’t over yet.

Back in the capital city of Susa, the king’s cupbearer (Neh. 1:11) still wasn’t satisfied. He “wept and mourned for days... fasting and praying before the God of Heaven” (Neh. 1:4). Why? Because the work still wasn’t finished. There was one last mountain to climb or, more specifically, one last wall to build.

Nehemiah knew what he had to do. The “remnant” who “survived the captivity” was still “in great distress and reproach” as Jerusalem’s wall remained “broken down” and her gates “burned down” to the ground (Neh. 1:3).[14] He must go to the place of his “fathers’ tombs” (Neh. 2:3) and finish rebuilding the city by restoring that wall and repairing those gates (Neh. 2:5). Only then will the mourning truly cease, and the rejoicing fully begin, as Isaiah foresees in Isaiah 66:10.

In modern times, we tend to miss the significance of gates in Biblical times. Gates were vital to city life, serving multiple key functions:

- \* Defense and Security: Gates controlled access to cities and were fortified to protect inhabitants from enemies (Nehemiah 3:1–32; 2 Chronicles 14:7).
- \* Legal and Civic Activities: Gates functioned as centers for legal proceedings, public announcements, and civic decision-making. Elders judged cases at the gate (Deuteronomy 21:18–21; Ruth 4:1–11; Proverbs 31:23).
- \* Commerce and Trade: Markets were often set up near gates, making them hubs of economic activity (2 Kings 7:1, 18).
- \* Spiritual Symbolism: Gates were so important that they came to symbolize a believer’s relationship with the Lord. “Enter his gates with thanksgiving...” reflects the gate as an entry into God’s presence (Psalm 100:4). Jesus referred to a “narrow gate” leading to life, signifying spiritual discernment (Matthew 7:13–14).

For more on the importance of gates in the ancient world, see: Zach Davis, “Esther 2: Jesus in the Life of Mordecai” – <https://bit.ly/3F68bZr>

By the time we get to chapter 66, Isaiah had already made the connection

between the completion of Jerusalem's gates and wall and the completion of the period of mourning. Isaiah 60:10 portended the events of Nehemiah. Isaiah said that "foreigners will build up your walls" (Isa. 60:10), and fittingly, Nehemiah completed the wall with the Persian Empire funding it all. Once that happened, Isaiah says, "...you will call your walls salvation and your gates praise" (Isa. 60:18). Then, and only then, "the days of your mourning will be finished" (Isa. 60:20).

Isaiah's earlier theme from chapter 60 reverberates here in chapter 66 as the time of mourning comes to an end and the time of rejoicing begins. The period of mourning began in the "nineteenth year of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon" (2 Kg. 25:8), when he "burned the house of the Lord" (2 Kg. 25:9) and "broke down the wall around Jerusalem" (2 Kg. 25:10). The prophet Jeremiah repeats the words of 2 Kings 25:9-10 in Jeremiah 52:12 and expresses his mourning in places like the book of Lamentations and Psalm 102.[15]

Jeremiah mourned because the city was abandoned, the temple was destroyed, and Jerusalem's wall had come crumbling down. Jeremiah's mournful voice is heard echoing in Nehemiah's own voice over a half century later. After Zerubbabel led the exiles back home to the city (Ezra 2:1-2, 70, 3:1) and rebuilt the temple (Ezra 6:14-15), the voice of mourning finally ended when Nehemiah put the final brick in the rebuilt wall.

<https://burrosofberea.com/2227-2/>

**Isaiah 66:11** that you may nurse and be satisfied from her consoling breast; that you may drink deeply with delight from her glorious abundance."

**Isaiah 66:12** For thus says the LORD: "Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the nations like an overflowing stream; and you shall nurse, you shall be carried upon her hip, and bounced upon her knees.

### **Nursed, Nourished, and Nurtured**

So far, Isaiah has spoken of birth, labor pains, and joy. As would be expected, he now speaks of the child (the restoration community) being nursed, nourished, and nurtured. Verse 12 speaks of the "glory" of the nations "overflowing" like a "stream" to nurse and carry God's people. This completely reverses Israel's pre-exilic relationship with the nations and Isaiah's earlier words where he spoke of that hostile situation. In Isaiah 8:7, the "King of Assyria" comes in "all his glory" as he sweeps through Judah's land with overwhelming force.[16] The imagery is completely flipped around in Isaiah 66:12 as the post-exilic conditions are the polar opposite of the pre-exilic conditions. In this verse, the "glory of the nations" is an "overflowing stream" that supports and sustains God's people.

The entire return from exile was sanctioned and commissioned by Cyrus himself (Ezra 1:1-7). The temple was rebuilt with Persian tax money from the surrounding territories (Ezra 6:4-12).[17] Esther and Mordecai secured the Jews'

right to arm and defend themselves with King Ahasuerus's seal of approval (Esth. 8:11).[18] And Nehemiah restored Jerusalem's wall with lumber supplied from King Artaxerxes's forest (Neh. 2:8).[19]

Before the exile, the glory of the foreign nations came in like a flood, destroying the Israelites' land (Isa. 8:7). After the exile, the nations' glory was the sustaining stream that nourished and restored that land (Isa. 66:12).

Isaiah 8:17 specifically mentions the "king of Assyria" as the sweeping force of destruction. A little over 200 years later, the new "king of Assyria" was part of the healing stream of reconstruction (Ezra 6:22). The role-reversal imagery between Isaiah 8:17 and 66:12 helps anchor Isaiah 66 to its historical context and demonstrates its role in Biblical context. Like all that precedes it, this firmly secures the fulfillment of these prophecies in the restoration period after the return from exile.

### **Recap of Isaiah 66:7-12**

The focus of Isaiah 66:7-12 is Israel's post-exilic restoration. Rather than a thematic disconnect in Isaiah's context, verses 7-9 reiterate the renewal motif introduced in 65:17. The childbirth imagery symbolizes the nation's sudden rebirth. The painless birth reflects the ease of Israel's return from exile under Cyrus's decree.

But the initial return was only the beginning, and the labor pains would follow. This is why Isaiah has the labor pains following the birth. The full restoration would not come without adversity. That adversity indeed came through the threats encountered by Zerubbabel, Esther, and Nehemiah.

Isaiah's imagery then moves from birth and pain (Isa. 66:7-9) to a fuller picture of rebuilding and rejoicing (Isa. 66:10-12). Nehemiah's final act of rebuilding the city walls marks the completion of Isaiah's prophetic arc. Once the monumental task of restoring the city was finished and finalized, Jerusalem's joy was realized.

In verses 11-12, the once-hostile nations nourish and nurture God's people, reversing the destructive flood of Isaiah 8 into the life-giving stream of Isaiah 66. The rich imagery Isaiah uses in Isaiah 66:7-12 continues to root the prophecy in the historical events of the restoration period after the return from exile.

### **Takeaways for Today**

The Assyrians took the northern tribes captive in 722 BC, and the Babylonians took the southern tribes captive in 605-586 BC. The Persian King Cyrus called the captives back home in 536 BC. This reminds us that God's promises are fulfilled at God's appointed time and we need to trust His timing.

Just as Zion gave birth before labor, sudden breakthroughs often follow long seasons of faithfulness, and rapid change often follows long preparation. The exile lasted for quite some time. It was like a long, dark night for the Israelites.

But joy comes in the morning (Ps. 30:5), and we can look forward to the joy that dawns once we make it through hard times as well. God disciplines those He loves (Heb. 12:6), and like the exiles, we must learn the lessons He's trying to teach us when we're going through those times.

The obstacles the returnees faced remind us that the path to restoration often includes resistance. Like Israel's returnees, believers should expect opposition even in the midst of God's blessings. Like Zerubbabel, Esther, and Nehemiah, believers today must trust in God amid that opposition.

All in all, these verses in Isaiah teach us that joy follows faithful perseverance and diligent obedience. The rejoicing in Isaiah 66:10 came after the mourning due to exile was over. God turns our mourning into dancing (Ps. 30:10) and our sorrow into joy (Jn. 16:10).

<https://burrosofberea.com/2227-2/>

**Isaiah 66:13** As one whom his mother comforts, so I will comfort you; you shall be comforted in Jerusalem.

Isaiah 66:7-9 gave us an image of a mother giving birth, indicating that Zion would bring forth her children before her labor began. This picture signified the relative ease with which the exiles would return in comparison to the challenges to follow.

The imagery shifts from a woman in labor to a nursing mother in Isaiah 66:10-12. This signified the events to unfold, when the surrounding nations would be used by God to fund and support Israel's restoration like an "overflowing stream."

Following suit, we now have an image of a comforting mother here in Isaiah 66:13. Like all that precedes it, this imagery signifies something that continues to anchor the text to the restoration period after the return from exile – the comforting of Jerusalem.

### **Letting Isaiah Interpret Isaiah**

Once again, Isaiah is recalling an earlier theme. In chapter 51, comfort comes to the ruins of Zion<sup>[1]</sup> when the ransomed of the Lord come home and the exiles are set free (Isa. 51:3, 11, 14). In chapter 52 God comforts His people in the waste places of Jerusalem when the city is redeemed (Isa. 52:9). Thus, the theme of the city and the people being comforted in 66:13 was introduced in 51:3 and 52:9 and is inseparably linked to the return from exile.

With that said, these statements about comforting Jerusalem (Isa. 51:3; 52:9) through restoration are in turn contained in a larger subsection of Isaiah that is bookended with post-exilic imagery. This subsection begins with a decree (Isa. 44:28, 45:1) and ends with a myrtle tree (Isa. 55:13). Those are the bookends. The decree came from Cyrus, and the myrtle tree is Esther. While Cyrus is mentioned by name, many don't realize that Esther is as well. Esther's given name in Hebrew is Hadassah, which is the feminine form of ha'das (or hadac) which means "myrtle." Isaiah 55:13 says,

"Instead of the thorn bush, the cypress will come up, And instead of the stinging nettle, the myrtle [ha'das] will come up; And it will be a memorial to the Lord, An everlasting sign which will not be eliminated" (Isa. 55:13).[2]

Putting this together then, Jerusalem's comfort (Isa. 51:3, 52:9) comes when God's myrtle tree arises (Isa. 55:13) after Cyrus's decree brings His people home (Isa. 44:28, 45:1). By the time Isaiah's audience heard the words given in 66:13, Isaiah would have expected them to retain what was previously said. If they didn't return to the Lord, then Jerusalem would not receive comfort until after God punishes them through exile. The comfort would not come until the restoration – after the decree of Cyrus and during the restoration period at the time of Esther (the myrtle tree).

### **Letting Zechariah Interpret Isaiah**

Zechariah, one of the restoration prophets,[3] echoes the words of Isaiah by speaking of "comfort" coming to "Zion" when God once again chooses "Jerusalem" (Zech. 1:17). The idea of comfort coming to Zion/Jerusalem comes straight from Isaiah. Zechariah was informed of this comforting of Jerusalem by a heavenly messenger who came to him in a night vision (Zech. 1:8). The messenger spoke of a deliverer who would protect God's people:

"...his glory sent me to the nations who plundered you, for he who touches you touches the apple of his eye: 'Behold, I will shake my hand over them, and they shall become plunder for those who served them. Then you will know that the Lord of hosts has sent me. Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion...' (Zech. 2:8-10).

When Zechariah's heavenly messenger notified the prophet about this upcoming deliverer, he was "standing among the myrtle trees" (Zech. 1:8). Prior to Zechariah, the term "myrtle" (ha'das) was only used in Isaiah.[4] The word does not appear in the entirety of the Old Testament prior to this. When he stood among the myrtle trees to deliver his message, Zechariah's messenger was telegraphing that the deliverance would come through Hadassah (Esther), and that she would be that deliverer – just as Isaiah had foreseen. Being familiar with Isaiah 51:3, 52:9 and 55:13, Zechariah would have understood the significance of the myrtle trees.

## **Nehemiah Commemorates Esther Comforting Jerusalem**

When Isaiah introduced the myrtle tree, he announced that it would be a “memorial to the Lord” and “an everlasting sign” that “would not be eliminated” (Isa. 55:13). Accordingly, when Nehemiah reinstituted the Feast of Tabernacles during the restoration, “myrtle branches” are added to the leafy branches used to make the tabernacles as directed in Leviticus 23:33-34 (Neh. 8:15), thus commemorating Hadassah’s achievement and victory for her people.

Consequently, when we read about God comforting Jerusalem as a mother comforts her child in Isaiah 66:13, we shouldn’t ignore where Isaiah had previously introduced the theme of comfort and how it played out in history. In the book of Esther, Haman’s attack was aimed at the Jews not only in Susa, but throughout the entire Persian Empire... quite the uncomfortable thought!

This empire-wide attack obviously would have included Jerusalem and Haman’s intent was even worse than that of Nebuchadnezzar, the Babylonian king who conquered Jerusalem. Nebuchadnezzar spared lives by taking captives and leaving a remnant behind.[5] Haman would have taken no prisoners and spared no lives.[6] His stated goal laid bare the full horror of the threat. Haman’s aim was the total and complete annihilation of the Jewish people (Esth. 3:13) – the children born to the woman in 66:7-9. Fittingly, God would raise up a heroine to protect those children.

## **The Protective Mother and the Resultant Joy**

The protective mother imagery in Isaiah 66:13 resonates with piercing clarity since God’s chosen instrument to bring about Jerusalem’s comfort was, in fact, a woman. Zechariah’s vision echoes the defensive defiance of a coming comforter marked by fierce maternal love. His heavenly messenger, prophesying about Esther, says, “He who touches you touches the apple of His eye” (Zech. 2:8). The apple of one’s eye is an ancient idiom for the reflection of a newborn in his/her mother’s pupil, as she gazes intently at the infant in her arms. The imagery evokes the raw emotion of a mother’s primal instinct – of not just comforting, but actively defending, absorbing, and withstanding whatever comes her way to keep her children safe.

Interpreting Jerusalem’s comfort in Isaiah 66:13 in its proper context, therefore, involves understanding all that precedes it in Isaiah and all that historically followed it in the restoration after the exile. All of it points to Esther as God’s chosen instrument to comfort Jerusalem. This becomes even clearer in 66:14, where the method of Israel’s comfort is laid out and would result in rejoicing and flourishing, all because “the hand of the Lord” would be with them. In the end, it would be their enemies — Haman and his cohorts — who would taste the full weight of God’s indignation.

<https://burrosofberea.com/isaiahs-new-heavens-and-new-earth-part-7->

[comforting-the-children-protecting-the-people/](#)

**Isaiah 66:14** You shall see, and your heart shall rejoice; your bones shall flourish like the grass; and the hand of the LORD shall be known to his servants, and he shall show his indignation against his enemies.

### **The Hand of Indignation and the Good Hand of the Lord**

The reference to the indignation of God is also highly significant. When the Israelites turned their back on God and followed other gods instead, God's indignation was sparked against His own people. He punished them with exile but He did not forget them. Once again GOD is faithful, His indignation is quelled, and He brought them back home as His "hand" was upon them (Isa. 66:14), thus completing the circle.

This is the same as was echoed by the prophet Jeremiah:

"Behold, I will gather them from all the countries to which I drove them in my anger and my wrath and in great indignation. I will bring them back to this place and I will make them dwell in safety. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God." (Jer. 32:37-38).

The reference to the "hand of the Lord" was a common Hebrew idiom signifying both strength and support. In fact, Isaiah has already referred to this in reference to Israel's exile and restoration as well. In chapter 29, Isaiah also prophesies about the coming downfall of Jerusalem but it does not end there. Beginning in verse 3, God promises Israel that even though they had turned away from Him, nonetheless, He won't forget them. They would be "brought low" (29:4) and overrun by a "multitude of your foreign foes" (29:5) – all because "their hearts are far from me" (29:13) but He would restore their fortunes and they would again turn to Him. He would ensure that "the ruthless shall come to nothing" and "all who watch to do evil shall be cut off" (29:20) and Jacob "shall no more be ashamed" but shall "stand in awe of the God of Israel," for they would know that they are "the work of My hands" (29:23).

### **Hearts of Joy**

As a result of restoration, Isaiah also says that their heart would be glad and their bones would flourish (Isa. 66:14). This is the same idea that we see in the descriptions of restoration after exile by other prophets, where God promises to give them "a new heart" and spirit when He brought them back (Jer. 32:39; Ezek. 11:19). As Jeremiah says,

"I will also give them a heart to know Me, for I am the Lord; and they will be My people, and I will be their God, for they will return to Me wholeheartedly" (Jer. 24:7).

With their renewed heart in their renewed land, the returning exiles were truly blessed by the goodness of God's hand and God kept them safe from the hands of their enemies.

## **Recounting the Victories of the Returnees**

After the return from exile, the returnees' "enemies" were people like Rehum, who "wrote a letter against Jerusalem" (Ezra 4:8), resulting in a "force of arms" stopping "the work on the house of God in Jerusalem" (Ezra 4:23-24). Through the prophets Haggai and Zechariah, Zerubbabel was reinvigorated to return to his work and restore the temple (Ezra 5:1-11). Another letter was sent to the Persian King (Ezra 5:7-17), Cyrus's decree was found (Ezra 6:1-3), resulting in Zerubbabel getting the green light to finish the temple with the full support and funding of the Persian Empire. During the restoration process, the "enemies" were people like Haman, who sought to wipe out the entire Jewish race (Esth. 3:13). Throughout the final phases of the rebuilding, the enemies were people like Tobiah, Geshem, and Sanballat (Neh. 6:1), who planned to do Nehemiah "harm" (Neh. 6:2) and prevent him from restoring Jerusalem's wall (Neh. 6:6).

All of these efforts by the returnees' "enemies" to oppose the restoration process were not only thwarted, but in each case the tables were completely turned. The rebuilding of the temple and the wall, along with the Jews' counterattack on Haman's forces, were soundly sanctioned and supported by Persia. This was poetically pictured by Isaiah when he said, "the glory of the nations" will be "like an overflowing stream" and "you will be nursed" (Isa. 66:12).

He put it this way earlier: "The wealth of the nations will come to you" (Isa. 60:5). The returnees' bones flourished "like new grass" and "the hand of the Lord" was upon them and He was "indignant toward His enemies" (Isa. 66:14). This mirrors the reference to His enemies in Isa. 66:6.

Thus, we've seen how God's people triumphed against all opposition during the time of Zerubbabel, Nehemiah, and Esther. We've also seen in previous comments how Isaiah continually oscillates between the current apostate generation of his day and the future faithful generation of the new day. The dual reality of God's blessing upon His servants and indignation toward His enemies is a timeless principle.

This being the case, the enemies with whom He was indignant included the adversaries who opposed God's people but who would be defeated during the time of the restoration. It would also include the apostates during Isaiah's time, God's own people, who would be defeated and sent into exile for their direct opposition to God.

## **Recap**

Tracking on the previous verses (Isa. 66:7-12), Isaiah 66:13-14 continues to depict the restoration in terms of motherly imagery. While the preceding verse focused on birth and nurturing, Isaiah now directs the reader's attention to a mother's role as a comforter.

In employing the theme of God comforting His people (Isa. 66:13), Isaiah uses similar language (Isa. 51:3; 52:9) contained in the section beginning with Cyrus's decree (Isa. 44:28, 45:1) and culminating in the "myrtle tree" (Hadassah/Esther) of Isaiah 55:13. Fittingly, Esther was God's chosen vessel to deliver the Jews from the threat of annihilation during the time of the restoration (Esth. 4:14).

During the restoration period and prior to the battle in the book of Esther, Zechariah was given a message about "comfort" coming to "Zion" and "Jerusalem" (Zech. 1:17) through a protector who would deliver God's people from their enemies (Zech. 2:8-9). The message comes from an angel "standing among the myrtle trees" (Zech. 1:8, 11) – signifying that the comfort and deliverance would come through Esther, as Isaiah had foreseen.

Through the faith of figures like Zerubbabel, Nehemiah, and Esther, the returnees faced all opposition head-on and overcame each one. In each case, God's hand was upon His people, guiding and protecting them, while pouring out indignation on their enemies. Isaiah's prophecy became a historical reality in the events leading up to, including, and following the return from exile during the restoration period.

## **Takeaways for Today**

### *Victory Often Comes Through Unexpected Instruments*

In the course of the article from which these comments originate, attention was drawn to four key figures of the restoration period: Cyrus, Zerubbabel, Nehemiah and Esther. Cyrus was a king, Zerubbabel was of kingly lineage and Nehemiah was a king's cupbearer. While Esther did become a queen, her journey began as a lonely orphan raised by her cousin. This young girl, who had nowhere else to go, went on to become the key to her people's survival.

This reminds us that no one is insignificant in God's plan and no one is beyond God's purpose. Oftentimes, God's most powerful acts come through those who are born with no claim to power or privilege. Victory often comes through unexpected instruments.

Just as God used figures like Cyrus, Zerubbabel, Nehemiah and Esther to bring comfort and deliverance to His people, believers today can trust that God is still at work behind the scenes. Whether through leaders, ordinary people, or unexpected means, God uses the right individual at the right time for "such a

time as this” to fulfill His purposes.

### *Divine Comfort Follows Divine Discipline*

Isaiah’s message shows that while God’s indignation leads to discipline and exile, it is never the end of the story. His ultimate goal for His children is restoration, renewal and joy. This offers assurance for modern believers: even when God allows seasons of hardship or correction, His hand is still upon His people and comfort is coming.

### *God Defends His People Like a Protective Mother*

The imagery of a mother defending, comforting and nurturing her child (Isaiah 66:13) speaks to God’s tender but fierce commitment to His people. Believers can rest in the truth that God not only provides but also actively protects and nurtures His children with deep, unwavering love.

### *God Turns Opposition Into Opportunity*

Whether it was enemies like Haman or obstacles during the city’s reconstruction, every opposition was turned by God into an opportunity for His glory. For believers today, this is a call to persevere in the face of resistance trusting that God can reverse the plans of the enemy and bring about His purposes in our lives.

### *Scripture Interprets Scripture – So Know It Well!*

The themes of Isaiah 66:13-14 are echoed in Zechariah, Esther, Nehemiah and other portions of Isaiah’s own prophecy. To truly grasp what Isaiah is saying in these verses we must see how all these passages tell one unified story. A deeper knowledge of Scripture allows us to discern God’s movements in Scripture, in history and in our own lives.

Always remember that God’s word isn’t dead and stagnant... It’s living and active (Heb. 4:12). It comes to life and speaks to every new generation and in every new situation. So, let the comforting words of Isaiah 66:13-14 comfort you during rough and troublesome times. Your “heart will be glad,” and your “bones will flourish like the grass,” when the “hand of the Lord” is upon you (Isa. 66:14). Reach out and take His hand. He’s got this!

<https://burrosofberea.com/isaiahs-new-heavens-and-new-earth-part-7-comforting-the-children-protecting-the-people/>

**Isaiah 66:15** “For behold, the LORD will come in fire, and his chariots like the whirlwind, to render his anger in fury, and his rebuke with flames of fire.

**Isaiah 66:16** For by fire will the LORD enter into judgment, and by his sword, with all flesh; and those slain by the LORD shall be many.

**Isaiah 66:17** “Those who sanctify and purify themselves to go into the gardens, following one in the midst, eating pig's flesh and the abomination and mice, shall come to an end together, declares the LORD.

After the return from exile, God's enemies showed up at every stage of the restoration effort. There was Rehum, who tried to shut down the rebuilding of the temple with armed force (Ezra 4:8, 23–24). Later, there was Tobiah, who did everything he could to stop Nehemiah from rebuilding Jerusalem's walls, even plotting to do him harm (Neh. 6:1–6). And in between Rehum and Tobiah, Esther faced off against the greatest threat of all – Haman, who planned to do great harm to the entire Jewish race (Esther 3:3). But in every case, these enemies failed, and God's people prevailed – fulfilling what Isaiah spoke of in passages like Isaiah 66:6 and 66:14.

Tracking on the theme of God's indignation toward His enemies in verse 14, Isaiah confronts a far more sobering reality in verses 15–17 – God's own people can become His enemies by forsaking Him for other gods. This sobering truth echoes the First Commandment: “You shall have no other gods before Me” (Exod. 20:3), and it stands at the heart of Isaiah's polemical indictment. When the Israelites of Isaiah's day became apostates, they became His enemies. As Isaiah said earlier...

“But they rebelled And grieved His Holy Spirit; Therefore He turned Himself to become their enemy, He fought against them” (Isa. 63:10).

### **When God's People Become His Enemies**

The theme of God's own people becoming His “enemies (o'yev) is introduced immediately in chapter 1 (Isa. 1:24) and tied specifically to the garden rituals (Isa. 1:29) which are highlighted here in Isaiah 66:17. Between these bookend references, this same cultic practice is spelled out in 57:5–8 and 65:3–11. Isaiah 66:17 does not stand alone.

As the footnote in the Good News Translation indicates, Isaiah 66:17 is “based on 65:3–4” and 65:3–4 refers “back to 1:29, where such gardens were first mentioned.”[1] In short the entire book of Isaiah is a unified structure and contains shared introductory and closing themes (Isaiah 1 and 66) which are the glue that holds the structure together.

Thus, the garden rituals condemned in Isaiah 66:17 are not an isolated offense but are part of a longstanding pattern of apostasy that bookends the entire prophecy. But these bookends serve more than mere stylistic symmetry – they frame the opening and closing arguments of a covenant lawsuit. The charge is that God's own people in Isaiah's day had switched loyalties through idolatry, and Isaiah's prophecy is the body of evidence in a carefully structured presentation as

the case unfolds.

## **Building the Case**

In the opening verses of chapter 65, it is clear that the sacrifices “offered in gardens and orchards” were a common practice in the pagan nations surrounding ancient Israel.[2] The “gardens” were, as the ESV renders them, “sacred orchards”, not mere flower gardens, in which the Israelites were continually practicing idolatry.[3] They were gardens marked out for these practices – not vegetable or herb gardens, but groves, orchards, or parks abundantly filled with trees.[4] In Isaiah 1:29-30, the garden rituals are practiced in the midst of “sacred oaks” of which they will be “ashamed.” In Isaiah 44:14-17, the trees are used in idol making. In Isaiah 57:5, illicit rituals and child sacrifice take place “under every green tree.” The Lord specifically forbade His people from engaging in these garden/tree rituals that were practiced by the surrounding nations.[5]

As “a covenant to the people,” God created Israel to be “a light” to those “nations” (Isa. 42:6). But the reverse happened. His own people had trusted in “idols” as their “gods” instead of the Lord (Isa. 42:17). These pagan nations, long considered enemies of God, had now become the very ones whose ways Israel imitated, instead of the other way around (cf. Deut. 4:6-8). Turning from the Lord and instead turning to the gardens of infidelity, they too had become His “enemies” (Isa. 42:13; 63:10) and would be “plundered” (Isa. 42:24). For Israel’s failure to remain faithful to her calling, a case would be assembled, witnesses summoned, and charges prepared.

## **The Covenant Lawsuit**

As Susan Ackerman again reminds us, the Book of Isaiah is a covenant lawsuit in which the “entire nation” is on “trial” for “cultic abuse.”[6] It is widely recognized that “Isaiah 1 stands squarely within the prophetic tradition of the covenant lawsuit.”[7] The fact that Isaiah is clearly opening with courtroom scene is unmistakable, with the call to come to order (Isa. 1:2a), the overview of the charges (Isa. 1:2b-9), the aggrieved party (Isa. 1:10-17), a call for rehabilitation (18-20), and a call for justice (1:21-31) because of the crimes committed, which are clarified in verse 29. And it is clear, through it all, that it is God who is standing in as Judge.

Fittingly, Isaiah’s first chapter opens with a strong judicial setting. Two witnesses (heaven and earth) are called to “listen” as the charges are brought: “Sons I have reared and brought up, but they have rebelled against me” (Isa. 1:2). Isaiah is letting the reader know that court is now in session.[8] As Herald Gandhi puts it, “Thus, begins the lawsuit of the King against His people. They have sinned and the evidence is great against them.”[9] In short, Israel is on trial for apostasy through idolatry, and Isaiah is the prosecuting attorney.

Just as any skilled attorney begins and ends a case by reiterating the central charges and evidence, Isaiah begins with Israel's rebellion and idolatrous rituals (Isaiah 1), and he ends with a striking echo of those same offenses (Isaiah 66). The correspondence between the opening and closing chapters means that Isaiah has built a cohesive forensic argument. These bookends summarize the charges and establish the indictment. The book of Isaiah is a prophetic lawsuit in which Israel is being charged with spiritual treason and the Lord will arise to "contend" with and "judge" His own people (Isa. 3:13).

The Hebrew word translated as "contend" in this verse is (riv) and has a root meaning of "to strive physically or with words," and often carries the nuance of "to conduct a case or suit (legal), to sue, to make a complaint." [10] The word translated "judge" is (din) and means to "act as judge," "to execute judgment," "requite or vindicate." [11] Both terms consequently carry strong legal overtones and speak to the overall judicial tone of Isaiah's prophecy. [12]

## Opening and Closing Statements

As Isaiah bookends his case, chapter 1 is the opening statement, the bulk of the book is the case in chief and chapter 66 is his closing statement. As such, chapters 1 and 66 are mirror images of each other. As John Watts says, "The Vision closes as it began, with a scene in the heavenly court of God." [13] In this regard, there are no less than 20 striking parallels between Isaiah's opening and closing statements.

| Word or Phrase                        | Isaiah 1       | Isaiah 66        |
|---------------------------------------|----------------|------------------|
| Heaven and Earth                      | Isaiah 1:2     | Isaiah 66:1      |
| Ox                                    | Isaiah 1:3     | Isaiah 66:3      |
| Sacrifices (ze'vach)                  | Isaiah 1:11    | Isaiah 66:3      |
| Wickedness (a'ven) [14]               | Isaiah 1:13    | Isaiah 66:3      |
| Offering (min'chah)                   | Isaiah 1:13    | Isaiah 66:3, 10  |
| No pleasure/No delight (lo cha'phets) | Isaiah 1:11    | Isaiah 66:4      |
| Evil (ra, ra'a)                       | Isaiah 1:16    | Isaiah 66:4      |
| Listen/consent/obey (sha'ma)          | Isaiah 1:19    | Isaiah 66:4      |
| Bad choices                           | Isaiah 1:29    | Isaiah 66:4      |
| Hear the word of the Lord             | Isaiah 1:10    | Isaiah 66:5      |
| Enemies/foes (o'yev) [15]             | Isaiah 1:24    | Isaiah 66:6      |
| Nation                                | Isaiah 1:4     | Isaiah 66:8      |
| Zion                                  | Isaiah 1:27    | Isaiah 66:8      |
| Jerusalem                             | Isaiah 1:1     | Isaiah 66:10, 20 |
| Sword                                 | Isaiah 1:20    | Isaiah 66:16     |
| Gardens                               | Isaiah 1:29    | Isaiah 66:17     |
| Offspring/seed (ze'ra)                | Isaiah 1:4     | Isaiah 66:22     |
| New Moon and Sabbath                  | Isaiah 1:13-14 | Isaiah 66:23     |
| Rebels/transgressors (pa.sha)         | Isaiah 1:2, 28 | Isaiah 66:24     |

Like any good prosecutor, Isaiah frames the case by reaffirming the key themes of his opening statement in his closing arguments. Like any good prosecutor, those arguments are airtight. And like any good prosecutor, Isaiah drives his point home by homing in on Israel's most egregious offense – their garden rituals to a false god. Or, in this case, a false goddess. Simply put, the charge is idolatry.

In this regard, the garden rituals singled out in 66:17 are especially pertinent considering all that precedes them in verses 7–13. As noted above and in previous articles, these seven verses are packed with motherly imagery to depict the care and provision of the Lord. In stark contrast to this comforting and nurturing by Yahweh, the arboreal settings of 66:17 were associated with Asherah, the mother goddess in the religions of the surrounding cultures. The striking contrast between the maternal provision of the Lord in verses 7–13 and the cultic malpractice of verse 17 makes a poignant polemical point: the apostates were looking to Asherah for the sustenance and security that they should have sought from the Lord.

In the Ancient Near East, Asherah was known as “The Mother Goddess” and “The Queen of Heaven.”[16] With a very explicit reference to Asherah,[17] the unfaithful of Jeremiah's day were unapologetic in letting it be known where their loyalties lay:

“Then all the men who were aware that their wives were burning sacrifices to other gods, along with all the women who were standing by, as a large assembly, including all the people who were living in Pathros in the land of Egypt, responded to Jeremiah, saying, “As for the message that you have spoken to us in the name of the Lord, we are not going to listen to you! But we will certainly carry out every word that has proceeded from our mouths, by burning sacrifices to the queen of heaven and pouring out drink offerings to her, just as we ourselves, our forefathers, our kings, and our leaders did in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem; for then we had plenty of food and were well off and saw no misfortune. But since we stopped burning sacrifices to the queen of heaven and pouring out drink offerings to her, we have lacked everything, and have met our end by the sword and by famine.” “And,” said the woman, “when we were burning sacrifices to the queen of heaven and pouring out drink offerings to her, was it without our husbands that we made for her sacrificial cakes in her image, and poured out drink offerings to her?” (Jer. 44:15-19).

Tracking on the same theme two centuries earlier, Isaiah put it this way:

“For you have forgotten the God of your salvation And have not remembered the rock of your refuge. Therefore you plant delightful plants And set them with vine shoots of a strange god” (Isa. 17:10).

As noted above, when God's people are faithful, He nurtures them, comforts them, and delivers them from their enemies (Isa. 66:7-14). On the other hand, when God's people are unfaithful, like the apostate generation of Isaiah's day, they themselves become God's enemies (Isa. 63:10). Rather than staying centered on the Lord, pre-exilic Israel strayed into ritual misconduct that summoned the sword (Isa. 66:16).

### **Staying Centered or Straying off Target?**

Isaiah speaks of "following one in the center" who eats "swine's flesh, detestable things, and mice" (Isa. 66:17b). As Blenkinsopp notes, Isaiah "is not concerned to provide information about these rituals" because it "was normal practice just about everywhere." [18] But what was "normal practice" for them is unfamiliar to us. This is why it's so important to familiarize ourselves with the time and context in which Isaiah is writing. Isaiah did not need to "provide information about these rituals" because his readers were the ones practicing those rituals. They knew exactly what they were doing and Isaiah knew exactly what he was doing in terms of rhetorical strategy.

Again, the entire book is a tribunal proceeding, and Isaiah is the prosecuting attorney. As such, he saved the hammer for the close after laying the groundwork for the crescendo. As we've seen, the motherly imagery in verses 7-14 contrasts with the garden worship of the Mother Goddess, Asherah, in 15-17. In this regard, God's mother-like provision for His people took on a very real historical embodiment when He used a woman, Esther, to comfort and protect His people. In like manner, Asherah worship took on a very real ritual expression – the "one in the center" is a phrase that refers to the female hierophant, or priestess, [19] who led the procession of her worshipers into sacred space.

As Blenkinsopp observes, "We know that all significant cult acts required a preliminary sacralization of place, time and officiants." [20] Those who follow Asherah's priestess into the center of the gardens "sanctify (qa'dash) and purify themselves" by "eating swine's flesh, detestable things, and mice" (Isa. 66:17). Here, Isaiah echoes what he said in the previous chapter concerning the apostates of his day:

"A people who continually provoke Me to My face, Offering sacrifices in gardens and burning incense on bricks; 4 Who sit among graves and spend the night in secret places; Who eat pig's flesh, And the broth of unclean meat is in their pots. Who say, 'Keep to yourself, do not come near me, For I am too holy (qa'dash) for you!' These are smoke in My nostrils, A fire that burns all the day. 6 Behold, it is written before Me: I will not keep silent, but I will repay; I will even repay into their laps" (Isa. 65:3-6).

In the rituals of Asherah worship, swine's flesh and mouse meat were believed to

have made the worshiper sanctified, holy, and set apart. So much so that they considered themselves holier than Yahweh in their devotion to this false mother-figure goddess. But God considered their consumption of these unclean meats to be anything but sanctification (qa'dash). Isaiah calls the choice of their ritual cuisine "detestable" (Isa. 66:17). The remedy for the situation would be the restoration, once the exile had purged the Israelites of these practices.

### **Getting Israel Back on Target**

Ezekiel notes these same types of practices. Among the "wicked abominations" which the sons of Israel were committing (Ezek. 8:9), he speaks of "creeping things and beasts and detestable things" among the "idols of the house of Israel" and even "carved on the wall all around" the Lord's House (Ezek. 8:10). Like Isaiah, Ezekiel also speaks of one standing in the "midst" or "center" (ta'vekh) of the circle of worshipers (Ezek. 8:11). In this case, the hierophant is a male, "Jazaniah the son of Shaphan," but the connotation is the same, i.e., a central figure leading the devotees in the worship of false gods. Feminine imagery is picked up in verse 14 where "women were weeping for Tammuz" outside the north gate of the Lord's House (Ezek. 8:14). These cultic practices were rampant in the pre-exilic days, leading directly to their punishment and captivity. Ezekiel, like Isaiah, makes it abundantly clear that the sin for which they were being punished and sent into captivity was idolatry. Speaking to Ezekiel, who was in exile, God said:

"Son of man, when the house of Israel was living on their own land, they defiled it by their ways and their deeds; their way before Me was like the uncleanness of a woman in her impurity. Therefore I poured out My wrath on them for the blood which they had shed on the land, because they had defiled it with their idols. I also scattered them among the nations, and they were dispersed throughout the lands. According to their ways and their deeds I judged them." (Ezek. 36:17-19).

And the purpose for this exile was to purge them of idol worship:

"They will no longer defile themselves with their idols, or with their detestable things, or with any of their offenses; but I will rescue them from all their dwelling places in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them. And they will be My people, and I will be their God" (Ezek. 37:23).

### **Targeting Isaiah's Context**

How does all of this help us pinpoint the intent and timeframe of chapters 65-66? Quite simply, the captivity was the latest in a line of punishments meted out by God on His people in an attempt to get them to be faithful. Isaiah, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel state time and again that the prime reason for God's wrath and punishment was spiritual unfaithfulness through idolatrous practices.

However, once the punishment was complete, those former practices would be forgotten. The punishment will have been served. God would remember His people and bring back the captives. The matter would be settled and the grievances forgotten (Isa. 65:17). There would be no bringing their idolatrous crimes back up, thus resulting in “double jeopardy”. The relationship between God and His people will be renewed and refreshed.

That does not mean that the nation would never falter again. It only means that the situation that had resulted in their punishment and exile would now be a closed case. The slate would be wiped clean, once the punishment had been served and completed. The captives would be set free. And they would have a renewed spirit. The days of going off into the gardens for worshipping other gods was over. As Michael Hieser puts it:

“...idolatry was wiped out of the Israelite experience after the Exile. They were cured of their idolatry, because the idolatry was why they went into exile and so it’s a very well-known historical fact that once the Jews return from Babylon (after the Exile in Babylon) they’re not doing idolatry anymore. In fact, they’re just going like crazy in the other direction. The Torah actually becomes sort of an object of worship at this point. ‘Because the law is the thing that protects us, following the law and having fierce laws and just really being tenacious about the Torah—that’s going to keep us from idolatry. Because idolatry is the last thing in the world we’re interested in doing because we all know what happened. We experienced what happened and our ancestors did because of it.’”[21]

Indeed, by the time we get to the New Testament, we find that the Jews of the Second Temple Period loathed idols (Rom. 2:22). They still had their problems, but those were different problems than idolatry. As Heiser said, they had elevated Torah to the point that the Law’s true purpose (a standard to live by) had been replaced by a system of merit (a means of salvation). The first-century Jews then went on to try and impose their misunderstanding of the Law upon Gentile converts to Christ, and the book of Romans is very much a polemic against this misunderstanding. The idolatry problem, however, was cured – the exile took care of that. It was no longer an issue after the exiles returned, nor was it a problem for the Jews in the first century but it was a huge problem in Isaiah’s day. And it was that exact problem that forms the backdrop and context of Isaiah 65-66.

## **Recap**

Isaiah’s final chapter is very much the culmination of a courtroom drama, with Isaiah as the prosecutor and Yahweh as the judge. Framed as a covenant lawsuit, chapter 1 opens with charges of idolatry and chapter 66 closes the case by reiterating those charges. In his closing argument, Isaiah highlights Israel’s most egregious offense – worship in pagan gardens associated with false deities, especially Asherah, the Canaanite mother goddess.

This particular cultic ritual, described in Isaiah 66:17, directly contrasts with the maternal care Yahweh offers in verses 7–14. Instead of looking to the Lord for comfort, nurture and provision, the apostates of Isaiah's day had turned to a counterfeit mother deity for their sustenance and security.

These parallel images – Yahweh's true maternal care versus the false sanctification of pagan ritual – reinforce the central charge: Israel had become God's enemy by trading His provision for idolatrous practices.

The charges were made and the sentence was issued. The exile becomes both punishment and purification. After the exile, Israel had been cured of her idolatry. The restoration after the return from exile was a new beginning where their "former things" were forgotten and no longer a problem (Isa. 65:17).

The problem faced in New Testament times is not the same as the problem faced in Isaiah's time. The Jews of Jesus's day had overcorrected by turning Torah into a rigid system of merit and the New Testament goes on to address this later development.

All of this anchors Isaiah 65-66 to the context of its own time with principles that are nevertheless applicable in all times.

### **Takeaways for Today**

Believing loyalty is as important for believers today as it was in Isaiah's day, we need to examine where our own loyalties truly lie. While the garden rituals of Isaiah's day may be outdated paganism, there is nothing outdated about keeping our hearts and minds in check – and keeping our focus on the Lord.

Today's "gardens" would be anything that replaces our dependence upon the Lord. God still desires faithfulness, not compromise. Believers today need to stay on target so that we don't find ourselves in the center of a lifestyle that is displeasing to Him. When we fail to stay on target, we may find ourselves feeling isolated and exiled from the blessing of His fellowship in our lives.

When those times come, we need to remember that Israel's exile wasn't just punitive, i.e., punishment without a purpose... It was redemptive. God used it to purge idolatry from His people. When we encounter hardships that feel like exile, we must remove the things in our lives that are displeasing to Him, so that we can renew our relationship with Him. The words of James are apropos here: "Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners, and purify your hearts, you double-minded" (James 4:8).

God's mercies are new every morning (Lam. 3:22-23) and we are being renewed every day (2 Cor. 4:16). If you're feeling "exile" in your own life, perhaps it's because God wants you to reach out to Him and let go of what's holding you back.

from fully experiencing His presence. Every day is a new day and it's never a bad day to come out of exile. Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind (Deut. 6:5; Matt 22:37).

<https://burrosofberea.com/isaiahs-new-heavens-and-new-earth-part-8-trying-the-case-isaiahs-opening-and-closing-arguments/>

**Isaiah 66:18** "For I know their works and their thoughts, and the time is coming to gather all nations and tongues. And they shall come and shall see my glory,

### **The Nations See God's Glory (Isaiah 66:18)**

This section opens with a reference to the gathering of nations. This is Isaiah's closing statement, so he isn't saying anything that he hasn't previously mentioned. The reference to the gathering of all nations and tongues is no exception. We find the same sentiment in Isaiah 43, which deals with the faithful generation at the time of the restoration from exile.

First, he tells them: "Since you are precious in My sight, Since you are honored and I love you, I will give other people in your place and other nations in exchange for your life" (Isa. 43:4).

While their lives would be in danger, it would be others who would ultimately pay the price. This undoubtedly refers to those who stood against Israel along the way, including Babylon (Isa. 43:14) as well as Haman and his forces. They opposed and threatened God's people but in the end the situation was reversed — the very ones who stood against them became the ones who faced the consequences. Through this exchange, God's people were spared.

The Lord then refers to the time of their future restoration from exile. He tells Israel:

"I will bring your offspring [seed: zera][1] with you from the east and gather you from the west. I will say to the north, 'Give them up!' And to the south, 'Do not hold them back'" (Isa. 43:5-6).

But one other thing occurs alongside the restoration spoken of in Isaiah 43 that dovetails with Isaiah 66:18 – the gathering of the nations as witnesses:

"All the nations have gathered together So that the peoples may be assembled. Who among them can declare this And proclaim to us the former things? Let them present their witnesses so that they may be justified, Or let them hear and say, 'It is true'" (Isa. 43:9).

The returnees themselves stood as proof to the nations of God's sovereignty – so much so that all of the empire helped rebuild and supply Jerusalem.[2] Whether

or not they recognized it, the nations certainly saw the kabowd (splendor, honor, abundance, glory) of God.

This is further determined by the phrase in Isa. 66:18 “nations and tongues.” The same word “tongues”, lashon, is used in Esther 1:22 to show that the provinces of Persia spoke different languages. In Esther 3:12-13, Haman has the proclamation to annihilate the Jews sent out to every province “in their own language (lashon).” And in Esther 8:9, Mordecai reverses this with a proclamation in favor of the Jews and against Haman and his forces, and that proclamation went out “from India to Cush (Ethiopia), 127 provinces,” to “every people according to their language (lashon), as well as to the Jews according to their script and their language (lashon).” As a result “many of the peoples” became Jews (Esther 8:17; see also Esther 9:27 for another reference of those who joined the Jews). Nehemiah also confirms that many of the nations came to him (Neh. 5:17).

In Isaiah 66:18, we find the culmination of Isaiah’s prophetic vision: the gathering of the nations who witnessed the glory of God and, in many cases, joined themselves to His people. The Gentile nations not only observed but actively participated in God’s restorative work.

God, through Isaiah, doesn’t just leave it at that, however. He proceeds to specify how all of this would be brought about.

<https://burrosofberea.com/isaiahs-new-heavens-and-new-earth-part-9-a-concluding-argument-a-sign-and-a-promise/>

**Isaiah 66:19** and I will set a sign among them. And from them I will send survivors to the nations, to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, who draw the bow, to Tubal and Javan, to the coastlands far away, that have not heard my fame or seen my glory. And they shall declare my glory among the nations.

### **The Sign for the Nations (Isa. 66:19)**

Isaiah elaborates on the specifics by circling back to a theme he had introduced earlier – the placement of a sign that would capture the attention of the nations.

The nations mentioned in verse 19 would have a “sign among them”. This language strongly indicates that this sign would be evident for the entire empire. And again, Isaiah is reiterating an earlier theme as he closes his arguments in chapter 66. He has already specified what that sign would be:

“Instead of the thorn bush, the juniper will come up, And instead of the stinging nettle, the myrtle will come up; And it will be a memorial to the Lord, An everlasting sign which will not be eliminated” (Isa. 55:13).

As Isaiah indicates just a few verses later, this sign would coincide with a time when foreigners would join themselves to the Lord and He would not separate

them from His people (Isa. 56:3). The connection between the "sign" (Isa. 55:13) and the inclusion of "the foreigner" (Isa. 56:3) is unmistakable. When Isaiah revisits this theme in his closing statement (Isa. 66:19), he would have expected his readers to recall what he had previously said in this regard. Remember, he's summing it all up here, not introducing new material.

With that said, the sign was none other than the myrtle itself. This myrtle tree was Esther, whose Hebrew name Hadassah means exactly that: "myrtle tree." [3] And Esther was the sign for the entire nation. Whereas the "stinging nettle," Haman, wanted to eradicate the Jews, the "myrtle tree," Esther, rose up instead. The Jews were not only spared but the forces amassed by Haman were totally decimated. It was so evident to the entire empire that their eyes were opened to the glory (kabowd) of God - so much so that it sparked a large conversion.

Isaiah 66:19 mentions many of the outlying provinces of Persia. For example, Tarshish, identified in the Septuagint as Carthage, was located on the African shores of the Mediterranean in the furthest reaches of the Persian empire. Javan is the ancient name for Greece and Tubal was an area in Asia Minor that extended up to the shores of the Black Sea. Meshech was the area along the southeast edge of the Black Sea, Put (or Pul) was what is now Libya and Lud was Lydia in Asia Minor as mentioned in Jer. 46:9.

Each and every one of these names appears in Ezek. 27:10-13 in Ezekiel's prophecy against Tyre. Tyre, a thriving commercial port and once considered impregnable, lost its independence and fell under Persian rule in 572 BC, just 14 years after the Babylonia conquest of Jerusalem and 33 years before Babylon itself fell to the Persians in 539 BC. Each place name mentioned in both Ezekiel 27 and Isaiah 66 had relevance within the Persian Empire.

The inclusion of all of these place names in Isa. 66:19 signifies that the resounding victory by the Jews would be commonly known throughout the entire empire. Every one of these names that appear here were well-known places within the expansive provinces in the Persian Empire during the restoration, yet not one of those names was still in common use by the time of the New Testament.

Esther 9 describes how the Jews (the survivors) were victorious not only in Susa, the capital city of Persia and Jerusalem, the home of the Jews, but also throughout the "king's provinces" (Esther 9:16) in "each and every province" (Esther 8:17). All of this was in fulfillment of Isaiah's words - not only those summed up in Isa. 66:18-19, but also stated explicitly in Isa. 45:1-7. Events that began with Cyrus (Isa. 45:1) would reach the entire Persian empire so that all the people "from the rising to the setting of the sun" (Isa. 45:6) would know God's glory. Just as Isaiah said in Isa. 66:19, the Jews (survivors) had been sent out to the provinces (Esther 9:16,20). This in turn sparked a wide-spread conversion (Esther 8:17) and Isaiah reiterates in 66:19 that each one of them would hear of

His glory (kobawd).

The effects of this empire-wide conversion were still felt nearly 100 years later, as the Lord would proclaim through the prophet Malachi, utilizing similar language:

For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name is great among the nations and in every place incense is offered to my name and a pure offering; for my name is great among the nations, says the LORD of hosts... and my name is feared among the nations" (Mal. 1:11, 14c).[4]

The singular event that set all of these other events in motion was Cyrus (Isa. 45:1) and his decree calling God's people back to their own land (Ezra 1:1-7). The exiles returned in waves before, during, and following the victory of God's Myrtle Tree (Esther). The "sign" continues to shine in passages like Isaiah 55:13 and 66:19 and the unmistakable rhythm of the exiles' return likewise resounds through Isaiah's words.

<https://burrosofberea.com/isaiahs-new-heavens-and-new-earth-part-9-a-concluding-argument-a-sign-and-a-promise/>

**Isaiah 66:20** And they shall bring all your brothers from all the nations as an offering to the LORD on horses and in chariots and in litters and on mules and on dromedaries to my holy mountain Jerusalem, says the LORD, just as the Israelites bring their grain offering in a clean vessel to the house of the LORD.

Following verse 19, verse 20 describes the manner in which the survivors would return as they come back to their homeland.

This is a fitting description of the returning exiles, who actually did return on horses, mules, camels, and donkeys (Ezra 2:66-67; Neh. 7:68-69). When Nehemiah arrives to inspect the walls, he even notes "the animal on which" he was riding (Neh. 2:12). This may seem like a mundane historical detail, but its significance becomes striking when set against modern approaches to Israel's regathering. For example, some see the immigration of "more than 3.5 million Jews" to "the Land of Israel" in recent times as a "literal fulfillment of God's promises"[5] but these modern returnees are arriving by commercial aircraft, not riding in on camels and mules. This is a far cry from a literal fulfillment!

The inclusion of the animals in this verse also sits uncomfortably with the idea of a spiritualized fulfillment in the sense of New Testament believers coming to the heavenly Jerusalem (e.g., Heb. 12:22-23). While this is indeed a beautiful and theologically rich truth, plugging it into Isaiah 66:20 would be a classic case of the right doctrine but the wrong text. One would be hard-pressed to explain what the horses, mules, and camels would spiritually symbolize in such an interpretation.

<https://burrosofberea.com/isaiahs-new-heavens-and-new-earth-part-9-a-concluding-argument-a-sign-and-a-promise/>

**Isaiah 66:21** And some of them also I will take for priests and for Levites, says the LORD.

### **Priests and Levites (Isa. 66:21)**

Regarding the caravan of returning exiles making this pilgrimage, Isaiah informs the reader that some of them would be set aside for a special purpose.

This verse provides yet another detail that serves to pin down the time of intended fulfillment for Isaiah 65-66 as the time of restoration from exile. Isaiah specifically mentions that some of the returnees would be taken as priests and Levites.

It would make sense for Isaiah to say that some of the returning exiles would become priests and Levites. The Babylonian exile lasted 70 years in total and the temple was destroyed for 50 years, plus the extended period of time it took for the temple to be rebuilt once the restoration began. For that span of time, nobody was functioning as a temple priest[6] and no one was performing the duties of the Levites in the temple. It was impossible because there was no temple in which to perform these functions and duties.

Additionally, in verse 21, the Lord, through Isaiah, says that only some of the returning countrymen of verse 20 would become Levitical priests. This fits naturally with the aftermath of the exile being borne out by "priests and Levites" being included among "those whose mind God had stirred" (Ezra 1:5) and numbered in the census given in Ezra 2, where the priests and Levites are listed as part of those who returned (Ezra 2:36-60), although some of the Levites were deemed unworthy of priesthood (Ezra 2:61-63).

Notwithstanding, the "priests and Levites" were but a subset of those that had returned (Ezra 2:70). The fact that Ezra specifically points out several times that "priests and Levites" were among those to return (Ezra 1:5; 2:70; 3:8, 12; etc.) appears to be a direct reference to the "priests and Levites" who would be included in Isa. 66:21.

This is in direct contrast to the New Testament reality, where all believers in Christ are made priests before God (1 Pet. 2:9; Rev. 1:6). In Isaiah 66:21 and its fulfillment in Ezra, however, the priests and Levites were only a portion of all those who would return.

<https://burrosofberea.com/isaiahs-new-heavens-and-new-earth-part-9-a-concluding-argument-a-sign-and-a-promise/>

**Isaiah 66:22** "For as the new heavens and the new earth that I make shall remain before me, says the LORD, so shall your offspring and your name remain.

## **An Enduring Legacy (Isa. 66:22)**

In Isaiah 66:22, Isaiah highlights the promise of the enduring lineage of the faithful, which also serves as a contrast with the fleeting legacy of the rebellious in the closing verse.

The phrase “the new heavens and the new earth” should be understood in the sense of a new redemptive and cosmological order. It deals not only with the physical creation but with the cosmological order as a whole. While it was necessary to create the literal heaven and earth the very first time, it is not necessary to re-create the heavens and the earth each time they are made new through redemptive and cosmological restructuring. Commenting on this verse, John Watts observes:

“This verse addresses the faithful pilgrims by picking up references in 65:17 to “the new heavens and the new land.” YHWH promises the worshipers permanence. Their children and their name will last as long as the new order and they will have their place before YHWH in worship (56:5). This does not promise them eternal life in the NT sense (John 10:27–29; 1 Pet 1:23; see E.Achtemeier, *Community and Message*, 150), but it does promise permanence through a remembered name and line of children (51:11; 61:9; 65:9, 23).”[8]

Unlike the new heavens and new earth to be initiated by Christ (Rev. 21:1ff), the redemptive order of the restoration period (Isaiah’s new heavens and new earth) was not intended to last forever. As the Psalmist said, it would “perish” and “wear out like a garment” (Ps. 102:26).[9] Indeed, it did perish and wear out. As Watts comments further:

“What are the important things the Vision of Isaiah has said? YHWH’s new age needed a symbol, a crown, a gathering place. Jerusalem became that place. God’s people needed a sign that God was alive and in charge, that he was still present on the earth where people could meet with him. Jerusalem became that sign. The world needed a forum where persons of every race could be assured of a place in God’s plan. Jerusalem is that place. Jerusalem yields her treasures of meaning and worship still, not to the mighty of the earth but to ‘the meek and mild who tremble at his word.’ The destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E. brought that era to a close.”[10]

This is exactly what the book of Revelation tells us. John says that the former (protos) heavens and earth would be “passed away” when the “new heavens and earth” were ushered in by Jesus Christ (Rev. 21:1). The new heavens and earth envisioned by Isaiah had grown old according to the writer of Hebrews (8:13) and it perished in AD 70 when the Romans destroyed the city and temple that the returning exiles had built and King Herod had remodeled.

<https://burrosofberea.com/isaiahs-new-heavens-and-new-earth-part-9-a-concluding-argument-a-sign-and-a-promise/>

**Isaiah 66:23** From new moon to new moon, and from Sabbath to Sabbath, all flesh shall come to worship before me, declares the LORD.

### **Sabbaths and New Moons (Isa. 66:23)**

Verse 23 opens with a clear reference to the Jewish Sabbath: "From new moon to new moon, and from Sabbath to Sabbath." This is highly indicative of the Old Testament rituals in particular.[11] In fact, the reference to the new moon and the Sabbath points directly back to Isaiah's opening statement, where the Israelites had become so complacent about their worship service that it had ceased to achieve its true meaning.

"Do not go on bringing your worthless offerings, Incense is an abomination to Me. New moon and Sabbath, the proclamation of an assembly — I cannot endure wrongdoing and the festive assembly. I hate your new moon festivals and your appointed feasts, They have become a burden to Me; I am tired of bearing them" (Isa. 1:13-14).

The purpose of punishment through exile was to bring them back into a true relationship with God and reestablish order. The new moon festivals and the Sabbath would once again be meaningful. And this reflects, once again, exactly what happened with the restoration. Once the rebuilding was complete, the priests read from the Law of Moses and as a result the people drafted a document with the "new covenant" with God (Neh. 9:38). To further dedicate themselves, they wholeheartedly committed themselves to, among other things, a proper reverence in the new moon festivals and the Sabbaths (Neh. 10:32-33). This included the "priests and Levites" but also included "the rest of the people" as well (Neh. 10:28), thus reflecting a fulfillment of Isa. 66:21-23.

Contrastingly, the reference to the "new moon" only occurs once in the New Testament – in Colossians 2:16-17, where the new moon festivals and the Sabbaths were no longer the measure of true worship but "only a shadow of what is to come" where the "substance belongs to Christ."

### **All Flesh**

Isa. 66:23 ends with the phrase " 'All mankind [flesh] will come to bow down before Me,' says the Lord." This would again remind Isaiah's audience of what he had been saying all along. In chapter 40, Isaiah proclaims the end of the exile:

"Comfort, comfort My people," says your God. "Speak kindly to Jerusalem; And call out to her, that her warfare has ended, That her guilt has been removed, That she has received of the Lord's hand Double for all her sins" (Isa. 40:1-2).

The statement "her guilt has been removed" literally reads "her iniquity has been pardoned" and refers to a payment for wrongdoing. The same word *ratsah*[12] is

used in Lev. 26:41-43 to refer to payment and atonement.

When the promise of restoration is fully realized, the punishment will have been served and the guilt for their idolatry will have been fully atoned.[13] They will have been doubly punished. The time for comfort will have come. And what is the result of this removal of guilt with the restoration?

The voice of one calling out, "Clear the way for the Lord in the wilderness; Make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Let every valley be lifted up, And every mountain and hill be made low; And let the uneven ground become a plain, And the rugged terrain a broad valley; Then the glory [kabowd] of the Lord will be revealed, And all flesh will see it together; For the mouth of the Lord has spoken." [Isa. 40:3-5]

The phrase "all flesh" in Isa. 40:5 is the same phrase (al ba-sar) as in Isa. 66:23. The entire Persian empire would see the glory (kabowd) of the Lord (Isa. 40:5) – just as stated in Isaiah 66:18. And people from all provinces recognized the Lord and began worshipping him.

Once again, Isaiah, in his closing summary, simply repeats what he had previously prophesied.

## **Recap**

In his closing argument in this divine courtroom drama, Isaiah reaffirms themes introduced earlier. Isaiah's repeated references serve to reinforce, not reinvent, his earlier prophetic themes.

Vindication for the faithful culminates in a vision of restored worship, a global witness and an enduring legacy for those loyal to the Lord. Isaiah 66:18–23 is firmly rooted in the post-exilic period with an emphasis on the multinational scope of God's glory being declared during that period.

The "sign" placed among the nations in Isaiah 66:19 is the same "sign" placed among the nations in Isaiah 55:13–56:3-6. It is Esther, God's Myrtle Tree, whose actions turned the tables on Haman and sparked widespread conversion across the Persian Empire (compare Isaiah 56:6 and Esther 8:17) and continued clear into the time of Malachi (Mal. 1:11, 14).

The return of the exiles, riding on literal animals, the reestablishment of priests and Levites, and a renewed observance of the new moons and Sabbaths, likewise serve as historical fulfillments of Isaiah's prophecy in the post-exilic period. The enduring legacy of the faithful that is tied to this redemptive reordering is once again called a "new heavens and a new earth" (Isa. 66:22; cf. 65:17). In other words, it was a new redemptive order.

The redemptive order of that era served its purpose until the close of that era when the final redemptive order brought about through the work of Jesus Christ was set in motion. This being the case, the final redemptive order (which believers today are a part of) should eclipse the previous redemptive order of Isaiah 65-66 which has now “passed away” (Rev. 21:1) as Jesus continues to make all things new (Rev. 21:5).

### **Takeaways for Believers Today:**

As God honored the faithfulness of the faithful during the post-exilic period, we should also strive to be faithful today if we expect to see His blessing in and on our own lives. As with Esther, hope and deliverance come when we place our hope in Him and look to Him for deliverance. Then, we become the salt and light that He’s called us to be as His light shines through us and is seen by those surrounding us (Matt. 5:13-16; 2 Pt. 1:19). As the nations and peoples from across the Persian Empire saw God’s glory and joined in His worship, let’s strive so that God’s glory can be seen in us and the people of our day join us in worshipping Him. The redemptive order of the past day (Isa. 65-66) serves as a model of the redemptive order of our day (Rev. 21-22) and serves as hope to the lost that they also can live in the blessings of a new day – as they put their faith and trust in Him.

<https://burrosofberea.com/isaiahs-new-heavens-and-new-earth-part-9-a-concluding-argument-a-sign-and-a-promise/>

**Jeremiah 4:6** Raise a standard toward Zion, flee for safety, stay not, for I bring disaster from the north, and great destruction.

When prophesying about the Babylonian invasion, Jeremiah 4:6 says: “I am bringing evil from the north, with great destruction” (cf. Jer. 1:13-15; 3:18; 6:1, 22; 10:22, Zech. 2:6-7). But Babylon was to the east of Jerusalem, not the north. How could an invasion from the east have been described as God “bringing evil from the north?”

As most commentators recognize, “the north” doesn’t typically refer to the origin of Israel’s attackers but to the trajectory of their attack. Logistically, it made sense for Nebuchadnezzar to avoid routing his armies through a vast desert. Instead, they went up and around it and then descended upon Jerusalem from the north.

<https://burrosofberea.com/gog-and-magog-part-9-the-direction-of-the-attack/>

**Jeremiah 4:23** I looked on the earth, and behold, it was without form and void; and to the heavens, and they had no light.

### **The De-Creation Motif**

This reversal of creation motif, commonly called “de-creation,”[24] is employed

extensively throughout the pages of Scripture. Genesis 1-2 is the template. And this makes perfect sense. In the original creation, God brought order out of chaos. Sin is a return to chaos and, as such, bad things will follow. Consequently, the de-creation language is a recurring theme in the prophets.

In this context, Jeremiah returns to the pre-creation chaos of Genesis 1 to describe their return to sin: (Jeremiah 4:22-26)

Notice the similarity of language with Zephaniah 1:2-3. Being contemporaries, each spoke to the same issue, i.e., the apostasy of Judah in their own day. Jeremiah chastised "the prophets" who "prophesied by Baal" (Jer. 2:8), and Zephaniah said the purpose of the coming judgment was to "cut off the remnant of Baal" from Jerusalem (Zeph. 1:4). Both prophets shared the same time, spoke to the same situation, and made use of the same language of de-creation.

**Zephaniah 1:2** "I will utterly sweep away everything from the face of the earth," declares the LORD.

**Zephaniah 1:3** "I will sweep away man and beast; I will sweep away the birds of the heavens and the fish of the sea, and the rubble with the wicked. I will cut off mankind from the face of the earth," declares the LORD.

<https://burrosofberea.com/zephaniah-at-worlds-end-a-modern-misunderstanding-of-an-ancient-motif/>

**Jeremiah 5:6** Therefore a lion from the forest shall strike them down; a wolf from the desert shall devastate them. A leopard is watching their cities; everyone who goes out of them shall be torn in pieces, because their transgressions are many, their apostasies are great.

## **The Animal Imagery**

The prophet Jeremiah describes Israel's enemies in language very similar to Isaiah 11:1-10, only the animals aren't peaceful in Jeremiah's account,

Later in the chapter, Jeremiah makes it clear that the vicious animals, who will tear His people to pieces, represent the nation that He is going to use to bring about His judgment upon them (i.e., Babylon):

"Behold, I am bringing a nation against you from far away, O house of Israel," declares the Lord. "It is an enduring nation, It is an ancient nation, A nation whose language you do not know, Nor can you understand what they say" (Jer. 5:15).

The contrast between Jeremiah's domineering dangers and Isaiah's docile description poetically captures the difference between judgment and restoration. <https://burrosofberea.com/isaiah-11-and-the-mandela-effect-how-todays->

[prophecy-pundits-see-things-that-arent-there/](#)

**Jeremiah 17:13** O LORD, the hope of Israel, all who forsake you shall be put to shame; those who turn away from you shall be written in the earth, for they have forsaken the LORD, the fountain of living water.

While Isaiah provides a general backdrop for Jesus' quotation, Jeremiah and Zechariah are more specific in that they mention not only "water," but more precisely, "living water." With that said, Zechariah 14:8 alone contains the last essential component in Jesus' statement that is missing in even the Jeremiah text.

**Zechariah 14:8** 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.

**Zechariah 14:9** And the LORD shall be King over all the earth. In that day it shall be "The LORD *is* one," And His name one.

**See the Comments on John 7:38 and Zechariah 14:8.**

<https://burrosofberea.com/zechariah-14-part-6-zechariah-146-8/>

**Jeremiah 31:15** Thus says the LORD: "A voice is heard in Ramah, lamentation and bitter weeping. Rachel is weeping for her children; she refuses to be comforted for her children, because they are no more."

Ramah was "the place where Nebuzara-dan collected all the Jews in chains, previous to their removal to Babylon (Jer 40:1)."[17] It was the "deportation point for the second exile on the road north from Jerusalem to Babylon." [18] The rhetorical Rachel (representing the mother of Israel and Judah, just as Jacob was their father in Isaiah 65:9) is weeping because her children, who were taken to Ramah, "are no more." The fact that the Babylonians killed Judean children (a tactic of warfare at the time) is evident in Isaiah 47. In Isaiah 47:3, God says that he will enact *na'qam* against the "daughter of Babylon" (cf. Isa. 47:1). Usually translated as "vengeance," the full force of the word conveys the idea of "restoring justice" by bringing "consequences in the form of proportionate evil upon those who enacted them." [19] In other words, there is a sense that the punishment would follow in a similar manner to the crime that was committed – let the punishment fit the crime (to borrow a line from the music of Gilbert and Sullivan's operetta *The Mikado*). This being the case, part of Babylon's daughter's punishment would be that she would incur "loss of children and widowhood" (Isa. 47:9). This implies that the Babylonians did in fact kill Jewish children during the deportation process as they were traversed through Ramah on their way to Babylon, hence Rachel's weeping for the loss of her children in that place.

Isaiah and Jeremiah, therefore, are both tracking on the same theme and, as

such, the historical circumstances match. Upon the deportation, Rachel's children would either be killed or they'd live out the rest of their lives in the fields of Babylon rather than the streets of their homeland. Neither outcome was desirable, and she'd be laboring "in vain" and bearing her children "for calamity" (Isa. 65:23). Conversely, both prophets also look forward in hope to the restoration after the return from exile when such would no longer be the case. Jeremiah promises that Rachel's children "shall return to their own territory" (Jer. 31:17) and Isaiah assures his readers that the time will come when the weeping and crying will "no longer be heard" (Isa. 65:19).

<https://burrosofberea.com/isaiahs-new-heavens-and-new-earth-part-1-former-things-and-new-things/>

**Jeremiah 31:35** Thus says the LORD, who gives the sun for light by day and the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar— the LORD of hosts is his name:

**Jeremiah 31:36** "If this fixed order departs from before me, declares the LORD, then shall the offspring of Israel cease from being a nation before me forever."

Andrew R. Angel succinctly summarizes Jeremiah's words: "... if the created order were ever to cease, then Israel would cease to be a nation." [2] Basically, Jeremiah is saying: if day turns into night, and night turns into day, this is an omen to ethnic Israel that God's unique relationship with them was over.

**Zechariah 14:6** On that day there shall be no light, cold, or frost.

**Zechariah 14:7** And there shall be a unique day, which is known to the LORD, neither day nor night, but at evening time there shall be light.

When reading these verses (Zechariah 14:6-7), we're immediately reminded of the words of another Old Testament prophet, Jeremiah, who prophesied roughly 100 years prior to Zechariah. [1] Jeremiah explains exactly what this role reversal between day and night meant for Old Covenant Israel.

Zechariah is tracking on the same theme as the former prophet and letting his readers know that Jeremiah's warning will in fact become a reality.

<https://burrosofberea.com/zechariah-14-part-6-zechariah-146-8/>

**Jeremiah 33:20** "Thus says the LORD: If you can break my covenant with the day and my covenant with the night, so that day and night will not come at their appointed time,

Andrew R. Angel succinctly summarizes Jeremiah's words: "... if the created order were ever to cease, then Israel would cease to be a nation." [2] Basically, Jeremiah is saying: if day turns into night, and night turns into day, this is an omen to ethnic Israel that God's unique relationship with them was over.

**Zechariah 14:6** On that day there shall be no light, cold, or frost.

**Zechariah 14:7** And there shall be a unique day, which is known to the LORD, neither day nor night, but at evening time there shall be light.

When reading these verses (Zechariah 14:6-7), we're immediately reminded of the words of another Old Testament prophet, Jeremiah, who prophesied roughly 100 years prior to Zechariah.[1] Jeremiah explains exactly what this role reversal between day and night meant for Old Covenant Israel.

Zechariah is tracking on the same theme as the former prophet and letting his readers know that Jeremiah's warning will in fact become a reality.

<https://burrosofberea.com/zechariah-14-part-6-zechariah-146-8/>

**Jeremiah 34:22** Behold, I will command, declares the LORD, and will bring them back to this city. And they will fight against it and take it and burn it with fire. I will make the cities of Judah a desolation without inhabitant."

This is the **only time in history** when it could be said that Jerusalem was completely and totally abandoned and forsaken. We learn from Jeremiah that Nebuchadnezzar chose to leave a remnant (the poorest of the land) behind in Judah (Jer. 39:10), and Jeremiah subsequently chose to remain behind with them (Jer. 40:1-5). Then, in Jeremiah chapters 42-44, Jeremiah relates how even that remnant didn't want to stay in the land but flee to Egypt – against Jeremiah's advice (Jer. 44:11-14). The remnant tells Jeremiah pointblank:

"Then all the men who were aware that their wives were burning sacrifices to other gods, along with all the women who were standing by, as a large assembly, including all the people who were living in Pathros in the land of Egypt, responded to Jeremiah, saying, 'As for the message that you have spoken to us in the name of the Lord, we are not going to listen to you! But rather we will certainly carry out every word that has proceeded from our mouths, by burning sacrifices to the queen of heaven and pouring out drink offerings to her, just as we ourselves, our forefathers, our kings and our princes did in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem; for then we had plenty of food and were well off and saw no misfortune' (Jer. 44:15-17).

So, even the remnant left behind by Nebuchadnezzar didn't want to stay behind. Their fellow citizens were taken to Babylon, and they left for Egypt. They left, specifically, to worship false gods and avoid further misfortune. The reference to "misfortune" is the Hebrew word *ra'* and literally means "trouble". The idea that they "saw no trouble" is reminiscent of the false gods of Gad ("fortune") and Meni ("destiny"), with whom the apostates were aligning themselves. Along with "the queen of heaven," God's people were turning to other gods in hopes of good fortune and having "plenty of food" (Jer. 44:17).

<https://burrosofberea.com/isaiahs-new-heavens-and-new-earth-part-2-old->

[names-and-new-names/](https://burrosofberea.com/isaiahs-new-heavens-and-new-earth-part-2-old-names-and-new-names/)

**Jeremiah 44:12** I will take the remnant of Judah who have set their faces to come to the land of Egypt to live, and they shall all be consumed. In the land of Egypt they shall fall; by the sword and by famine they shall be consumed. From the least to the greatest, they shall die by the sword and by famine, and they shall become an oath, a horror, a curse, and a taunt.

### **Cursed Memories and Forgotten Troubles**

As for the previous rebellious generations, Isaiah says they would be a “curse” to God’s new generation of “chosen ones” (Isa. 65:15a) when the “former troubles are forgotten” (Isa. 65:16). Similarly, Jeremiah tells the apostate generation of his time:

“...they will fall by the sword and meet their end by famine. Both small and great will die by the sword and famine; and they will become a curse, an object of horror, an imprecation and a reproach” (Jeremiah 44:12).[13]

The contrasts couldn’t be greater, and the context couldn’t be clearer. The grim future that Isaiah foresaw in his day became the harsh reality of Jeremiah’s day. The bright future of a new day that both prophets envisioned became a reality in the restoration.

The hunger of the cursed generations is replaced with the feasting of the new generation. A vivid picture of this can be seen in the reinstitution of the Passover (Ezra 6:19-12) and the new institution of Purim (Esth. 9:25-29). The rebellion of the cursed generations is replaced by the righteousness of the new generation. This is likewise pictured in the contrite prayers of confession in Ezra 9 and Nehemiah 9. The names of the false gods of the cursed generations are replaced with the name of the one, true God when the Generation of the Restoration is given its “new name.”

<https://burrosofberea.com/isaiahs-new-heavens-and-new-earth-part-2-old-names-and-new-names/>

**Jeremiah 44:17** But we will do everything that we have vowed, make offerings to the queen of heaven and pour out drink offerings to her, as we did, both we and our fathers, our kings and our officials, in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem. For then we had plenty of food, and prospered, and saw no disaster.

Even the remnant left behind by Nebuchadnezzar didn’t want to stay behind. Their fellow citizens were taken to Babylon, and they left for Egypt. They left, specifically, to worship false gods and avoid further misfortune. The reference to “misfortune” is the Hebrew word *ra’* and literally means “trouble”. The idea that they “saw no trouble” is reminiscent of the false gods of Gad (“fortune”) and Meni

("destiny"), with whom the apostates were aligning themselves. Along with "the queen of heaven," God's people were turning to other gods in hopes of good fortune and having "plenty of food" (Jer. 44:17).

<https://burrosofberea.com/isaiahs-new-heavens-and-new-earth-part-2-old-names-and-new-names/>

**Jeremiah 47:1** The word of the LORD that came to Jeremiah the prophet concerning the Philistines, before Pharaoh struck down Gaza.

**Jeremiah 47:2** "Thus says the LORD: Behold, waters are rising out of the north, and shall become an overflowing torrent; they shall overflow the land and all that fills it, the city and those who dwell in it. Men shall cry out, and every inhabitant of the land shall wail.

### **Gaza in Zephaniah and Jeremiah**

Gaza makes its next appearance, by way of prophetic oracle, in the writings of Zephaniah (640 – 609 BC)[10] and Jeremiah (627-587 BC).[11] Being contemporaries in the same timeframe in biblical history, these two prophets overlap historically. This being the case, Zephaniah's Gaza prophecy was Jeremiah's Gaza prophecy and vice versa.[12]

With that said, Gaza is listed among the nations that will stagger from the cup of the Lord's hand and go mad because of the sword being sent upon them in Jeremiah 25:15-19. Then, in Jeremiah 47:2, the prophet focuses on Gaza with real-time, chronological precision:

Jeremiah's real-time reference to the headlines of his day pinpoints exactly when these events were under way. By this time, Gaza was under Babylonian control. But things were about to change. After bouncing back from a resounding Egyptian defeat by Babylon in 605 BC (the famous Battle of Carchemish), Pharaoh Neco[13] was able to take Gaza in 601 BC – forcing the Babylonians to withdraw back to their homeland.[14]

Without a historical judgment upon Gaza, in real time and in their own time, Jeremiah 47:2 would have been meaningless in the original audience's time. If Gaza's demise (in the time of Zephaniah and Jeremiah) awaited the current Israel-Hamas crisis, Jeremiah's time marker makes zero sense. The bottom line? We can't ignore real-time fulfillment for the sake of the prophecy puppets' hopes and dreams of modern-time fulfillment.

<https://burrosofberea.com/zephaniah-24-and-the-gaza-prophecies-events-occurred-in-real-time/>

**Jeremiah 48:47** Yet I will restore the fortunes of Moab in the latter days, declares the LORD." Thus far is the judgment on Moab.

There is some question as to whether or not "fortunes" is the best translation of

the Hebrew word shevit in this instance. Your Bible may even contain a marginal note indicating that "captivity" is possibly a better rendering.[6] Either way, whether Jeremiah is speaking of the restoration or captivity of Moab, the point here is that this nation no longer exists. The Moabites "disappeared from history" after being "conquered by the Babylonians in 582 BC." [7]

While the pop-prophecy pundits of our day continue to claim that expressions such as "the latter days" and "the last days" refer to "the end of the world" and "describe still future events," [8] more scholarly resources indicate otherwise. Scholars recognize that the Biblical usage of such expressions means that these are not technical terms for the end of world history.

<https://burrosofberea.com/gog-and-magog-part-5-the-time-of-the-attack/>

**Ezekiel 8:3** He put out the form of a hand and took me by a lock of my head, and the Spirit lifted me up between earth and heaven and brought me in visions of God to Jerusalem, to the entrance of the gateway of the inner court that faces north, where was the seat of the image of jealousy, which provokes to jealousy.

### **The Evil Influence of the North**

Beyond Israel's northern border lay places like Bashan, Sidon, Tyre, and Ugarit. "The worship of Baal was central in these places," writes Michael Heiser, and the "fact that the center of Baal worship was just across the border was a contributing factor in the apostasy of the Northern Kingdom of Israel." [15]

The spiritual adultery stemming from the influence of the northern lands is evident in Ezekiel chapter 8. [16] In a vision, Ezekiel is lifted "by the Spirit" and taken "to Jerusalem, to the entrance of the gateway of the inner court that faces north" (Ezek. 8:3). Ezekiel is told to lift his eyes toward the north, and he sees an "idol of jealousy" at the northern gate (Ezek. 8:5). Then the Lord says to Ezekiel, "Son of man, do you see what they are doing, the great abominations that the house of Israel are committing here, to drive me far from my sanctuary? But you will see still greater abominations" (Ezek. 8:6). These greater abominations included "women weeping for Tamuz" at the "north gate of the house of the Lord" (Ez. 8:14). Because of these and other abominations, the Lord declares: "I will act in wrath. My eye will not spare, nor will I have pity. And though they cry in my ears with a loud voice, I will not hear them" (Ezek. 8:18).

<https://burrosofberea.com/zechariah-14-part-4-the-splitting-mountain/>

**Ezekiel 11:17** Therefore say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: I will gather you from the peoples and assemble you out of the countries where you have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel.'

**Ezekiel 11:18** And when they come there, they will remove from it all its detestable things and all its abominations.

**Ezekiel 11:19** And I will give them one heart, and a new spirit I will put within

them. I will remove the heart of stone from their flesh and give them a heart of flesh,

**Ezekiel 11:20** that they may walk in my statutes and keep my rules and obey them. And they shall be my people, and I will be their God.

The promise of restoration and renewal is specifically made to Ezekiel and his "brothers," his "relatives," and his "fellow exiles" (Ezek. 11:15). The recipients of the promise are as specific as the promise itself.

The context is clear as day and the addressees are the Israel of yesterday. Equally clear are the promises that are made – he will give them (the returning exiles) a new heart and a new spirit (verse 19).

As Daniel Block points out, in these verses, "Yahweh addresses the exiles directly,"[11] and "highlights the fact that the exiles' deliverance will involve much more than merely reversing the effects of the judgment," but will include "the establishment of an entirely new order." [12] Block cleverly observes that Ezekiel describes "the renewal in terms of a heart transplant." [13] Indeed, this is exactly what the exiles needed, as they were sent into exile specifically because they had "set up idols in their hearts" (Ezek. 14:3), and "their heart continually went after idols" (Ezek. 20:16).

This renewal plays out on the pages of Scripture itself. The newness of the returnees' spirit is expressed by their wholehearted obedience through the restoration covenant,[14] as they take on themselves "a curse and an oath to walk in God's law, which was given through Moses, God's servant, and to keep and to observe all the commandments of God our Lord and His ordinances and His statutes" (Neh. 10:29).

The exile cured Israel's heart problem and remedied her idolatry problem.[15] Chapter 37 has Ezekiel's Vision of the Valley of Dry Bones, where the formerly dead nation comes to life and all Israel is reunited back in their own land. After the nation was reborn in a day[16] through Cyrus's decree (Ezra 1:1-7), Ezra records that "all Israel" returned to their own "cities" (Ezra 2:70), and "the sons of Israel" were "gathered together as one man" (Ezra 3:1). With a renewed heart and a restored spirit, the exiles had returned to their land and renewed their covenant with the Lord – meeting every condition for the fulfillment of Ezekiel 36–37.

The massive battle described in Ezekiel 38–39 follows logically after chapters 36–37, and the battle in Esther fits the bill, coming historically after the return from exile.

But some Futurists insist that applying these chapters "to some past event or the book of Esther" is "absolutely wrong, wrong, wrong." [17] Why? Because Ezekiel 38:11 describes Gog's attack as coming when Israel is "living without walls, bars,

or gates.”[18] The Futurists say that this points to a future “time of world peace” – a false calm before the final storm of 1 Thessalonians 5.[19] The irony? That description fits Esther’s day precisely – the very time of the attack – and Esther’s own book confirms it.

<https://burrosofberea.com/gog-and-magogin-it-again-the-prophecy-pundits-remix-an-old-track/>

**Ezekiel 21:3** and say to the land of Israel, Thus says the LORD: Behold, I am against you and will draw my sword from its sheath and will cut off from you both righteous and wicked.

## **God Uses the Nations to Judge His People**

The theme of God drawing His sword against His own people is repeated several times in the verses that follow (Ez. 21:4-5, 9-14). Then, in verse 19, it is revealed that this would be accomplished through “the sword of the king of Babylon” (Ez. 21:19). In other words, the punishment of God’s people came through the hands of the armies of Babylon.

<https://burrosofberea.com/zechariah-14-part-3-the-day-of-battle-zechariah-143/>

**Ezekiel 38:1** The word of the LORD came to me:

Key details of Ezekiel 38-39 dovetail with the book of Esther. Ezekiel had just recorded his vision of the Valley of Dry Bones (chapter 37), which speaks of the return from exile and restoration in the land. The attack of Gog, from the land of Magog, comes at a time after this when Israel is “restored from the sword” and its “inhabitants have been gathered from many nations to the mountains of Israel which had been a continual waste; but its people were brought out from the nations, and they were living securely, all of them” (Ezek. 38:8). There really couldn’t be a more apt description of Israel during the time of Esther than what Ezekiel describes here.

<https://burrosofberea.com/gog-and-magog-part-1-from-saul-and-agag-to-mordecai-and-haman/>

**Ezekiel 38:2** “Son of man, set your face toward Gog, of the land of Magog, the chief prince of Meshech and Tubal, and prophesy against him

In Ezekiel 38:2, Gog is called the “chief (Rosh) prince of Meshech and Tubal.” These place names stretch all the way back to the Table of Nations (Gen. 10:2), and they had both become part of the growing Persian Empire by the time Ezekiel wrote.[7] The remaining five nations listed as Gog’s allies were also part of the Persian Empire of his day (i.e., Persia, Cush, Put, Gommer, and Beth-Togarmah, in Ezekiel 38:5-6).[8] The figure whom Ezekiel designates as Gog, therefore, was the “chief prince” of those Persian nations.

Ezekiel wrote while Babylon was still the major power player in the ancient world.

That was soon going to change, however. In 539 BC, the Persian Empire would overtake Babylon, and the Persian King would free the Jewish exiles and allow them to return to their homeland. Ezekiel 37 and the Valley of Dry Bones coming to life is about this rebirth of the Jewish nation. The following two chapters describe what was coming up next on the timeline.

In chapters 38-39, Ezekiel is telling his readers not to get too excited too fast. Another attack was on the horizon from the next empire to rise to power. It would fail, but it was on the way nonetheless, and it would be led by the chief prince of those Persian nations. When we allow Scripture to interpret Scripture, it's not terribly difficult to know exactly who this chief prince was.

<https://burrosofberea.com/haman-hamas-and-the-headlines-getting-gog-magog-wrongagain/>

## **Of the Land of Magog**

Ezekiel tells us that the antagonist, Gog, is "of the land of Magog. By the phrase, "the land of Magog," Ezekiel wasn't expecting his readers to peer into the future and imagine a nation (Russia) that didn't even exist yet at the time of writing. Rather, he was expecting them to reach into the past and recall the Table of Nations in Genesis 10. This is the list of the 70 nations that descended from Noah's three sons Japheth, Ham, and Seth. There are 14 descendants of Japheth (Gen. 10:2-5), 30 descendants of Ham (Gen. 10:6-19), and 26 descendants of Shem (Gen. 10:20-29). Notice that Magog is in that first grouping of nations, among the direct descendants of Japheth, as well as Meshech and Tubal – Gog's allies in Ezekiel 38:2.

Ezekiel is taking his readers all the way back to the very first nations after the flood and informing us that Gog's lineage can be traced here. Accordingly, Numbers 24:20 tells us that Amalek was "the first of the nations." [13] Gog's identity doesn't lay in the near-future but in the far-distant past.

**Numbers 24:20** Then he looked on Amalek, and he took up his oracle and said: "Amalek *was* first among the nations, But *shall be* last until he perishes."

Making the connection with Haman the Agagite in the book of Esther, Phil Kayser Explains: "An Agagite is "any leader of Amalek (according to the Jewish Encyclopedia). Therefore," says Kayser, "Haman represents the ancient spiritual struggle between Amalek and Israel. And the Amalekites were descendants of Magog, the son of Japheth." [14]

<https://burrosofberea.com/gog-and-magog-part-1-from-saul-and-agag-to-mordecai-and-haman/>

"Rosh" is a common Hebrew word used hundreds of times in the Old Testament, meaning: "chief," "head," "beginning," or "source." [11] Again, the word functions as an adjective and not a noun and or a place. The Jews still use it this way

today. For example, "Rosh Hashanah marks the beginning of the Jewish New Year." [12] Benjamin Netanyahu's title in Hebrew is Rosh HaMemshala, literally: "head of the government." [13] So, "Rosh" is not "Russia," and all that Ezekiel 38:2 means is simply that Gog is being identified as the "chief prince" of Meshech and Tubal – two place/people names from the Table of nations, which had both become part of the growing Persian Empire by the time Ezekiel wrote. [14]

## **Haman the Chief Prince**

And this fits the profile of Israel's enemy Haman, in the book of Esther, precisely. As Josh Peterson writes: "Ezekiel 38:2 refers to Gog as 'the chief prince.' This means Gog is not the actual king of an empire or kingdom, but rather is a high-ranking official. This is a fitting description for Haman, who was not the king of Persia, but rather was a high-ranking official." [15]

And the book of Esther bears this out:

"After these events, King Ahasuerus promoted Haman, the Agagite, and advanced him and established his authority over all the princes who were with him" (Esther 3:1-2).

"Then Haman recounted the glory of his riches, and the number of his sons, and every instance where the king had magnified him, and how he had promoted him above all the princes and servants of the king" (Esther 5:12).

If Haman was "over all the princes" and "above all the princes," in the Persian Empire, then he was in fact the "chief prince," [16] and this matches Ezekiel's description of Gog perfectly.

<https://burrosofberea.com/gog-and-magog-part-2-the-chief-prince-of-meshech-and-tubal/>

**Ezekiel 38:3** and say, Thus says the Lord GOD: Behold, I am against you, O Gog, chief prince of Meshech and Tubal.

Haman the Agagite, from the book of Esther, is the prime candidate in identifying Ezekiel's Gog of the Land of Magog. [1] The fact that Haman was the chief prince of the nations under the Persian Empire only serves to reinforce this connection. [2] These observations point us to the distant past, rather than the near future, to find the prophecy's fulfillment.

<https://burrosofberea.com/gog-and-magog-part-3-an-ancient-battle-with-ancient-weapons/>

**Ezekiel 38:4** And I will turn you about and put hooks into your jaws, and I will bring you out, and all your army, horses and horsemen, all of them clothed in full armor, a great host, all of them with buckler and shield, wielding swords.

Ezekiel describes Gog's army using the following terms: "horses and horsemen, and all of them splendidly attired, a great company with buckler and shield, and all of them wielding swords" (Ezekiel 38:4b). And we can add to this the "bows and arrows" and "war clubs and spears" of Ezekiel 39:9. These are the means and methods of their warfare. As Gary DeMar points out, Ezekiel is describing "an ancient battle fought with ancient weapons." [3] As such, this perfectly fits the battle that was fought at the time of Esther:

"The Jews struck all their enemies with the sword, killing and destroying them, and did as they pleased to those who hated them" (Esther 9:5).

A truly Biblical hermeneutic focuses on the historical context and the original audience. A truly Biblical hermeneutic does not seek to manipulate the text to fit a preconceived narrative. A truly Biblical hermeneutic follows the axiom that Scripture interprets Scripture. This being so, the ancient battle that Ezekiel describes comports with the ancient battle that was fought in Esther. And the main antagonist in both books is the same person – the chief prince of the Persian nations in Esther's world.

<https://burrosofberea.com/gog-and-magog-part-3-an-ancient-battle-with-ancient-weapons/>

**Ezekiel 38:5** Persia, Cush, and Put are with them, all of them with shield and helmet;

In verses 5-7, Ezekiel identifies Gog's allies – Persia, Cush, Put, Gomer, Beth-Togarmah. Fittingly, the nations that fought with these ancient weapons were ancient nations. It only makes sense. Ezekiel's audience didn't need to look 2600 years into the future to understand what or who he was talking about. But we need to look 2600 years into the past to understand it.

Ezekiel's list of nations in verses 5-6 is further evidence that Rosh is not a place name or distinct nation. In these verses, we have five nations plus the other two previously mentioned (Meshech and Tubal), for a total of seven nations aligning themselves with Gog. If Rosh was also a nation (rather than an adjective modifying the noun prince), it would insert an eighth nation into the text and run completely counter to Ezekiel's literary style.

<https://burrosofberea.com/gog-and-magog-part-4-gogs-allies-and-esthers-enemies/>

**Ezekiel 38:6** Gomer and all his hordes; Beth-togarmah from the uttermost parts of the north with all his hordes—many peoples are with you.

The nations mentioned by Ezekiel (Ezekiel 38:5-6) were all part of the Persian Empire of his day, and the attack in Esther comes from the 127 provinces of the Persian Empire of her day (Esther 8:1, 9). As James Jordan writes: "...the explicit idea that the Jews were attacked by people from all the provinces of Persia is in

both passages.”[3] In fact, Ezekiel and Esther both specifically mention Ethiopia (Cush) and Persia (Ezek. 38:5; Esth. 1:1, 3). The other nations Ezekiel mentions would have fallen within the boundaries of the Persian Empire of Esther’s day which “extended from India to Cush, 127 provinces” in all (Esth. 8:9).

<https://burrosofberea.com/gog-magogrussia-and-the-rapture/>

**Ezekiel 38:7** “Be ready and keep ready, you and all your hosts that are assembled about you, and be a guard for them.

**Ezekiel 38:8** After many days you will be mustered. In the latter years you will go against the land that is restored from war, the land whose people were gathered from many peoples upon the mountains of Israel, which had been a continual waste. Its people were brought out from the peoples and now dwell securely, all of them.

Verse 8 is a time text of sorts – telling us when this attack of Gog would come: “After many days, you will be summoned: in the latter years, you will come into the land that is restored from the sword...” (Ezekiel 38:8). And verse 16 uses the phrase “the last days” (NASB) or “latter days” (ESV), or “end of days” (JPS), depending on which translation you use. Many assume these are technical terms for the end of the world,[2] but such isn’t the case.

### **Ezekiel’s Latter Days = Esther’s Current Days**

According to The Theological dictionary of the Old Testament, in and of themselves, these expressions simply mean “in the after(wards) of days,” “in the following days,” “in the course of time,” “in the future.”[9]

Ezekiel is writing sometime after the Babylonian exile, and the events of the book of Esther take place shortly after the return from exile. This fits the historical context “of the speaker’s perspective.”

### **Dwelling Securely After the Exile**

The text gives us some very specific details regarding this “historical context from the speaker’s perspective” and this “historical phase when the new period of settlement in the land has arrived.” Gog’s attack would come at a time when God’s People are “now dwelling (yashav) securely, all of them” (Ezek. 38:8b). In verse 14, it says of Gog: “On that day, when my people are dwelling securely, will you not know it?” It is a time when the land had been “restored from war” and God’s people were “gathered” back to their homeland which had formerly been a “continual waste” (Ezek. 38:8).

This aptly describes the situation during the time of Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther when God’s People had returned from exile and the restoration had begun. Ezra tells us that all Israel was once again living in their own cities (Ezra 2:70) and the people were gathered together “as one man” (Ezra 3:1). Nehemiah reiterates

this, all the sons of Israel were back home in their own cities (Neh. 7:73), and everyone “lived (yashav) on his own property” (Neh. 11:3). This is the same word that Ezekiel uses in Ezekiel 38:8.

**Nehemiah 11:3** These *are* the heads of the province who dwelt in Jerusalem. (But in the cities of Judah everyone dwelt in his own possession in their cities—Israelites, priests, Levites, Nethinim, and descendants of Solomon's servants.)

The Persians, who had liberated Judah from Babylon, were fully assisting the Jews in the restoration effort (Ezra 1). The Assyrians, who had taken the ten northern tribes captive in 722 BC, were now aiding the Jews in the rebuilding of the temple. Ezra 6:22 says that “the Lord” had “turned the heart of the king of Assyria toward them to encourage them in the work of the house of the God, the God of Israel.”

**Ezra 6:22** And they kept the Feast of Unleavened Bread seven days with joy; for the LORD made them joyful, and turned the heart of the king of Assyria toward them, to strengthen their hands in the work of the house of God, the God of Israel.

To sum it up, their most recent enemy, Babylon, was no longer a threat. Their more ancient enemy, Assyria, was now their ally. And they had the full support of Persia, the empire that was now in power. Things couldn't have been better for God's people at this time. Everyone who wanted to return was back home, and the other nations were no longer a danger to them. All those who chose to return went back to their own land. The Jews' situation, at the time of Ezra, Nehemiah and Esther, perfectly fits the scenario that Ezekiel describes as the time when Gog's attack comes. It is a time when all Jews were truly dwelling “securely” in every sense of the word.

<https://burrosofberea.com/gog-and-magog-part-5-the-time-of-the-attack/>

**Ezekiel 38:9** You will advance, coming on like a storm. You will be like a cloud covering the land, you and all your hordes, and many peoples with you.

### **The Enemy of the Jews becomes the Chief Prince**

In Ezekiel, Israel's antagonist is referred to as “Gog,” and his goal was to come in “like a storm,” “like a cloud covering the land,” against God's People – Israel (Ezek. 38:9; 16), and his aim was to seize spoil and carry off plunder (Ezek. 38:12). In the book of Esther, we're introduced to Haman, who was “the enemy of all the Jews” (Esth. 8:1; cf. 3:10), and who “schemed against them to destroy them” (Esth. 9:24). Haman's objective was to “destroy, kill and annihilate all the Jews, both young and old, women and children, in a single day: the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, and to seize their possessions” (Esth. 3:13). If we were to do criminal profiling here, Haman fits the profile.

As Josh Peterson writes: "Ezekiel 38:2 refers to Gog as 'the chief prince.' This means Gog is not the actual king of an empire or kingdom, but rather is a high-ranking official. This is a fitting description for Haman, who was not the king of Persia, but rather was a high-ranking official." [9] The book of Esther bears this out:

"After these events, King Ahasuerus promoted Haman, the Agagite, and advanced him and established his authority over all the princes who were with him" (Esther 3:1-2).

"Then Haman recounted the glory of his riches, and the number of his sons, and every instance where the king had magnified him, and how he had promoted him above all the princes and servants of the king" (Esther 5:12).

If Haman was "over all the princes" and "above all the princes" in the Persian Empire, then he was in fact the "chief prince," [10] and this coincides perfectly with Ezekiel's description of Gog. Likewise, the time of Haman's attack in Esther coincides perfectly with the time of Gog's attack in Ezekiel.

<https://burrosofberea.com/haman-hamas-and-the-headlines-getting-gog-magog-wrongagain/>

**(NASB) Ezekiel 38:10** 'Thus says the Lord GOD, "It will come about on that day, that thoughts will come into your mind and you will devise an evil plan,

The word translated "plan" (machashavah), [1] in Ezekiel 38:10, is the same word that is used for Haman's evil plan to annihilate the Jews, three times in the book of Esther:

"Then Esther spoke again to the king. She fell at his feet and wept and pleaded with him to avert the evil plan of Haman the Agagite and the plot (machashavah) that he had devised against the Jews" (Esther 8:3).

"Esther rose and stood before the king. And she said, 'If it please the king and if I have found favor in his sight, and if the thing seems right before the king, and I am pleasing in his eyes, let an order be written to revoke the letters devised (machashavah) by Haman the Agagite, the son of Hammedatha, which he wrote to destroy the Jews who are in all the provinces of the king'" (Esther 8:5).

"But when it came before the king, he gave orders in writing that his evil plan (machashavah) that he had devised against the Jews should return on his own head, and that he and his sons should be hanged on the gallows" (Esther 9:25).

Haman's evil plan (in the book of Esther) and Gog's evil plan (in the book of Ezekiel) coincide perfectly.

<https://burrosofberea.com/gog-and-magog-part-6-mordecais-defiant-stand-and->

[gogs-evil-plan/](#)

**Ezekiel 38:11** and say, 'I will go up against the land of unwallled villages. I will fall upon the quiet people who dwell securely, all of them dwelling without walls, and having no bars or gates,'

## **Unwallled Villages**

Ezekiel tells us that Gog would launch his assault at a time when the Jews were living in "unwallled villages" (Ezek. 38:11). We definitely cannot look to today's headlines to find the fulfillment of this verse. Modern-day Israel is protected by a 500-mile-long wall called the "West Bank Barrier." [1] Where we can look to find its fulfillment is in the book of Esther. Esther 9:19 speaks of "the Jews of the rural towns, who live in the unwallled villages." These are the very Jews whom Haman and his armies sought to exterminate. As such, the attack of Gog and his allies (in Ezekiel 38) comes at a time that accurately describes the unique living conditions of the Jews ("unwallled villages"), in the book of Esther, when Haman and his forces set out to annihilate them.

<https://burrosofberea.com/haman-hamas-and-the-headlines-getting-gog-magog-wrongagain/>

The word Ezekiel uses for Gog's "evil plan" (Ezek. 38:10) is used three times for Haman's "evil plan" in the book of Esther (Esth. 8:3, 5; 9:25). In Ezekiel 38:11, the prophet is told that this "evil plan" would be set in motion at a time when Israel was called "the land of unwallled villages." Needless to say, the fulfillment of this verse can't be found in today's headlines. Modern-day Israel is protected by a 500-mile-long wall called the "West Bank Barrier." [1] Where the fulfillment can be found, on the other hand, is once again in the book of Esther.

The Hebrew word for "unwallled villages" (perazah) is only used three times in the entire Old Testament. Obviously, one of these three usages is here in Ezekiel 38:11. Significantly, a second occurrence of this word is in Esther 9:19, which speaks of "the Jews of the rural towns, who live in the unwallled villages (perazah)." These are the very Jews whom Haman and his armies tried to exterminate.

So, the attack of Gog and his allies, in Ezekiel 38, comes at a time that accurately describes the unique living conditions of the Jews ("unwallled villages"), in the book of Esther, when Haman and his forces set out to annihilate them.

## **Jerusalem Inhabited Without Walls**

The third occurrence of this specific word (perazah) is Zechariah 2:4. Zechariah is writing after the return from Babylon, and prior to the rebuilding of the temple. [2] In other words, Zechariah's time coincides with Esther's time. Regarding what was about to unfold during this time, the prophet is told:

"And behold, the angel who was speaking with me was going out, and another angel was coming out to meet him, and said to him, 'Run, speak to that young man, saying, 'Jerusalem will be inhabited without walls (perazah) because of the multitude of men and cattle within it. 'For I,' declares the LORD, 'will be a wall of fire around her, and I will be the glory in her midst'" (Zechariah 2:4-5).

Interpreting Scripture is about connecting dots, and the Bible gives us three dots here to connect with the term "unwalled villages." These dots all link Ezekiel 38, the book of Esther, and the book of Zechariah together. Gog's attack would come when Israel was a "land of unwalled villages." The Jews of Esther's time were living in "unwalled villages." And Zechariah is told that Jerusalem is to be kept "unwalled," for the time being.

<https://burrosofberea.com/gog-and-magog-part-7-gods-myrtle-tree/>

**Ezekiel 38:12** to seize spoil and carry off plunder, to turn your hand against the waste places that are now inhabited, and the people who were gathered from the nations, who have acquired livestock and goods, who dwell at the center of the earth.

In Ezekiel, Israel's antagonist is referred to as "Gog," and his goal was to come in "like a storm," "like a cloud covering the land," against God's People – Israel (Ezek. 38:9; 16), and his aim was to seize spoil and carry off plunder (Ezek. 38:12). In the book of Esther, we're introduced to Haman, who was "the enemy of all the Jews" (Esth. 8:1; cf. 3:10), and who "schemed against them to destroy them" (Esth. 9:24). Haman's objective was to "destroy, kill and annihilate all the Jews, both young and old, women and children, in a single day: the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, and to seize their possessions" (Esth. 3:13). If we were to do criminal profiling here, Haman fits the profile.

In Ezekiel 38:12, Gog's objective in attacking Israel is to "seize spoil" and "carry off plunder." In Esther 3:13, Haman's goal in annihilating the Jews was to "seize their possessions as plunder." In Ezekiel 38:13, Gog comes to "carry away" Israel's "silver and gold." In Esther, Haman promises to pay the Persian soldiers and line the king's pockets with the "silver" he acquires from plundering the Jews (Esth. 3:9, 11; 4:7).

Ezekiel 38:12 also speaks of Gog going after the Israelite's livestock and cattle. In Ezra 1:4, we're told that the Jewish exiles who returned under Cyrus's decree brought with them an enormous amount of "silver and gold," along with "goods and cattle" (see also: Ezra 1:5–11; 2:69; 5:14; 6:5; 7:15–16, 18, 22; Neh. 7:71–72). These are the exact same items mentioned by Ezekiel.[2]

The similarities are impossible to miss. The goal of Gog's attack was greed. Accordingly, Haman's goal wasn't simply to annihilate the Jews. He wanted more. He wanted what they had, and they had a lot.

<https://burrosofberea.com/gog-and-magog-part-6-mordecais-defiant-stand-and-gogs-evil-plan/>

The Jewish exiles who returned under Cyrus's decree brought with them an enormous amount of "silver and gold," along with "goods and cattle" (Ezra 1:5–11; 2:69; 5:14; 6:5; 7:15–16, 18, 22; Neh. 7:71–72).[1] According to Ezekiel, forcibly acquiring these very items from the Jews would be the goal of Gog's attack. This then places the setting of Ezekiel's Gog prophecy during the time of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther (i.e., the Restoration Period).

Verses 12-14 only serve to reinforce this conclusion. Ezekiel says that Gog will turn his "hand against" the "ruins that are now inhabited (yashav)" and "against the people who are gathered (asaph) from the nations" (Ezek. 38:12). When Nebuchadnezzar was done with Jerusalem, it was in fact left in ruins. And the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, which coincide with Esther's time, are all about the Jews returning and rebuilding those ruins.

Accordingly, using the same Hebrew words as Ezekiel 38:12, Ezra says:

"Now the priests, the Levites, some of the people, the singers, the gatekeepers, and the temple servants lived (yashav) in their towns, and all the rest of Israel in their towns" (Ezra 2:70).

"When the seventh month came, and the children of Israel were in the towns, the people gathered (asaph) as one man to Jerusalem" (Ezra 3:1).

Scripture interprets Scripture, and Ezra 2:70 and 3:1 are interpretive keys to unlocking Ezekiel 38:12.

Just to reiterate then: Gog's attack would come at a time when Israel's people were being regathered, her land was being reinhabited, and her ruins were being rebuilt. Again, this was the time of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther. So, the timing and setting of Gog's attack are fairly simple to pinpoint historically.

But the pop-prophecy pundits of our day don't see it this way. While it's a teacher's job to educate, they prefer to speculate. Plain and simple terms, which were relevant to Ezekiel's original audience, become code for things relevant to the pundits' modern audience. As such, a decoder ring is needed to discover the prophecy's true meaning.

### **Seeing Things That Aren't There**

And their decoder ring reveals that Ezekiel 38-39 really has nothing to do with the Restoration Period, and that Gog's attack really has nothing to do with Israel's livestock after all – even though that's what the text says.

Case in point: in his book, *The Middle East Meltdown*, Andy Woods tells the reader that “the Ezekiel 38 and 39 war has to happen sometime between 1948 and Israel’s ultimate restoration during the tribulation period.”[2] He speculates even further, claiming that it will be a time “when the Antichrist comes to power and enters into a peace treaty with national Israel, thereby guaranteeing her protection and survival.”[3]

If we were to list everything mentioned by Woods that is not mentioned by Ezekiel, the list would look like this: 1948, the tribulation period, the Antichrist, and a peace treaty with national Israel. In other words, the list would include everything that Woods mentions – none of which is mentioned by Ezekiel.

Next, the prophecy pundits move from seeing things that aren’t there to changing things that are. It seems that their commitment to a literal interpretation ends when it clashes with their prophetic speculation.

## **Word Games**

Ezekiel says that Gog’s goal was to capture spoil, with a particular eye on Israel’s livestock and cattle. For the prophecy pundits, Ezekiel 38-39 is all about Russia, Russia, Russia. Considering the scenario they propose, we have to ask: does anyone really believe that Russia is going to invade modern-day Israel to take their livestock and steal their cattle?

Well, actually, no they don’t. No one does. Not even the pundits themselves.

Just like “bows and arrows” really means “missiles and rocket launchers,” and “horses and horsemen” really means planes and helicopters, “livestock and cattle” really means “oil and natural gas!”[4] This is the inconsistent approach of so-called consistent literalism.

For example, in a sermon on Ezekiel 38-39, Jerry Falwell got his decoder ring out and let his audience know what this was really all about:

“The purpose of this invasion Ezekiel said, was to take a ‘spoil’— verse 12, chapter 38. If one but removes the first two letters from this word ‘spoil,’ he soon realizes what Russia will really be after—obviously, oil. And that is where we find ourselves today. This, then, is Ezekiel’s prophecy concerning Russia.”[5]

Even if chopping letters off words to make new words were a correct way to do exegesis, however, this still doesn’t help their case. As Golda Meir famously said, “Let me tell you something that we Israelis have against Moses. He took us 40 years through the desert in order to bring us to the one spot in the Middle East that has no oil!”[6] And without that oil, their prophecy plans are foiled.

When we allow the text to retain its context, there’s no need to contort Ezekiel’s

words or distort Ezekiel's meaning. The goal and timing of Gog's attack are as obvious as they are transparent. He comes to seize the Jews' possessions at a time when their possessions are many and their ruins are rebuilt. He comes at a time when they're back in their homeland. He comes at the time of Ezra, Nehemiah, and Esther.

<https://burrosofberea.com/gog-and-magog-part-8-the-goal-of-the-attack/>

**Ezekiel 38:15** You will come from your place out of the uttermost parts of the north, you and many peoples with you, all of them riding on horses, a great host, a mighty army.

### **Bringing Evil from the North**

The issues here are audience relevance and historical context. Neither of which have anything to do with nuclear threats in the 1970s or Russia invading Ukraine in 2022. When ancient Israelites heard terms like "the north" or "the remote parts of the north," they would have thought of the direction from which their foes historically attacked.

For example, when prophesying about the Babylonian invasion, Jeremiah 4:6 says: "I am bringing evil from the north, with great destruction" (cf. Jer. 1:13-15; 3:18; 6:1, 22; 10:22, Zech. 2:6-7). But Babylon was to the east of Jerusalem, not the north. How could an invasion from the east have been described as God "bringing evil from the north?"

As most commentators recognize, "the north" doesn't typically refer to the origin of Israel's attackers but to the trajectory of their attack. Logistically, it made sense for Nebuchadnezzar to avoid routing his armies through a vast desert. Instead, they went up and around it and then descended upon Jerusalem from the north. Consequently, it would have been even more so the case for Haman and his forces coming from Persia – which was even farther east than Babylon.

As archaeologist Barry Beitzel puts it: "The Bible's use of the expression 'north' denotes the direction from which a foe would normally attack and not the location of its homeland." [3]

<https://burrosofberea.com/gog-and-magog-part-9-the-direction-of-the-attack/>

**Ezekiel 38:16** You will come up against my people Israel, like a cloud covering the land. In the latter days I will bring you against my land, that the nations may know me, when through you, O Gog, I vindicate my holiness before their eyes.

The Brown-Driver-Briggs (BDB) Hebrew and English Lexicon of the Old Testament translates Ezekiel 38:16 as "in the end of days" and defines it as "a prophetic phrase denoting the final period of the history so far as the speaker's perspective reaches; thus the sense varies with the context..." [5] Ezekiel is writing sometime after the Babylonian exile, and the events of the book of Esther take place shortly

after the return from exile. This fits the historical context “of the speaker’s perspective.”

<https://burrosofberea.com/gog-magogrussia-and-the-rapture/>

**Ezekiel 38:17** “Thus says the Lord GOD: Are you he of whom I spoke in former days by my servants the prophets of Israel, who in those days prophesied for years that I would bring you against them?”

As just about all commentators recognize, this is a rhetorical question and the intended answer is, “yes.”[15] In fact, the Septuagint doesn’t even phrase the verse as a question at all. It reads as follows:

“Thus saith the Lord God, to Gog; Thou art he concerning whom I spoke in former times, by the hand of my servants the prophets of Israel, in those days and years, that I would bring thee up against them” (Ezekiel 38:17 LXX, Brenton’s Translation).

What this means is that this entire concept of “Gog” is something that Ezekiel’s readers would have been quite familiar with, as they would have read about it in the words of the former prophets of Israel. This is more significant than we might realize. While the prophecy gurus of our day rake in the money, selling books identifying Gog with modern-day Russia, the Hebrew prophets had nothing to say about Russia.

They did, however, have much to say about Amalek and/or the Amalekites. This would include: Moses (Ex. 17:16, etc), Balaam (Numb. 24:20), Samuel (1 Sam. 15:1-3, 17-23), Deborah (Judges 5:14), Gideon (Judges 6-7), Jephthah (Judges 10:11-14), David (1 Sam. 30) and Asaph (Psalm 83). And they prophesied of multigenerational warfare (Exodus 17:16; Numb. 14:43; 24:20; Deut. 25:17-19; 1 Sam. 14:48; 15:18). The war with the Amalekites begins in Exodus 17:8 and, in Exodus 17:16, Moses says: “The Lord has sworn; the Lord will have war against Amalek from generation to generation.”

Ezekiel gives us many clues as to Gog’s identity, and Haman the Agagite from the book of Esther emerges as the prime suspect.

## **Recapping the Connections**

Just to recap, because these connections are so important: Haman, the enemy and adversary of the Jews in the book of Esther, was an “Agagite” (a term that is synonymous with “Gogite”). And the Agagites were the royal line of the Amalekites, who were descendants of Magog, and of whom Yahweh Himself had sworn to have war “from generation to generation.” So, Amalek and his descendants fit the bill as the ones of whom God spoke, through His prophets, in former times. If we want to nail down the identity of Ezekiel’s Gog of the land of Magog, there’s no need to look to today’s headlines or modern world leaders.

There's no need to look beyond the Book of Esther.

<https://burrosofberea.com/gog-and-magog-part-1-from-saul-and-agag-to-mordecai-and-haman/>

**Ezekiel 39:9** "Then those who dwell in the cities of Israel will go out and make fires of the weapons and burn them, shields and bucklers, bow and arrows, clubs and spears; and they will make fires of them for seven years,

There are seven of everything. The weapons left behind are burned for seven years (39.9). It takes seven months to bury the dead (39.12, 14). The dead are designated as seven different types of carcasses for the wild animals to feast on after the battle (39.18). God hurls seven judgments against Gog (38.21–22). On two occasions, seven terms are used to designate the enemy's war gear (38.4–5; 39.9). Seven times, the formula "thus saith the Lord" is used (38.3, 14, 10, 17; 39.1, 17, 25). And there are seven variations on the theme of the nations recognizing Yahweh's greatness (38.13, 23; 39.6, 7 [twice][1], 22, 28).

As most all scholars recognize, Ezekiel's usage of the number seven is a literary technique that he uses to indicate the scope of the crisis, the vast size of the conflict, and the magnitude of the victory of God's People.[3]

<https://burrosofberea.com/gog-and-magog-part-4-gogs-allies-and-esthers-enemies/>

**Ezekiel 39:11** "On that day I will give to Gog a place for burial in Israel, the Valley of the Travelers, east of the sea. It will block the travelers, for there Gog and all his multitude will be buried. It will be called the Valley of Hamon-gog.

## Burial Site

When all is said and done, and the battle of Gog and Magog is over, the Lord says, "On that day I will give Gog a burial place there in Israel, the valley of those who pass by east of the sea, and it will block the way of those who would pass by. So they will bury Gog there with all his horde, and they will call *it* the Valley of Hamon-Gog" (Ezekiel 39:11).

On this passage, Gary DeMar writes: "According to Ezekiel 39:11 and 15, the place where the army of Gog is buried will be known as the Valley of Hamon-Gog...The word *hamon* in Ezekiel is spelled in Hebrew almost exactly like the name Haman. In Hebrew, both words have the same 'triliteral root' (*hmn*). Only the vowels are different.<sup>[18]</sup> With this in mind, vowels weren't added to the Hebrew language until sometime between 700 and 1000 AD.<sup>[19]</sup> In other words, Ezekiel is writing 1600 years before Hebrew vowels even existed. This means that when an ancient Jew read the books of Ezekiel and Esther, "Haman" and "Hamon" would have been the exact same word. Accordingly, it means Ezekiel 38-39 and the book of Esther describe the exact same thing.

<https://burrosofberea.com/haman-hamas-and-the-headlines-getting-gog-magog->

[wrongagain/](#)

## **The Valley of Hamon-Gog**

As with the previous observations, all the textual indicators continue to point to Haman the Agagite as Gog of the Land of Magog. And finally, Gog's burial site makes the connection unmistakable.

On this passage, Gary DeMar writes: "According to Ezekiel 39:11 and 15, the place where the army of Gog is buried will be known as the Valley of Hamon-Gog. The word hamon in Ezekiel is spelled in Hebrew almost exactly like the name Haman. In Hebrew, both words have the same 'trilateral root' (hmn). Only the vowels are different.[4]

Notice what DeMar says: "Only the vowels are different." This is more significant than we realize. Why? Because vowels weren't added to the Hebrew language until sometime between 700 and 1000 AD.[5] Ezekiel is writing 1600 years before vowels even existed in the Hebrew language. This means that, when an ancient Jew read the books of Ezekiel and Esther, "Haman" and "Hamon" would have been the exact same word. The correspondence to Haman is consistent from the time Gog appears in Ezekiel's text all the way through to Gog's bitter end.

## **A Quick Recap**

The direction of the attack (the north), the goal of the attack (gold and silver, cattle and horses), the Jews' situation at the time of the attack (dwelling securely in unwallled villages), the time of the attack itself (the latter days from Ezekiel's perspective), the nations involved in the attack (all Persian), the weapons used in the attack (ancient and not modern), the identification of the attacker himself (the chief prince of those Persian nations), and the fact that the attacker was spoken of in the past (an Amalekite) all point to attack of Haman, in the book of Esther, as the one identified as Gog of the Land of Magog, in the book of Ezekiel. <https://burrosofberea.com/gog-and-magog-part-9-the-direction-of-the-attack/>

**Hosea 2:17** For I will remove the names of the Baals from her mouth, and they shall be remembered by name no more.

**Hosea 2:18** And I will make for them a covenant on that day with the beasts of the field, the birds of the heavens, and the creeping things of the ground. And I will abolish the bow, the sword, and war from the land, and I will make you lie down in safety.

In this passage, God makes a covenant with "the animals of the field, the birds of the sky, and the crawling things of the ground" (Hos. 2:18). This wouldn't be the first time that God's covenantal dealings extend to non-human life. In fact, the very first covenant that God makes encompasses the animal community (Gen.

9:9-11).

**Genesis 9:9** "Behold, I establish my covenant with you and your offspring after you,

**Genesis 9:10** and with every living creature that is with you, the birds, the livestock, and every beast of the earth with you, as many as came out of the ark; it is for every beast of the earth.

**Genesis 9:11** I establish my covenant with you, that never again shall all flesh be cut off by the waters of the flood, and never again shall there be a flood to destroy the earth."

**Genesis 9:12** And God said, "This is the sign of the covenant that I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for all future generations:

**Genesis 9:13** I have set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and the earth.

**Genesis 9:11** When I bring clouds over the earth and the bow is seen in the clouds,

**Genesis 9:15** I will remember my covenant that is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh. And the waters shall never again become a flood to destroy all flesh.

**Genesis 9:16** When the bow is in the clouds, I will see it and remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is on the earth."

**Genesis 9:17** God said to Noah, "This is the sign of the covenant that I have established between me and all flesh that is on the earth."

As with the Noahic Covenant, God's actions in Hosea would benefit, both, man and beast alike.

Throughout Hosea, the problem in Israel was Baal worship, and the solution to the problem would be purging the land of Baal worship by ridding it of the Baal worshipers (Hos. 2:13; 4:5-6, 12-14; 9:10, 15; 13:1-2 ). And the verse leading up to verse 18 highlights this theme (Hos. 2:17).

With that said, bestiality ran rampant in the Baalite religion. From the Canaanite epic, The Baal Cycle, Baal himself is praised and exalted for engaging in the practice: "Mightiest Baal hears; He makes love with a heifer in the outback, A cow in the field of Death's Realm. He lies with her seventy times seven and mounts her eighty times eight; She conceives and bears a boy." [1] As Clay Jones writes, "There should be no surprise that bestiality would occur for the Canaanites since the god they worshiped practiced it." [2]

Clay goes on to describe the Canaanite practices in this regard, the details of which are as disgusting as they are disturbing. In contrast to this, God's Word prohibits intercourse with animals (Lev.18:23), praises the humane treatment of animals (Pr. 12:10), and condemns the misuse and abuse of animals (Deut. 25:4, Exod. 23:5).

So it is perfectly fitting that a restoration covenant with His people, that remedies the problem with Baalism, would likewise restore the proper relationship that man is to have with the creatures of whom he's been given dominion (Gen.1:26, Gen. 2:15).

Understanding Hosea 2:18 in its proper context makes it relevant for us today. As God's image bearers on earth, we need to honor God's covenant with animals. We should be setting the standard by opposing all forms of animal abuse and fighting for the humane treatment of all of God's creatures.

<https://burrosofberea.com/a-brief-note-on-hosea-218/>

**Hosea 4:3** Therefore the land mourns, and all who dwell in it languish, and also the beasts of the field and the birds of the heavens, and even the fish of the sea are taken away.

**See Comments on Zephaniah 1:2-3.**

Hosea prophesied roughly 110 years earlier than Zephaniah, and his focus was the fall of the northern kingdom. This happened at the hands of the Assyrians in 722 BC. Once again, the fish get the brunt end of the deal in the prophet's zeal. But, once again, God didn't vaporize the fish of the sea in 722 BC. And if He had, there wouldn't have been any fish left a century later for Zephaniah to prophesy about! The prophets' statements were metaphoric and poetic – not literal. Nonetheless, they were meant to literally have an effect upon those who heard. In other words, Hosea and Zephaniah were going for something. As such, they expected their audience to get it – to understand their point.

As Paul House points out, this is Old Testament, Hebrew poetry which "differs from the poetry of Western culture" and "makes full use of imagery, metaphor, word play, and other poetic devices." [27]

<https://burrosofberea.com/missing-the-metaphor-the-theology-of-drax-the-dispensationalist/>

**Hosea 8:13** As for my sacrificial offerings, they sacrifice meat and eat it, but the LORD does not accept them. Now he will remember their iniquity and punish their sins; they shall return to Egypt.

**Deuteronomy 28:68** And the LORD will bring you back in ships to Egypt, a journey that I promised that you should never make again; and there you shall offer yourselves for sale to your enemies as male and female slaves, but there

will be no buyer.”

Moses and Hosea had both foretold that the eventual fate of rebellious Israel would be a return to Egypt, not a return to their homeland (Deut. 28:68; Hos. 8:13). Uncoincidentally, this is exactly what happened. Josephus informs us that the survivors of the siege were taken to Egypt for free slave labor (Wars, 6.8.2; 6.9.2). On the other hand, those Jews who embraced Christ were part of the New Israel, and the land we inherit is now the entire earth (Matt. 5:5).

<https://burrosofberea.com/dispensationalism-strikes-out-again-three-more-verses-they-get-wrong/>

**Amos 1:6** Thus says the LORD: “For three transgressions of Gaza, and for four, I will not revoke the punishment, because they carried into exile a whole people to deliver them up to Edom.

**Amos 1:7** So I will send a fire upon the wall of Gaza, and it shall devour her strongholds.

The fire of which Amos spoke (v7) blazed strong and burned out long ago. Prophesying in 760 BC, Amos’s oracle (Amos 1:6-7) would have been fulfilled in the campaigns of Sargon II in 722-705 BC. In 720 BC Sargon subdued and conquered Gaza – exiling its king, Hanun, to Assyria.[9] Amos’s prophecy was fulfilled in real time, in the times of the past.

<https://burrosofberea.com/zephaniah-24-and-the-gaza-prophecies-events-occurred-in-real-time/>

**Amos 5:7** O you who turn justice to wormwood and cast down righteousness to the earth!

**Amos 5:8** He who made the Pleiades and Orion, and turns deep darkness into the morning and darkens the day into night, who calls for the waters of the sea and pours them out on the surface of the earth, the LORD is his name;

### **Amos: Covenant Enforcer**

As a prophet of God, enforcing the terms of the covenant was Amos’s main job. [8] In his covenant lawsuit against ancient Israel, Amos charges the apostates of his time with turning “justice into wormwood” and casting “righteousness down to the earth” (Amos 5:7). The language is obviously metaphoric. Justice can’t literally be turned into wormwood and righteousness can’t literally be cast down to the earth.

These metaphors are repeated and strengthened in chapter 6: “You have turned justice into poison, and the fruit of righteousness into wormwood” (Amos 6:12).

And right there, we have yet another metaphor – “fruit.” Real fruit grows on trees. The phrase, “fruit of righteousness,” is a simile. The imagery is that of

turning something pleasant and sweet (i.e., fruit) into something disgusting and bitter (i.e., wormwood). So, "wormwood" symbolizes something. Specifically, it symbolizes the bitter abandonment of justice and righteousness. This Old Testament usage of the imagery should inform our thinking when John uses that same imagery in Revelation.

But John says that wormwood is a "star" in Revelation 8:11. The next question we need to ask is if there is anything in the Old Testament that would inform us in this regard? There is, and it is likewise right there in the book of Amos.

After denouncing apostate Israel for abandoning justice and righteousness (wormwood), Amos seems to make a somewhat unrelated statement. He speaks of the Lord as "He who made the Pleiades and Orion" (Amos 5:8). Of course, God made these celestial patterns in the sky, but what's the connection between star constellations and wormwood? The answer to this is also found later in the chapter.

Amos tells the rebellious Israelites, "You pick up your images of Sikkuth (Molech), your king, and Kiyun (Saturn), the images of your star gods which you have made for yourselves" (Amos 6:26). So, the ancient Israelites, who were turning justice and righteousness into wormwood, were doing so because they were worshipping false deities called "star gods."

<https://burrosofberea.com/asteroids-dreams-and-wormwood-revelation-810-11/>

**Amos 9:15** I will plant them on their land, and they shall never again be uprooted out of the land that I have given them," says the LORD your God.

According to John Schmitt, of Open Bible Summary: "Israel was declared an independent nation in 1948 at a site that is preserved as a museum, known as Independence Hall. This passage is engraved on the wall indicating a belief by the present Israel, that this is a prophecy fulfilled. Evidence shows that this is correct." [31]

**It is a "prophecy fulfilled," true enough, but it wasn't fulfilled in 1948.**

We must allow the progressive revelation of the New Testament to inform our thinking regarding a passage such as this. Israel is planted in their land (Amos 9:15) in conjunction with God restoring the fallen tabernacle of David (Amos 9:11). According to James, this happened when God took a people for Himself from among the Gentiles (Acts 15:13-18). This means that the fulfillment of Amos 9 was in the first century AD. Scripture interprets Scripture, and the New Testament sheds light on the Old.

After the fallen tabernacle of David was restored (Gentile inclusion), physical Israel in fact was uprooted from their physical land in AD 70. So, either the prophecy failed, or this isn't about physical Israel. In fact, Moses and Hosea had both foretold that the eventual fate of rebellious Israel would be a return to

Egypt, not a return to their homeland (Deut. 28:68; Hos. 8:13).

Uncoincidentally, this is exactly what happened. Josephus informs us that the survivors of the siege were taken to Egypt for free slave labor (Wars, 6.8.2; 6.9.2). On the other hand, those Jews who embraced Christ were part of the New Israel, and the land we inherit is now the entire earth (Matt. 5:5).

<https://burrosofberea.com/dispensationalism-strikes-out-again-three-more-verses-they-get-wrong/>

**Micah 1:3** For behold, the LORD is coming out of his place, and will come down and tread upon the high places of the earth.

**Micah 1:4** And the mountains will melt under him, and the valleys will split open, like wax before the fire, like waters poured down a steep place.

Notice the language: God comes down, He treads upon the high places of the earth, **(verse 4)** the mountains melt underneath Him, and the valleys are cleft. In this passage, Micah is prophesying about the doom of Samaria (Micah 1:1), which took place in 722 BC when the Assyrians besieged and captured it. Micah's usage of figurative language is as clear as his context. Samaria was taken as Micah prophesied, but the mountains of that region obviously didn't melt. Micah is simply using the same literary device that was used by Habakuk and numerous other Scriptural writers.

Throughout the Bible, mountains tremble (Ps. 18:7; 46:3) and depart (Isa. 54:10). They melt like wax (Ps. 97:5; Mic. 1:4) and are crushed into dust (Isa. 41:15). Mountains are laid to waste and moved into the sea (Isa. 42:15; Ps. 46:2). They are thrown down to the ground (Ez. 38:20). Mountains are made glad (Ps. 48:11) and break forth into singing (Ps. 98:8; Isa. 44:23; 49:13; 55:12). Do mountains have emotions? Do they have vocal cords? God tells Ezekiel to prophesy to the mountains of Israel (Ez. 36:1, 4, 6). Do mountains have ears? The Psalmist says, "The mountains skipped like rams, and the hills skipped like lambs" (Ps. 114:4, 6). Do mountains have legs? Can they literally skip?[10] No one would answer "yes" to these questions. The usage of metaphor and symbolism is self-evident in passages such as these.

<https://burrosofberea.com/zechariah-14-part-4-the-splitting-mountain/>

**Micah 4:10** Writhe and groan, O daughter of Zion, like a woman in labor, for now you shall go out from the city and dwell in the open country; you shall go to Babylon. There you shall be rescued; there the LORD will redeem you from the hand of your enemies.

Like his contemporary Isaiah, Micah also casts the captivity and return from exile in childbirth imagery. Isaiah and Micah both track on the same theme, and they illustrate how the dual metaphor of labor and childbirth functioned in the pre-exilic period.[5] It was an image of exile and restoration, as to be expected. In each passage, the woman in labor is Zion, and her "children" (ben) are finally brought forth in Isaiah 66:8.

<https://burrosofberea.com/2227-2/>

**Micah 7:17** they shall lick the dust like a serpent, like the crawling things of the earth; they shall come trembling out of their strongholds; they shall turn in dread to the LORD our God, and they shall be in fear of you.

In the Genesis creation narrative, the original divine rebel is portrayed as a serpent destined to eat dust as a result of his deceit (Gen. 3:14). God brought order from chaos, and Satan sought to reinsert chaos into God's orderly world. The portrayal of the serpent crawling on his belly and eating dust conveys the idea that, despite all his efforts, Satan is still subjugated to the orderly rule and authority of God and will not prevail.[4]

This theme of eating dust, originating from Genesis, then becomes a template of its own in conjunction with God's restorative efforts through His people in other parts of Scripture. Psalm 72, for example, paints a picture of the righteous judgments of the king (Ps. 72:1) who will vindicate the afflicted, save the needy, and crush the oppressor (Ps. 72:2-4). Then the Psalmist says:

"May the nomads of the desert bow before him, And **his enemies lick the dust.** May the kings of Tarshish and of the islands bring gifts; May the kings of Sheba and Seba offer tributes. And may all kings bow down before him, All nations serve him" (Psalm 72:9-11).

In this passage, the nations are serving the servant of the Lord while his enemies are left to "lick the dust." The imagery is borrowed from Genesis 3:14 and is apropos.[5] The agents of chaos who attempt to thwart the king's efforts at order and stability in God's society will suffer the same fate as the original chaos serpent.

Fittingly, Isaiah's contemporary, Micah, looks ahead to the restoration period when the "nations" which opposed God's people "will see and be ashamed" (Mic. 7:16) and "lick the dust like a serpent" (Mic. 7:17). Isaiah likewise looks forward to the restoration when "dust shall be the serpent's food" (Isa. 65:25). Tracking on these other usages of the idiom, serpents lick dust when those who attempt to hinder God's purposes are "ashamed" (Mic. 7:17), and the other nations serve God's people by bringing "gifts" and offering "tribute" (Ps. 72:9-11). Suitably, this is another picture-perfect portrayal of the restoration period following the return from exile.

<https://burrosofberea.com/isaiahs-new-heavens-and-new-earth-part-3-wolves-and-lambs-serpents-and-dust-and-the-chosen-young-man/>

**Habakkuk 3:1** A prayer of Habakkuk the prophet, according to Shigionoth.

**Habakkuk 3:2** O LORD, I have heard the report of you, and your work, O LORD, do I fear. In the midst of the years revive it; in the midst of the years make it known; in wrath remember mercy.

Judges 7 and Habakkuk 3 are describing the same event. The book of Judges describes the event in the form of a straightforward, matter-of-fact historical narrative, whereas Habakkuk employs poetic and apocalyptic language in his description.

The actual historical account of this deliverance is given in Judges 7:13-25. There is no mention in this passage of God coming down, of burning coals coming from His feet, of mountains being scattered, or of hills bowing. In Judges 7:13-25, Gideon simply takes 3 companies of 100 men, gives each man a trumpet, a pitcher, and a lamp, and they pursue the Midianites and defeat them. Nevertheless, Judges 7 and Habakkuk 3 are describing the same event. The book of Judges describes the event in the form of a straightforward, matter-of-fact historical narrative, whereas Habakkuk employs poetic and apocalyptic language in his description.

<https://burrosofberea.com/index.php/2023/09/08/zechariah-14-part-4-the-splitting-mountain>

**Habakkuk 3:3** God came from Teman, and the Holy One from Mount Paran. *Selah*. His splendor covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise.

**Habakkuk 3:4** His brightness was like the light; rays flashed from his hand; and there he veiled his power.

The Lord came to His people from the south: Teman is the Hebrew word for "south." As John Calvin comments, "When they spoke of the south, they said Teman. And when the Jews wished to designate a wind from Africa, they said: 'It is a Teman wind.' "[13] Habakkuk also mentions "mount Paran," which is a mountain located to the south of Israel. According to the Bible then, God came to His people from the south.

### **The Lord Came to His People from the South**

The tradition of the Lord coming from the south goes all the way back to Moses. Like Habakkuk, Moses specifically mentions Yahweh coming from mount Paran, and includes the southern region of Seir as well:

"Now this is the blessing with which Moses the man of God blessed the sons of Israel before his death. He said: "The Lord came from Sinai, And He dawned on us from Seir; He has shone forth from mount Paran, in the midst of myriads of His holy ones" (Deut. 33:1-2).

Accordingly, in her song, Deborah sings of the Lord coming from Seir and adds the southern region of Edom to her words:

"LORD, when you went out from Seir, you marched from the region of Edom, the

earth trembled, the heavens dropped, and the mountains quaked at the presence of Yahweh..." (Judges 5:4-5).

As these passages make clear, the south was associated with the Lord –it was from the south that He came and called His people to unto Himself. As John Gill commented, "God came from the South...and he is going before them in the wilderness, destroying their enemies, casting them out before them, and introducing them into the land of Canaan." [14]

<https://burrosofberea.com/zechariah-14-part-4-the-splitting-mountain/>

**Habakkuk 3:5** Before him went pestilence, and plague followed at his heels.

Like Zechariah 14:4, the passage mentions God's "feet." As Ken Gentry writes, "Judgment-coming passages often mention God's feet as a symbol of deliverance for His People and the thwarting of their enemies (e.g., Ps. 18:9; Nah. 1:3)." [9]

<https://burrosofberea.com/zechariah-14-part-4-the-splitting-mountain/>

**Habakkuk 3:6** He stood and measured the earth; he looked and shook the nations; then the eternal mountains were scattered; the everlasting hills sank low. His were the everlasting ways.

The passage speaks of the mountains being scattered and the perpetual hills bowing. The point being: Habakkuk is recounting the power of God's saving acts in the past, and none of this literally happened.

<https://burrosofberea.com/index.php/2023/09/08/zechariah-14-part-4-the-splitting-mountain/>

**Habakkuk 3:7** I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction; the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble.

Specifically, the passage (3:3-7) refers to God delivering His People from the hands of the Midianites.

<https://burrosofberea.com/zechariah-14-part-4-the-splitting-mountain/>

**Zephaniah 1:2** "I will utterly sweep away everything from the face of the earth," declares the LORD.

The important thing to note here is that what was "here and now" to Zephaniah is "there and then" to us. Zephaniah's prophecies were given there – to the people living in his own time, and those prophecies came to pass then – in the historical context of that time.

Today's eschatology executants have yet another issue to confront. If Zephaniah is prophesying human extinction, who will be around for the next act? In other words, if everyone gets killed in the Tribulation, how will the seats get filled in the Millennium? If all mankind is annihilated, who's left?

## **Zephaniah 1:2-3 in Context**

After God just finished saying that He's going to "eliminate mankind from the face of the earth" (Zeph. 1:3), He then says that He will stretch out his hand "against Judah" and "all the inhabitants of Jerusalem" (Zeph. 1:4). As C. L. Taylor remarks, "After the total annihilation of verses 2-3, the limited destruction of verses 4-5 falls a bit flat." [22] The point being, the entirety of verses 1-3 is hyperbolic language for the literal judgment of verses 4-5.

In other words, verses 1-3 are the poetry, and verses 4-5 are the prose. First comes the symbol, and then comes the substance. Hyperbole leads, and history follows – in Zephaniah's narrative.

## **The De-Creation Motif**

This reversal of creation motif, commonly called "de-creation," [24] is employed extensively throughout the pages of Scripture. Genesis 1-2 is the template. And this makes perfect sense. In the original creation, God brought order out of chaos. Sin is a return to chaos and, as such, bad things will follow. Consequently, the de-creation language is a recurring theme in the prophets.

Zephaniah makes full use of this rhetorical device. Zephaniah purposely and precisely inverts the order of God's creative work in Genesis 1. It goes from fish, birds, beasts, and man (Gen. 1:20-27), to man, beasts, birds, and fish (Zeph. 1:2-3). [25] For additional "rhetorical effect" and "emphasis," man is "again singled out" in the closing of verse 3. [26]

Zephaniah's audience needed to know the gravity of the situation, so he used the strongest verbiage possible. As Burlet puts it, "...these 'stylistic matters' were not chosen simply for 'decorative value' but constitute a critical component of how the 'substance' of the prophet's message is conveyed." [27] The substance of the prophet's message was that sin has consequences, and those consequences are devastating – thoroughly and completely.

<https://burrosofberea.com/zephaniah-at-worlds-end-a-modern-misunderstanding-of-an-ancient-motif/>

**Zephaniah 1:3** "I will sweep away man and beast; I will sweep away the birds of the heavens and the fish of the sea, and the rubble with the wicked. I will cut off mankind from the face of the earth," declares the LORD.

## **The De-Creation Motif**

This is a prophecy about the first destruction of Jerusalem, in 586 BC. This was done by the Babylonians under Nebuchadnezzar. God said that He would remove

the fish in the sea – along with the birds of the air, the beasts of the land, and even man himself. Obviously, none of this literally happened in 586 BC. As Gary DeMar comments, “A local judgment that had national consequences for Judah and Jerusalem (1:4) is described in a way that depicts the end of the earth and every living thing on it.” [26] The fact that this prophecy was fulfilled means these expressions aren’t to be understood literally. If Drax the Dispensationalist was around back then, he would have protested: “THAT... didn’t happen in 586 BC!”

The particular metaphor being employed in these passages is known as the creation reversal motif”[28] or de-creation language.[29] It’s a literary device meant to convey the idea that sin and rebellion will bring a return to chaos. This is seen most clearly when Jeremiah laments Judah’s sinful condition and takes his audience all the way back to Genesis 1:2:

22 “For My people are foolish, They do not know Me; They are foolish children And have no understanding. They are skillful at doing evil, But they do not know how to do good.

23 I looked at the earth, and behold, it was a formless and desolate emptiness; And to the heavens, and they had no light.

24 I looked on the mountains, and behold, they were quaking, And all the hills jolted back and forth.

25 I looked, and behold, there was no human, And all the birds of the sky had fled.

26 I looked, and behold, the fruitful land was a wilderness, And all its cities were pulled down Before the Lord, before His fierce anger” (Jer. 4:22-26).

When God created the world, He brought order out of disorder. When God’s People sin and judgment comes, disorder returns. Rather than extending the dominion and rule of God in this world, His people are falling backwards when they fall back into sin. Consequently, the judgment that follows is poetically cast in terms of creation backwards. When God’s prophets used this language, it was meant to send a clear signal of warning to his people: you’re moving in the wrong direction!

That’s what happened to the northern kingdom in 722 BC (as per Hosea), the southern kingdom in 586 BC (as per Jeremiah and Zephaniah), and first-century Israel in AD 70 (as per John in Revelation). This is what the de-creation language means. John is recycling a common Biblical motif, familiar to his readers, to get his message across. The imagery was not meant to be taken literally when Hosea used it, when Zephaniah used it, when Jeremiah used it, or when John used it in the book of Revelation.

And this makes passages such as these applicable and relevant to us today. God’s Word is not dead and stagnant, it’s living and active (Heb. 4:12). To avoid chaos and disorder in our own lives, we need to lead obedient lives that are pleasing to

the Lord. We need to walk in His ways and follow His commandments (John 14:21-26). Just like every Old Testament prophecy that's been fulfilled, fulfilled New Testament prophecies have ongoing applications to believers of every generation. On the other hand, if the book of Revelation is about the final generation of human history, then it has been irrelevant to every generation for almost 2000 years now. If Dispensationalism is true, then Revelation will only have meaning for those alive when the fish in the sea finally die.

<https://burrosofberea.com/missing-the-metaphor-the-theology-of-drax-the-dispensationalist/>

**Zephaniah 1:4** "I will stretch out my hand against Judah and against all the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and I will cut off from this place the remnant of Baal and the name of the idolatrous priests along with the priests,

This is specifically a judgment against "Judah" and "the inhabitants of Jerusalem" (Zeph. 1:4a). God says He will "cut off the remnant of Baal from this place" along with "the names of the idolatrous priests" (Zeph. 1:4b). I don't think there are any Baal worshipers or idolatrous priests in modern-day Jerusalem! This is a prophecy about something that happened long ago from our perspective, but it was the near future in Zephaniah's day as it should be. Why would Zephaniah and his audience even care about events thousands of years removed from their own lifetime?

<https://burrosofberea.com/the-day-of-the-lord-in-zephaniah-114/>

**Zephaniah 1:5** those who bow down on the roofs to the host of the heavens, those who bow down and swear to the LORD and yet swear by Milcom,

**Zephaniah 1:6** those who have turned back from following the LORD, who do not seek the LORD or inquire of him."

God is going to judge "those on the house tops" who "bow down to the host of Heaven." This is what God warned them about in Deuteronomy 4:17. They were not to bow down to the sun, moon and stars and all the host of heaven. These were perceived by the ancient people as the gods allotted to the other nations. I don't think anyone in modern-day Israel is going on their rooftops and bowing down to the sun, moon and stars and all the host of heaven.

As John Gill commented: "And upon them that worship the host of heaven upon the house tops. The sun, moon, and stars, which some worshipped upon their house tops; the roofs of their houses being flat, as the roofs of the houses of the Jews generally were; from hence they had a full view of the host of heaven, and worshipped them openly; and fancied, the nearer they were to them, the more acceptable was their service; see **Jeremiah 19:13**."

Additionally, most translations bear out that the people of this time period swore by Yahweh while, at the same time, swearing by "Milcom" (Zeph. 1:5). According to the Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible, Milcom was a "deity of the

Ammonites" and was the "god of the underworld and fire" (DDD, p. 575). We know from Isaiah that God's ancient people had a problem in this area since they had "made a covenant with death" (Isa. 28:18; see: K. van der Toorn, "Echoes of Judaeon Necromancy in Isaiah 28:7-22, Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, Volume 100 [2], January 1, 1988).

Most Jews today, in fact most people today for that matter, don't worship Baal. And they don't go onto to their roof tops to get as close as they can to the host of heaven nor do they make a pact with the god of the underworld.

<https://burrosofberea.com/the-day-of-the-lord-in-zephaniah-114/>

**Zephaniah 1:14** The great day of the LORD is near, near and hastening fast; the sound of the day of the LORD is bitter; the mighty man cries aloud there.

Many Futurists think Zephaniah 1:14 discredits the Preterist interpretation of the time texts. If the Day of the Lord was "near" in Zephaniah's time, and clearly not imminent, why do the New Testament time texts have to be referring to an imminent event? The misunderstanding here is two-fold.

First, it assumes there is one, singular Day of the Lord in Scripture. But, the Day of the Lord is anytime God brings judgment against any nation.

As David Chilton wrote: "The Biblical prophets saw the Day of the Lord to be fulfilled in all of God's redemptive judgments in history against disobedient nations: it was the divine 'day of reckoning' against Judah, when the wicked would be annihilated and the righteous saved and blessed (Isa. 2-5; Joel 1-3); for Babylon it was the day of destruction, fire, and the collapse of the universe (Isa. 13:6-13); it was also the day when Edom would suffer God's vengeance in bloody slaughter, in fire and brimstone, and in desolation, while God's people are safely 'gathered' to Him (Isa. 34); the day when God's great sword would drink its fill of the blood of the Egyptians (Jer. 46); indeed, 'the Day of the LORD draws near on all the nations' (Obad. 15). When we place these passages together, along with texts such as Zephaniah 1 and Psalm 18, it becomes strikingly clear that the prophetic term Day of the Lord means Judgment – a judgment issuing in both destruction of the wicked and salvation of the righteous" (Paradise Restored, p. 137).

Second, the context of Zephaniah 1:14 clearly supports that idea that "near" still meant "near," even in the Zephaniah's day. The passage is not speaking about the end of the world or even the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

Zephaniah's prophecy (640 BC) would have been about the upcoming judgment against Judah when the Babylonians would take them into captivity and destroy the temple and the city (586 BC). In other words, it's about the first destruction of Jerusalem back in Old Testament times. We're looking at 54 years. This easily fits the framework of a "Day of the Lord" that was "near."

The context itself bears this out. It's specifically a judgment against "Judah" and "the inhabitants of Jerusalem" (Zeph. 1:4a). God says He will "cut off the remnant of Baal from this place" along with "the names of the idolatrous priests" (Zeph. 1:4b). I don't think there are any Baal worshipers or idolatrous priests in modern-day Jerusalem! This is a prophecy about something that happened long ago from our perspective, but it was the near future in Zephaniah's day. As it should be. Why would Zephaniah and his audience even care about events thousands of years removed from their own lifetime?

In verse 5, God is going to judge "those on the house tops" who "bow down to the host of Heaven." This is what God warned them about in Deuteronomy 4:17. They were not to bow down to the sun, moon and stars and all the host of heaven. These were perceived by the ancient people as the gods allotted to the other nations. I don't think anyone in modern-day Israel is going on their rooftops and bowing down to the sun, moon and stars and all the host of heaven.

As John Gill commented on verse 5: "And upon them that worship the host of heaven upon the house tops. The sun, moon, and stars, which some worshipped upon their house tops; the roofs of their houses being flat, as the roofs of the houses of the Jews generally were; from hence they had a full view of the host of heaven, and worshipped them openly; and fancied, the nearer they were to them, the more acceptable was their service; see Jeremiah 19:13.

Additionally, most translations bear out that the people of this time period swore by Yahweh while, at the same time, swearing by "Milcom" (Zeph. 1:5). According to the Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible, Milcom was a "deity of the Ammonites" and was the "god of the underworld and fire" (DDD, p. 575). We know from Isaiah that God's ancient people had a problem in this area since they had "made a covenant with death" (Isa. 28:18; see: K. van der Toorn, "Echoes of Judaeon Necromancy in Isaiah 28:7-22, Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft, Volume 100 [2], January 1, 1988).

Most Jews today, in fact most people today for that matter, don't worship Baal. And they don't go onto to their roof tops to get as close as they can to the host of heaven. Nor do they make a pact with the god of the underworld.

In short, the passage isn't about modern Israel, or even first-century Israel, it's about God's judgment against ancient Judah (in the Old Testament) for worshiping false gods and playing with necromancy. This judgment came 54 years after Zephaniah prophesied. "Near" clearly meant "near" in Zephaniah's day, just as it did in the New Testament, and just as it does today.

<https://burrosofberea.com/the-day-of-the-lord-in-zephaniah-114/>

**Zephaniah 2:4** For Gaza shall be deserted, and Ashkelon shall become a desolation; Ashdod's people shall be driven out at noon, and Ekron shall be

uprooted.

As Dustin Burlet writes, "The prophet acutely focuses on the coming Day of the LORD, that is, Yahweh's judgment, on the 'nation of Judah and its ancient Near Eastern [ANE] neighbors in the late seventh century BC.'" [13] Zephaniah 2:4 targets Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod, and Ekron as upcoming targets of God's wrath. As Bill Wenstrom points out, this was "all fulfilled through Nebuchadnezzar and his armies in 603 B.C." [14]

<https://burrosofberea.com/zephaniah-at-worlds-end-a-modern-misunderstanding-of-an-ancient-motif/>

**Zephaniah 2:12** You also, O Cushites, shall be slain by my sword.

**Zephaniah 2:13** And he will stretch out his hand against the north and destroy Assyria, and he will make Nineveh a desolation, a dry waste like the desert.

In Zephaniah 2:12-13, the prophet hones in on Ethiopia and Assyria, along with Assyria's capital city Ninevah. Ethiopia fell when "King Cambyses II of Persia defeated Egypt and Ethiopia in 525 BC and brought them into the Persian empire." [15] Assyria's downfall came when Babylon led an allied attack on its capitol in 612 BC. [16] The ruins of Ninevah "are now surrounded by modern-day Mosul, Iraq." [17]

As Britannica puts it:

"The city, whose heyday had come earlier in the 7th century under the leadership of King Sennacherib, was comprehensively sacked after a three-month siege, and Assyrian King Sinsharushkin was killed. Although his successors clung to power for a while, the days of Assyrian ascendancy were gone." [18]

These literal fulfillments of Zechariah's prophecy cause the prophecy pundits to cave on their own approach to prophecy. Suddenly, their literal hermeneutic gets left behind.

Normally advocating for extreme literalism and harshly criticizing any other approach, [20] the prophecy pundits are forced to backtrack. And this is where the rub comes in. To make Zephaniah's worldwide judgment language literal, they must make the nations being judged symbolic.

<https://burrosofberea.com/zephaniah-at-worlds-end-a-modern-misunderstanding-of-an-ancient-motif/>

**Haggai 2:23** On that day, declares the LORD of hosts, I will take you, O Zerubbabel my servant, the son of Shealtiel, declares the LORD, and make you like a signet ring, for I have chosen you, declares the LORD of hosts."

Zerubbabel was among those who led the first wave of exiles back in 536 BC (Ezra 2:1-2), having been specifically chosen by God as a signet ring and

governor of Judah.

The mention of the “signet ring” is a major key to the story and highlights Zerubbabel’s status and destiny. His grandfather was King Jehoiachin, “the prisoner” (2 Kings 24:12 ) carried away by Nebuchadnezzar to Babylon (2 Kings 24:15). Jehoiachin “did evil in the sight of the Lord” and God removed him as “his signet ring” (Jer. 22:24-27, using his alternate name of Coniah[7]). In chapter 51, Isaiah looks forward to the time when the exiled prisoners would be set free (Isa. 51:14), and the story arches full circle when the prisoner’s grandson is the one who leads the prisoners to freedom (Ezra 2:2; see also Matt. 1:12). As God’s chosen “signet ring,” the “young man” Zerubbabel had redeemed his family name.

But that’s not all he would do as the Lord’s chosen one.

Zechariah said that the hands of Zerubbabel had laid the foundation of the temple, and his hands would also finish that temple (Zech. 4:9). This is only fitting since his ancestor Solomon built the first temple (1 Kings 6:1, 14). Accordingly, Zerubbabel and Jeshua (or Joshua) the priest led the rebuilding of the temple in 516 BC (Ezra 6:15; cf. Ezra 5:2, 11; Zech. 4:9, Hag. 2:2).

<https://burrosofberea.com/isaiahs-new-heavens-and-new-earth-part-3-wolves-and-lambs-serpents-and-dust-and-the-chosen-young-man/>

**Zechariah 1:1** In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, the word of the LORD came to the prophet Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, son of Iddo, saying,

**Zechariah 1:2** “The LORD was very angry with your fathers.

**Zechariah 1:3** Therefore say to them, Thus declares the LORD of hosts: Return to me, says the LORD of hosts, and I will return to you, says the LORD of hosts.

Zechariah is writing around 520 BC – sixteen years after Cyrus allowed the Jewish people to begin returning to their homeland in 536 BC, and four years before the temple was rebuilt in 516 BC. Other significant events on the horizon include Ezra leading a second wave of exiles back to Jerusalem in 458 BC, and Nehemiah rebuilding the city wall in that same year. This is the historical context and setting of the time when Zechariah wrote. The prophet is speaking to the concerns of his own day, not the concerns of people thousands of years away.

<https://burrosofberea.com/double-restoration-and-trouble-with-equations-pop-prophecy-and-zechariah-911-12/>

**Zechariah 1:8** “I saw in the night, and behold, a man riding on a red horse! He was standing among the myrtle trees in the glen, and behind him were red, sorrel, and white horses.

## **A Message in the Myrtle Trees**

This entire prophetic episode in Zechariah opens with a heavenly messenger coming to him at night, "who is standing among the myrtle trees" (Zech. 1:8). Commentators recognize that the myrtle is relatively rare in the Old Testament up to this point. After this, "it appears as if indigenous."<sup>[5]</sup> The significance is impossible to miss. Esther's original Hebrew name (her real name) was Hadassah, and Hadassah means "myrtle tree." By his stance among the myrtle trees, Zechariah's heavenly messenger was signaling that the deliverance would come through Hadassah, God's myrtle tree and it did.

Once she had uncovered and revealed Haman's entire plot to annihilate the Jews, Esther points to him and declares: "A foe and an enemy, is this wicked Haman!" And Haman became terrified before the king and the queen" (Esth. 7:6).

**Esther 7:6** And Esther said, "The adversary and enemy *is* this wicked Haman!" So Haman was terrified before the king and queen.

And then, on the gallows at his own house which Haman had constructed to hang Mordecai, the king declares: "Hang him on it" (Esth. 7:9).

**Esther 7:9** Now Harbonah, one of the eunuchs, said to the king, "Look! The gallows, fifty cubits high, which Haman made for Mordecai, who spoke good on the king's behalf, is standing at the house of Haman." Then the king said, "Hang him on it!"

**Esther 7:10** So they hanged Haman on the gallows that he had prepared for Mordecai. Then the king's wrath subsided.

After this, the king grants the Jews the right to assemble, to defend themselves, and to annihilate the entire army of those who set out to annihilate them (Esth. 9:11). This includes five hundred men, along with the ten sons of Haman, in the capital city of Susa alone (Esth. 9:12) and an additional 75,000 more throughout the entire Empire (Esth. 9:16).

Both the battle itself and the resulting victory for God's People were huge. This more than meets the criteria for fulfilling something of the scope and size of Ezekiel's Gog of Magog Prophecy.

<https://burrosofberea.com/gog-and-magog-part-7-gods-myrtle-tree/>

**Zechariah 1:17** Cry out again, Thus says the LORD of hosts: My cities shall again overflow with prosperity, and the LORD will again comfort Zion and again choose Jerusalem."

## Letting Zechariah Interpret Isaiah

Zechariah, one of the restoration prophets,<sup>[3]</sup> echoes the words of Isaiah by speaking of "comfort" coming to "Zion" when God once again chooses "Jerusalem" (Zech. 1:17). The idea of comfort coming to Zion/Jerusalem comes straight from Isaiah. Zechariah was informed of this comforting of Jerusalem by a

heavenly messenger who came to him in a night vision (Zech. 1:8). The messenger spoke of a deliverer who would protect God's people:

"...his glory sent me to the nations who plundered you, for he who touches you touches the apple of his eye: 'Behold, I will shake my hand over them, and they shall become plunder for those who served them. Then you will know that the Lord of hosts has sent me. Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion...' (Zech. 2:8-10).

When Zechariah's heavenly messenger notified the prophet about this upcoming deliverer, he was "standing among the myrtle trees" (Zech. 1:8). Prior to Zechariah, the term "myrtle" (ha'das) was only used in Isaiah.[4] The word does not appear in the entirety of the Old Testament prior to this. When he stood among the myrtle trees to deliver his message, Zechariah's messenger was telegraphing that the deliverance would come through Hadassah (Esther), and that she would be that deliverer – just as Isaiah had foreseen. Being familiar with Isaiah 51:3, 52:9 and 55:13, Zechariah would have understood the significance of the myrtle trees.

<https://burrosofberea.com/isaiahs-new-heavens-and-new-earth-part-7-comforting-the-children-protecting-the-people/>

**Zechariah 2:5** And I will be to her a wall of fire all around, declares the LORD, and I will be the glory in her midst.'"

## **A Wall of Fire**

Carefully note the reason the angel gives, in Zechariah 2, as to why the walls weren't needed. The walls weren't needed because the Lord Himself would be a "wall of fire" around His People, and the glory in their midst. God works through His People and, during this unique time of "unwalled villages," He was that wall of fire through His servants, Esther and Mordecai.

With that said, it's no small coincidence that Gog is poetically destroyed with "fire" in Ezekiel 38:22.

**Ezekiel 38:22** And I will bring him to judgment with pestilence and bloodshed; I will rain down on him, on his troops, and on the many peoples who *are* with him, flooding rain, great hailstones, fire, and brimstone.

Ronald Reagan famously said, "Ezekiel says that fire and brimstone will be rained upon the enemies of God's people. That must mean that they will be destroyed by nuclear weapons." [3] Contrary to such conjecture, this isn't about nuclear weapons. It's about God protecting His People when they are faithful to Him. God is a consuming fire (Heb. 12:29), and He Himself is the protection round about His people (Ps. 125:2).

<https://burrosofberea.com/gog-and-magog-part-7-gods-myrtle-tree/>

**Zechariah 2:8** For thus said the LORD of hosts, after his glory sent me to the nations who plundered you, for he who touches you touches the apple of his eye:

### **Touching the Apple of His Eye**

According to Zechariah, the fire of God's protection would be set ablaze at a time when the nations would seek to "plunder" His people (Zech. 2:8a). This immediately reminds us of Ezekiel 38:12, and Gog attacking Israel to "seize spoil" and "carry off plunder."

**Ezekiel 38:12** to take plunder and to take booty, to stretch out your hand against the waste places *that are again* inhabited, and against a people gathered from the nations, who have acquired livestock and goods, who dwell in the midst of the land.

It also reminds us of Esther 3:13, and Haman's goal to annihilate the Jews and "seize their possessions as plunder."

**Esther 3:13** And the letters were sent by couriers into all the king's provinces, to destroy, to kill, and to annihilate all the Jews, both young and old, little children and women, in one day, on the thirteenth *day* of the twelfth *month*, which *is* the month of Adar, and to plunder their possessions.

When the plunderers mount this assault, Zechariah is told that God will raise up a protector of His People who, with a wave of the hand, will plunder their enemies instead and declare, "...his glory sent me to the nations who plundered you, for he who touches you touches the apple of his eye" (Zech. 2:8b).

The "apple of his eye" is an ancient Hebrew idiom speaking of an infant's reflection in the pupil of his/her parent's eye – as the parent gazes intently at the baby being held.[4] Israel was that infant in God's arms, and He was about to send them a deliverer in their time of trouble.

<https://burrosofberea.com/gog-and-magog-part-7-gods-myrtle-tree/>

To compare Zechariah's statement about "the apple of His eye" to the modern nation of Israel, is to compare apples to oranges.

In this passage, Zechariah is told of a deliverer who will rise up at a time when "Jerusalem will be inhabited without walls" (Zechariah 2:4). This means Zechariah's prophecy in chapter 2 is about a time after the return from exile and prior to the rebuilding of the wall in Nehemiah (cf. Neh. 2:13; 4:6). It also means that the Dispensationalists have once again failed to hit the ball over the wall. Modern-day Israel is protected by a 500-mile-long wall called the "West Bank Barrier." [32]

The term Zechariah uses, "without walls" (perazah), is only found in two other

places in the Old Testament, i.e, Ezekiel 38:11 and Esther 9:19. Consequently, the historical context is the time of Esther, when Haman the Agagite/Gogite sought to exterminate the Jewish people.

At this time, Zechariah is told that God will raise up a protector of His People who, with a wave of the hand, will plunder their enemies (Zech. 2:8-8-9) and say: "his glory sent me to the nations who plundered you, for he who touches you touches the apple of his eye" (Zech. 2:8).

The entire prophetic episode opens with a heavenly messenger coming to Zechariah at night, "who is standing among the myrtle trees" (Zech. 1:8). This is significant because Esther's original Hebrew name was Hadassah (Esther 2:7), and Hadassah means "myrtle tree." The opening sequence in Zechariah telegraphs the fact that the deliverance would come through Hadassah, God's myrtle tree. This is precisely what happens in the Esther narrative.

Once she had uncovered and revealed Haman's entire plot to annihilate the Jews, Esther points to him and declares: "A foe and an enemy, is this wicked Haman!" And Haman became terrified before the king and the queen" (Esth. 7:6). And then, on the gallows at his own house which Haman had constructed to hang Mordecai, the king declares: "Hang him on it" (Esth. 7:9).

After this, the king grants the Jews the right to assemble and defend themselves, and to annihilate the entire army of those who set out to annihilate them (Esth. 9:11). And annihilate them, they did. This includes five hundred men, along with the ten sons of Haman, in the capital city of Susa alone (Esth. 9:12) and 75,000 more throughout the empire (Esth. 9:16). Esther (God's Myrtle Tree) was the protector of God's apple, and the myrtle tree becomes a memorial before the Lord forever (Isa. 55:13). Zechariah 2:8 has nothing to do with 1948, modern-day Israel, or the recent Hamas attack.

<https://burrosofberea.com/dispensationalism-strikes-out-again-three-more-verses-they-get-wrong/>

**Zechariah 8:13** And as you have been a byword of cursing among the nations, O house of Judah and house of Israel, so will I save you, and you shall be a blessing. Fear not, but let your hands be strong."

Accordingly, in Nehemiah 6 "many in Judah were bound by an oath (shevuah)" to Tobiah (Neh. 6:18) who had sent the letter to "frighten (yare)" Nehemiah and discourage the restoration efforts (Neh. 6:19). Zechariah is prophesying to tell the people not to honor that oath nor stand in the way of the work which the Lord would do through his servant, Nehemiah.

The historical situation that Zechariah foresees in 8:13-17 has everything to do with the issues and concerns of his own time and nothing to do with prophecy pundits' version of the Millennium in a yet future time. As such, Zechariah focuses

on Nehemiah – a hero of that time. Even closer in time, another hero (Mordecai) would emerge. Like Nehemiah, he would also stand his ground. Literally.

### **The Events of Esther's Day – Just a Decade Away**

Everyone is familiar enough with the story in Esther. Mordecai, a descendant of King Saul, refuses to bow down to Haman, a descendant of Agag. The conflict between Saul and Agag is rebooted in the book of Esther,[4] and Mordecai overcomes a half a century of shame and restores his family's name.

When Zechariah penned his prophecy, the epic battle that resulted in 510 BC[5] was just 10 short years down the road. If Haman and his forces had prevailed, all the restoration efforts would have failed. Simply put, there would be nothing to restore and no one left to restore it.

As an Agagite, Haman was part of the Royal bloodline of the Amalekites – Israel's most ancient enemy. His goal was to wipe the Jewish people out, all of them, in a single day (Esth. 3:23). As history would have it, a young orphan who became queen and her older cousin turned the tables on Haman – and turned history around.

The victory achieved by Esther and Mordecai would see the end of the Amalekites and the inauguration of a new Jewish holiday to commemorate their accomplishment – the Feast of Purim (Esth. 9:26-29). As Anne Wetter writes, Esther and Mordecai prove "to be the worthiest bearers of the Jewish tradition: they have not forgotten to blot out Amalek (Deut. 25,19), and, unlike their forefathers, they have actually managed to perform the deed." [6]

<https://burrosofberea.com/mordecai-or-the-millennium-ancient-history-pop-prophecy-and-the-meaning-of-zechariah-823-part-1-a-man-a-jew/>

**Zechariah 8:17** do not devise evil in your hearts against one another, and love no false oath, for all these things I hate, declares the LORD."

**Nehemiah 6:1** Now it happened when Sanballat, Tobiah, Geshem the Arab, and the rest of our enemies heard that I had rebuilt the wall, and *that* there were no breaks left in it (though at that time I had not hung the doors in the gates), **Nehemiah 6:2** that Sanballat and Geshem sent to me, saying, "Come, let us meet together among the villages in the plain of Ono." But they thought to do me harm.

Sanballat and his cohort Geshem wish to meet with Nehemiah under false pretenses (Neh. 6:2a). Nehemiah declines and informs the reader, "But they **intended (*chashav*)** to do me **harm" (*raah*)**. Notice the correlation with Zechariah 8:17 – "let none of you **devise (*chashav*) evil (*raah*)** in your heart against another."

<https://burrosofberea.com/mordecai-or-the-millennium-ancient-history-pop->

[prophecy-and-the-meaning-of-zechariah-823-part-1-a-man-a-jew/](#)

**Zechariah 8:19** “Thus says the LORD of hosts: The fast of the fourth month and the fast of the fifth and the fast of the seventh and the fast of the tenth shall be to the house of Judah seasons of joy and gladness and cheerful feasts. Therefore love truth and peace.

In Esther chapter 9, Mordecai sends a second letter to the Jews of all 127 provinces of Ahasuerus’s kingdom confirming the Feast of Purim as an officially appointed celebration – following Israel’s four days of fasting over the events of the exile (Esth. 9:25-31).[7] Mordecai’s words in this letter are specifically designated as the “words of peace and truth” (Esth. 9:30). The connection to Zechariah (written 10 years earlier) is all but transparent:

As Jon D. Levenson points out in his commentary on Esther, Esther 9:30 is a clear “echo of the clause” found in Zechariah 8:19.[8] Interestingly, the writer of Esther reverses the word order. Esther says, “peace and truth,” while Zechariah says, “truth and peace.” For modern readers, this reversal may seem to downplay the idea of an allusion to Zechariah. For an ancient Jew, however, the word inversion would solidify the connection.

Inverting the “original lemma” is actually “the general rule for intra-biblical citations” during this period in Israel’s history.[9] In other words, if a Biblical writer wants to reflect back to a previous Biblical writer, this is precisely what they often do. This is known as Zeidel’s Law – after the scholar M. Zeidel, who found numerous parallels between Isaiah and Psalms employing this stylistic device.[10] And this makes perfect sense if you think about it. Reversing the word order of an earlier passage is a beautiful and poetic way of capturing the concept of an echo back. As such, Esther 8:30 is a loud echo back to Zechariah 8:19.

As Micheal Fishbane points out, the writer of Esther understood the “Zecharian prophecy in the light of contemporary events,” and Zechariah’s “exhortation to ‘love truth and peace’ has been “transformed.”[11] It now serves as the signet of Mordecai’s decrees, called ‘words of peace and truth.’”[12] “With the inversion of terms characteristic of intrabiblical citations,” writes Levenson, Esther 9:30 “bears striking similarity to the prophecy of redemption in Zech. 8:19.”[13] On this basis, Levenson concludes “that the author of Esth. 9:29-32 may have seen a fulfillment of ancient prophecy in the events narrated in the book to which he appended this passage.”[14]

<https://burrosofberea.com/mordecai-or-the-millennium-ancient-history-pop-prophecy-and-the-meaning-of-zechariah-823-part-2-the-words-of-peace-and-truth/>

**Zechariah 8:23** Thus says the LORD of hosts: In those days ten men from the nations of every tongue shall take hold of the robe of a Jew, saying, ‘Let us go

with you, for we have heard that God is with you.”

Zechariah's 8th chapter finds its fulfillment in the events of the Restoration Period, after the return from exile, and draws striking parallels to Esther's 8th chapter. In Zechariah 8:23, a specific man, Mordecai, is elevated among his people and no one people group is elevated above another.

Zechariah is writing around 520 BC – sixteen years after Cyrus called the Jewish people back to their homeland in 536 BC and four years before the temple was rebuilt in 516 BC.[3] Other significant events on the horizon include Ezra leading a second wave of exiles back to Jerusalem in 458 BC, and Nehemiah rebuilding the city wall in that same year. This is the historical context and setting of the time when Zechariah wrote. The prophet is speaking to the concerns of his own day.

A concrete case-in-point example, firmly anchoring Zechariah 8 to the prophet's own time, would be verses 13-17. These verses have nothing to do with a future Millennium, after a seven-year Tribulation, and everything to do with the events of the Restoration. Specifically, these verses contain a warning not to conspire with those who would lead the resistance movement against Nehemiah's restoration efforts:

From the overall thematic elements in general, right down to the precise terms and phrases in particular, Zechariah's words here are an exact match to the events of Nehemiah 6. Zechariah anticipates the conspiracy to take Nehemiah down and Nehemiah's resolve to stand his ground.

In the opening sentence of Esther 2:5, he is simply “a man, a Jew” (ish Yehudi). This seemingly minor detail, however, becomes a major key in understanding Zechariah 8:23 and speaks to Mordecai's importance in Jewish history.

While the word “man” (ish) is used 1850 times in the Old Testament, and the word “Jew” (Yehudi) is used 69 times, the two words are coupled together in just two places – Esther 2:5 and Zechariah 8:23.[8] Rendered literally, Zechariah 8:23 says that the people from the other nations “will grab the garment of a man, a Jew” (ish Yehudi).[9] As Christopher Kou says, this “exact emphatic form occurs only” in these two passages.[10] Interpreting Scripture is about connecting dots, and the Biblical writers give us two dots to connect between Zechariah's prophecy and Mordecai's legacy.[11]

<https://burrosofberea.com/mordecai-or-the-millennium-ancient-history-pop-prophecy-and-the-meaning-of-zechariah-823-part-1-a-man-a-jew/>

**Zechariah 9:5** Ashkelon shall see it, and be afraid; Gaza too, and shall writhe in anguish; Ekron also, because its hopes are confounded. The king shall perish from Gaza; Ashkelon shall be uninhabited;

## Gaza in Zechariah

Lastly, Gaza's final showing in the prophetic lineup comes by way of Zechariah (520 BC). Zechariah 9:5 states that "Gaza will writhe in great pain" and "the king will perish from Gaza." A little over 200 years later, "Alexander the Great destroyed the city again in 332 BC, after a lengthy battle." [15] In short, all of the Gaza prophecies, that the prophecy purveyors appeal to, have been fulfilled in the pages of history's past. Taken in context, the Gaza prophecies have nothing to do with our modern context. And this is precisely why the prophecy pundits ignore the prophecies' historical context.

<https://burrosofberea.com/zechariah-24-and-the-gaza-prophecies-events-occurred-in-real-time/>

**Zechariah 9:11** As for you also, because of the blood of my covenant with you, I will set your prisoners free from the waterless pit.

Zechariah's words here harken back to God's original Covenant with Israel after the Exodus from Egypt, the only other time this phrase is used in Scripture:

**Exodus 24:8** And Moses took the blood, sprinkled *it* on the people, and said, "This is the **blood of the covenant** which the LORD has made with you according to all these words."

**Exodus 24:9** Then Moses went up, also Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel,

**Exodus 24:10** and they saw the God of Israel. And *there was* under His feet as it were a paved work of sapphire stone, and it was like the very heavens in *its* clarity.

**Exodus 24:11** But on the nobles of the children of Israel He did not lay His hand. So they saw God, and they ate and drank.

**Exodus 24:12** Then the LORD said to Moses, "Come up to Me on the mountain and be there; and I will give you tablets of stone, and the law and commandments which I have written, that you may teach them."

**Exodus 24:13** So Moses arose with his assistant Joshua, and Moses went up to the mountain of God.

So, Zechariah is recalling a past event in Israel's history to give the returning exiles a new hope in their current situation. The past is the key to the present, as God sets "free" (Zech. 9:11) the prisoners "who have the hope" (Zech. 9:12).

And just as the phrase "the blood of the covenant" takes the reader back to the time of the Exodus, the idea of God setting his people "free" does as well. We all remember Moses's famous words before Pharaoh: "Set my people free" (Exod. 5:1). Thus, the return from exile is thematically linked to the Exodus from Egypt.

It is on the basis of the "blood" of the first "covenant" that God made with His people at the Exodus that He is going to set His people free once again. Only this time, it's not the land of Egypt from which they are being liberated, but the

“waterless pit” of Babylon. This the backdrop and setting of the prophet’s words. Zechariah recalls the Exodus of the past to give “the prisoners” a “hope” for the future – their future, not ours.

<https://burrosofberea.com/double-restoration-and-trouble-with-equations-pop-prophecy-and-zechariah-911-12/>

**Zechariah 9:12** Return to your stronghold, O prisoners of hope; today I declare that I will restore to you double.

As it turns out, the numbers do add up (and then some) when we take the time to read the writings of the Old Testament and do the arithmetic. Regarding the exile, 4,600 Jews were taken captive during the 7th, 18th, and 23rd years of Nebuchadnezzar’s reign (Jer. 52:28-30). His biggest incursion, however, came in the 8th year of his reign with 18,000 captives (2 Kg. 24:14-16). Running the numbers then,  $18,000 + 4,600 = 22,600$  total captives during the Babylonian Exile.

In Zechariah, God declares to the returning exiles: “I will restore you double” (Zech. 9:12). Doing the math here:  $22,600 \times 2 = 45,200$ . That is the minimum number of returning Jews needed for the double restoration. According to Ezra and Nehemiah, the first wave of returnees under Zerubbabel comes in at 42,360 (Ezr. 2:64; Neh. 7:66). An additional 7,337 servants and 200 singers (Ezr. 1:65) brings the sum to 49,891. Finally, the second wave of 1,516 returnees under Ezra (Ezr. 8) gives us a grand total of 51,407 Jews back home in Israel after the exile. This more than meets the double-restoration requirement of Zechariah 9:12.

Nonetheless, the pundits will do what they always do. They will double down on their insistence that prophecies like this have not come true. They need these things to still be in the future for their narrative to work – and for their books to sell. With their warp-speed slingshots around the text, who knows what they’ll come up with next? Only time will tell.

<https://burrosofberea.com/double-restoration-and-trouble-with-equations-pop-prophecy-and-zechariah-911-12/>

**Zechariah 14:1** Behold, a day is coming for the LORD, when the spoil taken from you will be divided in your midst.

## Chapter Context

To begin with, Zechariah 14 follows two chapters that were ultimately fulfilled in the 1st century. Compare Zech. 12:10 with John 19:37 and Zech. 13:7 with Mark 14:27. In keeping with that context, it would seem reasonable that Zech. 14 follows historically within that same time frame; rather than breaking over a period that is already almost 2,000 years elapsed. Simply Put: Since Chapters 12 and 13 find a 1st century fulfillment, it would stand to reason that Chapter 14 would find a 1st century fulfillment as well.

## **The Day of the Lord**

The expression, "the day of the Lord" (Zech. 14:1), does not necessitate an end of the world event. The "day of the Lord" is a common expression in Scripture. The Scriptural references to the "day of the Lord" cannot all be taken to mean the same event. Its precise meaning in any particular passage is entirely dependent upon the context of that passage. For example, the Prophet Isaiah uses the phrase, "the day of the Lord," in conjunction with the destruction of ancient Babylon (Isa. 13:6, 9). God's judgment on Idumea is called, "the day of the Lord's vengeance" (Isa. 34:8). Jeremiah calls the judgment of ancient Egypt, "the day of the Lord God of Hosts" (Jer. 46:10). Amos refers to the Assyrian captivity of Israel as, "the day of the Lord" (Amos 5:18-19, 27). According to the Apostle Peter, the pouring out of the Holy Spirit upon God's People on the Day of Pentecost fulfilled Joel's prophecy concerning, "the great and terrible day of the Lord" (cf. Acts 2:16-21; Joel 2:28-32). Therefore, it would not be at all unusual for this expression to apply to a national judgment, such as the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

## **Spoils Divided**

Zechariah tells the Jews: "thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee" (Zech. 14:1). It is significant that Josephus credits the primary cause of the Jewish revolt, which eventually led to the Jewish War, to a public plundering of Jewish property by Gessius Florus in the 12th year of Nero's reign. Gessius Florus, appointed by Nero, was the Roman procurator of Judea from AD 64-66. Whereas the former procurator did his cheating and fraud "in private," "Gessius did his unjust actions to the harm of the nation after a most pompous manner." Rather than getting "money out of single persons," Gessius "spoiled whole cities" and did "publicly proclaim it all the country over." He had given great liberty to the Roman soldiers that they might "turn robbers" in order that he might "share with them in the spoils they got." Josephus speaks of Gessius's "greediness of gain" in which he "became a partner with the robbers themselves." Gessius was bent on the purpose "to show his crimes to everybody" and make a "pompous ostentation of them to our nation," writes Josephus. "It was Florus who necessitated us," continues Josephus, "to take up arms against the Romans." Whereas robbers normally sneak into homes in the dead of night and divvy up their sordid gain in private, the spoil of Gessius's unjust acts were "divided" in the Jews' very "midst!"[1]

<https://burrosofberea.com/thoughts-on-zechariah-141-4/>

It is significant that Josephus credits the primary cause of the Jewish revolt, which eventually led to the Jewish War, to a public plundering of Jewish property by Gessius Florus in the 12th year of Nero's reign. Gessius Florus, appointed by Nero, was the Roman procurator of Judea from AD 64-66.

<https://burrosofberea.com/index.php/2022/10/15/thoughts-on-zechariah-14:1-4/>

In a typical internet search on the passage, the answers given are characteristic of the modern penchant to interpret fulfilled prophecy as unfulfilled. The inclination to approach such texts in this manner is the disease that plagues the Church today.

A tell-tale symptom of this disease is the tendency of modern “prophecy experts” to take the reader on a wild goose chase throughout the Bible. In so doing, they seldom actually deal with the specific passage that they claim to be addressing. Ideas and concepts, imported from other portions of Scripture, are strung together in a haphazard manner, leaving the reader in a dizzy state of confusion. Modern treatments of Zechariah 14 are a prime example of this interpretive approach.

### **Spoils Divided in their Midst**

Regardless of how one views the timing of fulfillment, the picture Zechariah paints in verse 1 is hard to miss. God’s people are being assaulted and plundered in plain sight, and the atrocities against them are being committed in full view. Unlike robbers who ransack homes at night and return to their hideaway to divvy up their sordid gain in private, the Jews’ assailants would openly flaunt the rewards of their conquest in the Jews’ very “midst.” Past or future, this is a public plundering of the Jewish people, and most commentators understand this.[5]

### **It’s Not About Us**

The truth is, there really couldn’t be a more apt summary of the events of the first-century Roman-Jewish War than what is succinctly contained in Zechariah 14:1-2. As Brent Kercheville writes, Zechariah 14:1-2 is a “graphic description” of “what would take place in the Roman assault upon the city of Jerusalem in 70 A.D.”[7]

As the fourth-century Christian historian Eusebius wrote, “Zechariah writes this prophecy after the return from Babylon, foretelling the final siege of the people by the Romans, through which the whole Jewish race was to become subject to their enemies: he says that only the remnant of the people shall be saved, exactly describing the apostles of our Savior.”[8] Specifically, Zechariah 14:1 foretells the particular actions of the 7th Roman procurator of Judea, Gessius Florus – actions which, among other circumstances, helped to prompt the war, according to Josephus.

### **The Actions of Gessius Florus**

Throughout his writings, Josephus identifies at least 10 different factors as contributing causes of the Roman-Jewish conflict.[10] These were all triggers which would eventually converge, resulting in all-out war. Among the earliest of

these triggers were the criminal acts and abuses of power by Gessius Florus[11] in the 12th year of Nero's reign. What Josephus recounts in this regard is virtually a commentary on Zechariah 14:1.

Whereas the former procurator did his cheating and fraud "in private," writes Josephus, "Gessius did his unjust actions to the harm of the nation after a most pompous manner." [12] Rather than getting "money out of single persons," Gessius "spoiled whole cities" and did "publicly proclaim it all the country over." He had given great liberty to the Roman soldiers to "turn robbers" in order that he might "share with them in the spoils they got."

Josephus speaks of Gessius's "greediness of gain," from which he "became a partner with the robbers themselves." Gessius was bent on the purpose "to show his crimes to everybody" and make a "pompous ostentation of them to our nation," writes Josephus. "It was Florus who necessitated us," he continues, "to take up arms against the Romans." Whereas robbers normally sneak into homes in the dead of night and divide up their acquisitions in private, the spoil of Gessius's unjust acts were "divided" in the Jews' very "midst!"

This very public plundering of the Jews coincides perfectly with what Zechariah describes in verse 1, and it pulls us to the far distant past rather than the near future to find the prophecy's fulfillment. Zechariah 14:1 also sets the stage for all that follows in the remainder of the chapter. Accordingly, we should continue to look to ancient history for the passage's fulfillment, rather than to tomorrow's headlines.

If Zechariah 14 was indeed fulfilled in the events leading up to and including the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, this has tremendous apologetic value for Christian believers. The fact that Zechariah predicted these events nearly 600 years before they transpired is de facto evidence for divine inspiration. It demonstrates that the Bible is exactly what it claims to be, and people need to take its claims seriously. Sadly, this great apologetic tool sits unused, collecting dust, as God's People continue to misinterpret fulfilled prophecy as unfulfilled.

In simple terms, the popular approach to Bible prophecy is like a virus which has infected nearly 90% of the American Christian world. Perhaps this partially explains why the Church in America has become so impotent and ineffective? The net effect of the dispensational method has manifested almost 200 years of failed predictions and false hopes. This cuts to the very heart of the meaning and message of the Bible itself and taints its reliability. Additionally, it greatly impacts our own perceived meaning and purpose in the world, as well as our message to the world. The same world that we're trying to reach is relying on us to get this right.

We can't heal the nations until we take off our own filters and see Bible prophecy again – for the first time.

<https://burrosofberea.com/zechariah-14-part-1-the-precursor-to-the-war-zechariah-141/>

**Zechariah 14:2** For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle, and the city shall be taken and the houses plundered and the women raped. Half of the city shall go out into exile, but the rest of the people shall not be cut off from the city.

## **All Nations**

The Lord says He will “gather all nations against Jerusalem to do battle” (Zech. 14:2). 1st century Rome was an empire consisting of all the nations of the known world at the time (see: Luke 2:1). The Roman Empire “extended roughly two thousand miles from Scotland south to the headwaters of the Nile and about three thousand miles from the Pillars of Hercules eastward to the sands of Persia. Its citizens and subject peoples numbered perhaps eighty million.”[2] The siege of Jerusalem actually included a League of Nations, under Roman dominion, consisting of Italy, Achaia, Asia, Syria, Egypt, Africa, Spain, Gaul, Britain and Germany.[3] This more than satisfies the textual requirement of “all nations”—especially when this term (and similar terms) is oftentimes much more limited in scope in its Scriptural usage (e.g., 1 Chr. 14:17; 2 Chr. 32:23; 36:23, Ezra 1:2; Ps. 118:18; Jer. 27:7; 28:11; Hab. 2:5).

## **Atrocities Committed**

The atrocities mentioned, e.g., “houses rifled,” “women ravished” (Zech. 14:2), certainly fit the scenario of the Roman siege of Jerusalem and I seriously doubt anyone would argue with this observation. Zechariah tells us that “half of the city shall go forth into captivity” (Zech. 14:2). Accordingly, Josephus speaks of a surplus of Jewish slaves. The “number of them that were slain” was so “great” that “the very soldiers grew weary of killing them” and “sold the rest of the multitude, with their wives and children, and every one of them at a very low price... And indeed the number of those that were sold was immense; but of the populace above forty thousand were saved...”[4]

## **The Residue of the People**

The passage goes on to state: “and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city” (14:2). The progressive revelation of the NT sheds much light on Zechariah’s words. From the NT, we learn that there are, in reality, two Jerusalems: the Jerusalem below that was “in bondage” and the Jerusalem above “which is free” (Gal. 4:24-26). Christians, being “born after the Spirit,” are members of the Jerusalem which is above (Gal. 4:29). Long ago, Abraham “looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God” (Heb. 11:10). According to the Writer to the Hebrews, NT Christians have come to that city: “But ye are come unto Mount Zion and unto the city of the living God, the

heavenly Jerusalem..." (Heb. 12:22). Those who accepted Christ as the Messiah became citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem, escaped the final siege of AD 70, and were "not cut off from the city" of the living God.

<https://burrosofberea.com/thoughts-on-zechariah-141-4/>

As one commentator notes, the disturbing events described in this verse are "identical to those that happened during the Roman destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. (i.e., city conquered and plundered by a consortium of armies and auxiliaries from throughout the empire; women raped; many enslaved, some freed)."[2]

## **All Nations Attack Jerusalem**

The passage says that "all the nations" will come "against Jerusalem" in "battle." Arguing from the Futurist perspective, Tommy Ice says, "This does not sound like the Romans in A.D. 70," and it "does not fit with what happened to Jerusalem in A.D. 70 when the Romans conquered Israel." [3] Likewise, Alex Dodson concurs: "Of course, Jerusalem was invaded in 70 AD but...what happened in 70 AD doesn't seem to fit." [4] One popular website informs us that all "the nations of the world" will be involved in this attack upon Israel. [5] The argument boils down to the notion that Zechariah 14 describes an attack by "all the nations of the earth, not just the Romans." [6]

On the surface, this reasoning may seem valid. However, there is no need to press this language to the extreme and imagine that it speaks of every single nation on the face of the planet. Scripture interprets Scripture, and this just isn't how the expression, "all nations," is used in the Bible.

## **The Phrase "All Nations" in the Bible**

In its Scriptural usage, the phrase "all nations" is merely used, contextually, to refer to the nations adjacent to the subject. For example, 1 Chronicles 14:17 says that the Lord brought the fear of David upon "all nations." Likewise, 2 Chronicles 32:23 says that Hezekiah, the king of Judah, was exalted in the sight of "all nations." Speaking of Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon, Jeremiah 27:7 says, "all nations shall serve him." It's simply not the case that every nation in the entire world feared David, exalted Hezekiah, or served Nebuchadnezzar. The language is localized to mean the nations in proximity to Israel and not every nation from around the globe. [7]

## **A Consortium of Nations in AD 70**

This is exactly what happened in AD 70. As Ken Gentry writes: "Zechariah 14:1-2 pictures the Roman imperial forces joining the various client kings who engage the Jewish War AD 67-70. This war is conducted by an empire of 'nations' (v 2), consisting not only of the Romans but the lands of Syria, Asia Minor, Palestine,

Gaul, Egypt, Britain, and others. Client kings, such as Antiochus, Agrippa, Sohemus, Malchus, and Alexander, provide auxiliary forces for Rome during the Jewish War.”[9]

When Zechariah therefore speaks of “all nations” coming against Jerusalem, it is a fitting term for the league of nations accompanying Rome’s decimation of the city.

### **Some Horrific Details**

A dive into any of the historical writings that recount the events of the Roman-Jewish War reveals how identical those events truly were to Zechariah’s prediction. For example, 4 Ezra (also known as 2 Esdras) is a post-AD 70 Jewish writing preoccupied with the devastating effects of the city’s destruction in the aftermath of the war.[10] Stressing the most lamentable results of the Roman onslaught, one passage from 4 Ezra in particular reads like a commentary on Zechariah 14:2:

“Our psaltery is laid on the ground, our song is put to silence, our rejoicing is at an end, the light of our candlestick is put out, the ark of our covenant is spoiled, our holy things are defiled, and the name that is called upon us is almost profaned: our children are put to shame, our priests are burnt, our Levites are gone into captivity, our virgins are defiled, and our wives raped; our righteous men carried away, our little ones destroyed, our young men are brought in bondage, and our strong men are become weak” (4 Ezra 10:22).[11]

The themes of devastation, exile, and rape, loom large in both 4 Ezra 10:22 and Zechariah 14:2. These texts are mirror images of each other – one written before the fact, the other written after the fact.

### **A Revolting Image**

Perhaps the most revolting image, in both 4 Ezra and Zechariah 14:2, is that of rape. As Caryn A. Reeder points out, “Rape is nearly a synonym for the capture of a city” in ancient times,[12] and was a “consistent expectation in war.”[13] Roman imperial art often highlights rape to show the “abasement of Rome’s enemies.”[14] Steve Mason describes a modern relic from history’s past that demonstrates how rape served as a badge of honor for the Romans in their conquest of other nations. Intriguingly, “the Judeans” are specifically mentioned in the inscription:

“A temple from Nero’s reign in Aphrodisias (modern Turkey) sported a football-field-sized promenade along which imperial victories over the world’s *ethne* were portrayed. On the northern façade were statues of some fifty nations; by chance the inscription for the ‘*ethnos* of the Judeans’ is one of the few to have survived. The southern façade hosted mythical scenes portraying the emperors. In one, a heroically naked Tiberius escorts a bound prisoner half his size. In another

Claudius, naked as a God, looms over a supine and helpless Britannia, grabbing her long hair as she struggles beneath him, one of her breasts exposed. Another scene features Nero towering over naked and distraught Armenia. These are potent images... soldiers lie dead, dying, and headless. Women, disheveled after implied rape, desperately try to protect their children.”[15]

All of these potent, revolting, and horrific images were telegraphed by Zechariah in the Old Testament centuries before they happened. Zechariah’s words were then echoed in the New Testament, centuries later, by Jesus Himself.

### **The Siege, the Houses, and the Women**

Zechariah’s reference to the women of the city is the third item identified on his list of shocking events. The prophet highlights three key elements precisely in this order: 1) the siege of the city, 2) the reference to houses, and 3) the mention of women. Part of interpreting Scripture is recognizing patterns. This being the case, it’s no small coincidence that all three of these key elements occur, in the exact same sequence, in Jesus’ Olivet Discourse (Mk. 13:14-17).

Jesus speaks of the siege of the city (Lk. 21:20) and the urgency of evacuating one’s house (Lk. 21:21; cf. Matt. 24:17; Mk. 13:15-16) and shows a heightened concern for women during this time (Lk. 21:23). In fact, the Roman temple images of raped women “desperately” trying “to protect their children” reflect Jesus’ own words: “woe to those who are with child and to those who nurse babes in those days” (Lk. 21:23). Jesus echoes Zechariah, and both of their voices were echoed in AD 70.

As Jonathan Menn states, “the Olivet Discourse is a ‘retelling’ of Zechariah 14.”[16] Coffman’s Commentary on the Bible puts it this way: “the subject under discussion” in Matthew 24 “is exactly the same as the theme of Zechariah here... There is such a resemblance between this chapter in Zechariah and that of Matthew 24, that it is safe to suppose that Jesus’ words in the New Testament may actually be understood...as an expansion and elaboration of this very prophecy.”[17] In other words, whatever Zechariah 14 is talking about, Jesus is talking about (Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21), and they’re both talking about the events leading up to and including the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

### **Half the City is Exiled and Half Remains**

Zechariah’s next statement continues the trend of a perfect match with the Olivet Discourse. He says, “half of the city will be exiled but the rest of the people will not be eliminated from the city.” Jesus put it this way: “At that time there will be two men in the field; one will be taken and one will be left. Two women will be grinding at the mill; one will be taken and one will be left” (Matt. 24:40).

These are two different ways of saying the same thing, and Zechariah and Jesus

are both speaking of the same thing. Having said that, the context of both of their words once again coincides with the events of the first century. The idea of half the city being taken into exile is an apt depiction of the Jews' situation at the end of the Roman-Jewish War. Those who remained in the city were killed and those who were taken were exiled. As D. A. Carson notes, there was never "so high a percentage of a great city so thoroughly and painfully exterminated and enslaved as during the Fall of Jerusalem." [18]

## Closing comment

What Moses, Zechariah, and Jesus spoke of in signs and portents, Josephus recorded as history. This prophecy is fulfilled on the pages of history, not on the headlines of today.

The good news for modern-day believers is that the precise fulfillment of Zechariah's prophecy, along with the prophecies of Jesus, and Moses, serves as a tremendous apologetic demonstrating the divine inspiration of Scripture. From the siege of the city to the sad outcome of the survivors, it was all foretold in exact detail by God's prophets long before it happened.

<https://burrosofberea.com/zechariah-14-part-2-the-siege-of-the-city/>

"the remnant of the people shall not be cut off from the city" may refer to New Jerusalem.

<https://burrosofberea.com/index.php/2022/10/15/thoughts-on-zechariah-141-4/>

**Zechariah 14:3** Then the LORD will go out and fight against those nations as when he fights on a day of battle.

## The Lord Will Fight

Next, Zechariah tells us that "the Lord will go forth and fight" against those very nations that He raised up against Jerusalem. The idea of the Lord fighting for His People is a familiar concept in Scripture (e.g., Joshua 10: 14, 42; 23:3) and indicates His providential favor. The concept of God judging the very nations that He uses to purge His People is also a familiar concept in Scripture—the example of Assyria being the most well-known (See: Isa. 10:5-6, 12-13). Similar to Assyria, after using Rome as His rod to smite Jerusalem, God then turns on Rome itself in judgment. "It is significant that the decline of the Roman Empire dates from the fall of Jerusalem." [5] "It is also observable, that the Romans after having been thus made the executioners of divine vengeance on the Jewish nation, never prospered as they had done before; but the Lord evidently fought against them, and all the nations which composed their overgrown empire; till at last it was subverted, and their fairest cities and provinces were ravaged by barbarous invaders." [6]

<https://burrosofberea.com/thoughts-on-zechariah-141-4/>

For most futurists, this verse is the key as to why (in their view) Zechariah 14 can't be about the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. The passage speaks of the city's deliverance and not its decimation, they argue. In Zechariah 14:3, God fights against those nations that mount an assault upon Jerusalem. As the reasoning goes: the Romans were successful in AD 70; therefore, the passage must be speaking of sometime in the future – a time when the nations of the world attempt an attack upon Israel, but God intervenes and defeats them. Obviously, God did not "fight against those nations" that stormed the city in AD 70.[1] Consequently, this verse serves as the basis for rejecting the idea of past fulfillment in Zechariah 14.

From there it is argued that anything in the Gospels that might possibly speak of the upcoming destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70 is, consequently, incompatible with Zechariah 14. Since Zechariah predicts Israel's rescue rather than its ruination, Zechariah cannot be telling of the same events as Jesus in such instances.

### **The Significance of Getting Zechariah's Prophecy Right**

The timing of Zechariah 14 is significant for both Jews and Christians living today. If Zechariah 14 remains unfulfilled, the Jewish people have some horrific events before them in the inevitable future – rape, destruction, and captivity (Zech. 14:2), to name but a few. This certainly isn't good news. On the other hand, if Zechariah 14 was fulfilled in the distant past, none of these atrocities await today's Jew in God's predetermined prophetic plan.

For today's Christian believer (both Jew and Gentile alike), past fulfillment of the passage has tremendous apologetic value. It would mean that Zechariah, along with Jesus in the Olivet Discourse, foresaw and foretold of AD 70 with incredible accuracy. This being the case, divine inspiration alone accounts for the precision of both of their predictions. Prior to the rise of Dispensationalism in the mid to late 1800s, Jesus's Olivet Discourse was seen as "absolute and irresistible proof of the divine origin of Christianity," as George Peter Holford put it in 1805.[2] Since Zechariah's topic was the same as Jesus's topic (i.e., the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70), Zachariah 14 carries the same apologetic value for the believer as does Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21.

The interweaving of Zechariah's prophecy with Jesus's prophecy, however, is precisely where Futurists think they've found an "out" which allows them to sever the two prophecies from one another. Specifically, they believe Luke's version of the Olivet discourse contains an escape clause of sorts. With this supposed loophole in Luke, Zechariah 14 is then catapulted into the future, disconnected from AD 70, and robbed of its worth in defending the faith.

### **Zechariah 14 and the Olivet Discourse**

Jesus's Olivet Discourse, found in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 21, is basically His version of Zechariah 14. Whatever the Olivet Discourse is about, Zechariah 14 is about, and vice versa. As Don K. Preston notes, "The parallel between the passages can hardly be doubted." [3]

Even most Futurists would agree with this, but they see neither Jesus nor Zechariah describing the events of the Roman-Jewish War of the first century. For them, Jesus and Zechariah are both describing the events leading up to and including the end of the world, rather than the events leading up to and including the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

This creates a problem for them, however. If such is indeed the case, this leaves Jesus saying virtually nothing about one of the most significant happenings in the near future of His original audience. It seems inconceivable that He wouldn't have mentioned the upcoming calamity at some point during His earthly ministry.

This being so, some Futurists will actually concede that Luke 21 is about the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, but to exclusion of Matthew 24 and Mark 13. To put it another way, Luke 21 is in fact in the past from our perspective while Matthew 24 and Mark 13 still lie in our future – according to them. From there, it is argued that what Luke describes in Luke 21 (i.e., AD 70) is drastically different from what Zechariah describes in Zechariah 14; therefore, Zechariah cannot be speaking of the events of AD 70. This in turn gives the Futurist a workaround to detach Jesus's words from Zechariah's words whenever Jesus is prophesying about the city's first-century destruction.

### **Luke 21 vs. Zechariah 14**

Tommy Ice is a good example of those who try to break the connection between Zechariah 14 and Luke 21. While Ice agrees that that "Luke 21:20-24 prophesied the A.D. 70 Roman destruction of Jerusalem," he contends that there is a significant contrast between Luke and Zechariah which renders the two passages incompatible. [4]

Ice reasons that "Jerusalem" is "destroyed" in Luke, but Jerusalem is "redeemed" in Zechariah. [5] Consequently, the argument is that Zechariah and Luke must be speaking of two different events entirely. The city cannot be destroyed and redeemed at the same time, or so the reasoning goes.

This juxtaposition between destruction (Luke) and redemption (Zechariah) may appear compelling on the surface, but Luke 21 also speaks of redemption. In Luke, Jesus says, "Now when these things begin to take place, straighten up and raise your heads, because your redemption is drawing near" (Lk. 21:28). Thus, Luke speaks of both destruction (Lk. 21:20) and redemption (Lk. 21:28) at the same time. In other words, the same contrast which Ice claims sets Luke and Zechariah apart, exists within Luke's very passage itself. If positing destruction

against redemption necessitates two distinct contexts, this distinction does more than merely set Luke at odds with Zechariah, it sets Luke at odds with himself.

### **Is Luke Contradicting Himself?**

The question now becomes: is Luke contradicting himself within the space of eight verses? How can a city be ruined and rescued at the same time? What sense can be made of this? The key to answering these questions is, of course, Luke 21:21 and the flight to the mountains.

When the time came, the people inside the city had a choice to make between the Zealots' message and Jesus's message. In their insane delusion that they could somehow overcome the Roman onslaught, the Zealots were marshalling the Jews to stay inside the city and fight. Jesus's followers, on the other hand, would have heeded His advice and "got the heck out of Dodge," so to speak. So, desolation and redemption coexist within the same context. While some met an awful fate trapped inside the city's walls, others fled to freedom and escaped that same fate. Retribution and relief were simultaneous, and Luke's words are not conflicting.

Those who clung to old earthly Jerusalem, in hopes of successfully defending her, were destroyed and defeated. Those who clung to Jesus's words, and were becoming part of the new heavenly Jerusalem, were rescued and rewarded. Both elements coexist in Luke 21, and they are side by side in Zechariah 14 as well. Zechariah informs us that some would go down with the city and/or be captured (Zech. 14:2), while others would flee to the safety of God's mountains (Zech. 14:5). This dovetails with the events of AD 70, precisely. Those who followed Jesus's advice didn't die within the city's walls, nor were they captured or exiled. Old Jerusalem was destroyed while the members of the New Jerusalem were rescued.

The apparent contradictions and conflicting outcomes raised by Ice are a non-issue in either passage. In Luke 21 and Zechariah 14, there is both destruction and deliverance, slaughter and salvation, retribution and redemption. It all depended upon which message the people in question chose to listen and obey – the message of the Zealots or the message of Jesus. There is no internal contradiction in Luke, and there is certainly no external contradiction between Luke and Zechariah.

### **Against Those Nations or With Those Nations?**

These issues aside, the question still remains as to how it could be said that God fought "against those nations" that came against Jerusalem in battle in 70 AD. The Romans were in fact successful in their campaign rather than vice versa. This much is true. If God was fighting "against" them, one would think the outcome would have been the other way around.

As is often the case, the English rendering of a single word can make all the difference regarding what a particular verse is or isn't saying. There's a well-known translational problem here that would alter the connotation of the verse significantly. Rendered literally, the text simply reads, "the Lord will fight in nations." [6] This sounds awkward to us. To smooth things out in English, translators drop the preposition "in" and add the word "against." In so doing, the sense of the verse drastically changes. In fact, this translational choice turns the passage on its head.

As George L. Klein points out, in his commentary on Zechariah: "The statement that 'the LORD will ... fight against those nations' contains a significant ambiguity that has the potential to alter the meaning of the verse dramatically...The question turns on the meaning of the preposition be. This preposition commonly means 'in' or 'among' (Zech. 6:5). If this is the intended meaning of the preposition, it would mean that the Lord continues to fight with the nations against Jerusalem." [7]

### **John Nelson Darby Got It Right on Zechariah 14:3**

In a bit of historical irony, John Nelson Darby, who is responsible for bringing Dispensationalism to the world, translated the verse as follows: "And Jehovah will go forth and fight with those nations, as when He fought in the day of battle." [8] He gets God's name wrong, it's Yahweh and not Jehovah, but "fight with those nations" is a much better English rendering of the original Hebrew than "fight against those nations." So, Darby deserves credit there.

Darby's translational choice of wording is supported by the Septuagint. The Septuagint is the ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, and it was written by Jewish scribes who understood their language. That said, they rendered the verse: "And the Lord shall go forth, and fight with those Gentiles as when he fought in the day of war." [9]

<https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Zechariah%2014&version=DARBY>

Taken in this light, the meaning is that "the Lord fought with those nations as his tools to punish Jerusalem or that he sided with those nations against Israel to punish Israel as when he brought Babylon against Israel to punish her for her transgressions." [10] This comports well with other Scriptural examples of God using pagan nations to execute judgment upon His People.

### **God Judges Those He Uses to Judge His People**

God judged the Assyrians and the Babylonians, whom He used against His people, and He would judge the Romans as well.

"With regard to Assyria, the Lord says, "I send it against a godless nation and commission it against the people of My fury to capture booty and to seize plunder,

and to trample them down like mud in the streets.... So it will be that when the Lord has completed all His work on Mount Zion and on Jerusalem, He will say, 'I will punish the fruit of the arrogant heart of the king of Assyria and the pomp of his haughtiness'" (Isa. 10:5-6, 12-13).

Likewise, once the Lord has used the Babylonians to accomplish His purposes, judgment would come upon them as well:

"Behold, I am going to stir up the Medes against them, Who will not value silver or take pleasure in gold. And their bows will mow down the young men, They will not even have compassion on the fruit of the womb, Nor will their eye pity children. And Babylon, the beauty of kingdoms, the glory of the Chaldeans' pride, Will be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah" (Isa. 13:17-19).

### **The Romans Didn't Avoid Eventual Judgment**

Thus, the Lord punishes those whom He uses as instruments to judge His disobedient people. What is important to point out, at this juncture, is that these punishments were not meted out instantly. If past precedent is any indication, God's retribution upon the Romans would not have been instantaneous either. As Gary DeMar writes, "The fall of Assyria did not immediately follow its plunder of Israel," and "it took time for Babylon's judgment by the Medes and Persians to occur (5:1-31). Jerusalem fell in 586 BC and Babylon fell in 539 BC, nearly 45 years later. The same is true of God's use of Rome to judge Israel." [11] DeMar continues:

"It is significant that the decline of the Roman Empire dates from the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70. Thomas Scott concurs: 'It is also observable, that the Romans after having been thus made the executioners of divine vengeance on the Jewish nation, never prospered as they had done before; but the Lord evidently fought against them, and all the nations which composed their overgrown empire; till at last it was subverted, and their fairest cities and provinces were ravaged by barbarous invaders.'"

"There may have been an early indication of what was going to happen to Rome with the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in Pompeii in AD 79 where an estimated 16,000 people perished. Earlier earthquakes had occurred in AD 62 and 64. They were mostly ignored since they were a common occurrence. Pliny the Younger wrote to the historian Tacitus that the 'earth tremors' leading up to the disaster at Pompeii 'were not particularly alarming because they are frequent in Campania.' Josephus writes that earthquakes were common calamities. He describes one earthquake in Judea of such magnitude "that the constitution of the universe was confounded for the destruction of men."

"In AD 80, the capital city encountered another disaster, another great fire in Rome following the one that ravaged Rome under Nero's reign that burned for six

days in AD 64.”[12]

## **Zechariah’s Day of Battle is Behind Us**

In the end, not even the Romans walked away unscathed. As in the case of Assyria and Babylon, however, divine retribution came over time. Nonetheless, the point of Zechariah 14:3 is that God would fight “with” the nations that came against rebellious first-century Israel, rather than fight “against” them. Either way, the passage finds its fulfillment in history’s past and not in our future.

The attempt to discredit this approach by positing Zechariah 14:3 over and against Luke 21:20 fails in that both Biblical writers equally portray a desolation and redemption taking place simultaneously within each of their respective contexts. Like verses 1 and 2 before it, Zechariah 14:3 concerns itself with events that are now almost 2000 years behind us on the historical landscape. This means modern-day Israel is not destined for the doom Zechariah describes. For modern-day Christians, this means we have a powerful tool to use in defending the faith, as Zechariah’s prophecy finds detailed fulfillment in AD 70 and the events surrounding it. The Lord fought “with those nations” that came against Jerusalem in “the day of battle” – in AD 70.

<https://burrosofberea.com/zechariah-14-part-3-the-day-of-battle-zechariah-143/>

**Zechariah 14:4** On that day his feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives that lies before Jerusalem on the east, and the Mount of Olives shall be split in two from east to west by a very wide valley, so that one half of the Mount shall move northward, and the other half southward.

Scripture is Its own best interpreter. In order to understand these words, it is helpful to look at some other passages that employ similar language. For example:

## **Habakkuk 3:3-7**

“God came from Teman, and the Holy One from mount Paran. Selah. His glory covered the heavens, and the earth was full of his praise. And his brightness was as the light; he had horns coming out of his hand: and there was the hiding of his power. Before him went the pestilence, and burning coals went forth at his feet. He stood, and measured the earth: he beheld, and drove asunder the nations; and the everlasting mountains were scattered, the perpetual hills did bow: his ways are everlasting. I saw the tents of Cushan in affliction: and the curtains of the land of Midian did tremble” (Hab. 3:3-7).

Notice, this passage is a reference to a coming of God—a judgment coming. “Judgment-Coming” passages often mention God’s feet as a symbol of deliverance for His People and the thwarting of their enemies (e.g., Ps. 18:9; Nah. 1:3).[7] The passage speaks of the mountains being scattered and the

perpetual hills bowing. The point is this: Habakkuk is recounting the power of God's saving acts in the past. Specifically, the passage refers to God's delivering His People from the hands of the Midianites (vs. 7).

The actual historical account is given in Judges 7:13-25. There is absolutely no mention in this account of God coming, of God's feet, of mountains being scattered, or of hills bowing. In Judges 7:13-25, Gideon simply takes 3 companies of 100 men, gives each man a trumpet, a pitcher and a lamp, and they pursue the Midianites and defeat them. Nevertheless, Samuel (whom I believe wrote the Book of Judges) and Habakkuk are describing the same events. Samuel describes the events in the form of a straightforward, matter of fact, historical narrative; whereas, Habakkuk is employing poetic, apocalyptic language. Everyone familiar with the various types of Biblical genre understands this.

## **2 Samuel 22:8-14**

"In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried to my God: and he did hear my voice out of his temple, and my cry did enter into his ears. Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations of heaven moved and shook, because he was wroth. There went up a smoke out of his nostrils, and fire out of his mouth devoured: coals were kindled by it. He bowed the heavens also, and came down; and darkness was under his feet. And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly: and he was seen upon the wings of the wind. And he made darkness pavilions round about him, dark waters, and thick clouds of the skies. Through the brightness before him were coals of fire kindled. The LORD thundered from heaven, and the most High uttered his voice" (2 Sam. 22:8-14).

Notice, in this passage God comes down—this is another judgment-coming passage. The earth shakes and trembles. There is another reference to God's feet in conjunction with His judgment-coming. The point: this is a Psalm that David wrote "in the day that God delivered him out of the hand of all his enemies, and out of the hand of Saul" (2 Sam. 22:1). I dare say that one can read all of the previous material, in both 1st and 2nd Samuel, concerning Saul and the rest of David's enemies, and find no mention of God coming down, the earth trembling, darkness under God's feet, etc. Why? Because the previous material contained in 1st and 2nd Samuel is written as historical narrative while David's Psalm is poetic or figurative in nature. Again, it's two different types of genre describing the same event. And, once again, all Bible commentators recognize this and no one takes the language of 2 Samuel 22 literally. This would include the most adherent futurists and/or dispensationalists.

## **Micah 1:3-4**

"For, behold, the LORD cometh forth out of his place, and will come down, and tread upon the high places of the earth. And the mountains shall be molten under

him, and the valleys shall be cleft, as wax before the fire, and as the waters that are poured down a steep place" (Micah 1:3-4).

Again, notice the language: God comes down, He treads upon the high places of the earth, the mountains melt underneath Him, the valleys are cleft. In this passage, Micah is prophesying about the doom of Samaria (Micah 1:1), which took place in 722 BC when the Assyrians besieged and captured it. Once again, I know of no one who would dispute this, and I know of no one who takes this figurative description literally.

As Ralph Woodrow writes, "It was not uncommon for prophets to use figurative expressions about the Lord 'coming' down, mountains trembling, being scattered, and hills bowing (Hab. 3:6, 10); mountains flowing down at his presence (Isaiah 64:1, 3); or mountains and hills singing and the trees clapping their hands (Isaiah 55:12)."[8]

Therefore, the question now becomes: How is this language any different from the Lord standing on the Mount of Olives and splitting it in half in Zechariah 14:4? Why do the same interpreters, who look at so many similar passages as figurative, insist upon taking this passage as literal? Where is the Biblical precedent for understanding such language literally? If the analogy of Scripture means anything, the passage should not be taken literally.

<https://burrosofberea.com/thoughts-on-zechariah-141-4/>

**Matthew 21:1** Now when they drew near Jerusalem, and came to Bethphage, at the Mount of Olives, then Jesus sent two disciples,

**Matthew 21:2** saying to them, "Go into the village opposite you, and immediately you will find a donkey tied, and a colt with her. Loose *them* and bring *them* to Me.

## **The Mount of Olives in Zechariah and Matthew**

Zechariah 14:4 is last time the Mount of Olives is mentioned in the Old Testament, and Matthew 21:1 is the first time it's mentioned in Matthew's Gospel. After this, everything ramps up dramatically in Matthew's narrative. From the time Jesus' feet touch the Mount of Olives (Matt. 21:1), He rides into Jerusalem on a donkey (Matt. 21:2-11),[2] cleanses the temple (Matt. 21:12-17),[3] gives a number of parables that comprise His covenant lawsuit against Jerusalem (Matt. 21:18-22:14), answers the challenges of the Scribes and Pharisees (Matt. 22:15-45), exposes their hypocrisy in a series of woes against them (Matt. 23), and gives the Olivet Discourse (Matt. 24-25). From there, the events leading up to and including His death, burial, and resurrection transpire (Matt. 26-28). All of this transpires after He comes "to Bethphage, to the Mount of Olives" (Matt. 21:1).

Having let the reader know that Jesus' feet had touched the Mount of Olives,

Matthew goes out of his way to point out that the Olivet Discourse itself takes place on that very mount (Matt. 24:3). This is in fact why we call it, "The Olivet Discourse." Why is this significant? It's significant because the Olivet Discourse is "a 'retelling' of Zechariah 14," as Johnathan Menn puts it.[4] And this is, perhaps, the most significant thing of all regarding the connection between Zechariah 14 and the Olivet Discourse.[5] Jesus plants His feet on the exact spot where Zechariah said He would as He redelivers Zechariah's message.[6]

Jesus stood on the Mount of Olives and reiterated Zechariah's words to the audience for whom those words had always been intended. Before they all passed away, the intended audience would see the prophecy come to pass. As surely as both Jesus and Zechariah had predicted, the city would be taken and destroyed. The time had come, the day had arrived, and God's Son was standing on the Mount of Olives.

### **The Mountain Splits**

Zechariah says that the Mount of Olives, upon which Jesus would stand, would be "split in two." The modern approach to interpreting this verse tends to take these words literally.[7] While this is not the intent of those who hold this view, the idea of a giant Jesus physically straddling a splitting mountain is borderline cartoonish. Extreme literalism does a horrible injustice to the splendor of the imagery being used in this verse. More to the point, it ignores the usage of similar language elsewhere in the Bible. When one reaches out from Zechariah 14:4 to grasp comparable passages, the literal approach comes up emptyhanded.

For example, John the Baptist said, "Let every valley be lifted up, and every mountain be made low" (Luke 3:5). A strictly literal interpretation would have John the Baptist, as the foreman on a job site, directing a major excavation project in first-century Palestine.[8] In this particular case, no one takes the language literally. John's meaning is clear: the long-awaited Messiah is on His way, and He's going to level things out. All Christians understand this, and John was merely following a long tradition of employing mountain imagery to make his point.

### **See comments on Habakkuk 3:3-7 and Micah 1:3-4.**

Mountains can melt and be crushed, they can be moved and brought low, they can rejoice and sing, they can hear, and they can skip like animals. None of this is literal and everyone recognizes it. Yet, if a mountain is "splitting," suddenly this must be understood literally? Where is the Biblical precedent for this? How does this make sense? If Scripture truly interprets Scripture, as all Christians agree, there is nothing elsewhere in Scripture to lead us to believe that the mountain splitting should be taken literally. In fact, it's just the opposite.

The melting, crushing, and movement of the mountains symbolizes God's

judgment in these passages. And the mountains being glad, breaking into joyous song, and hearing the words of a prophet, symbolize God's People. This is especially the case with respect to the mountains leaping and skipping like animals being set free. Malachi 4:2-4 says, "But for you who fear my name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing on its wings. And you will break free, like calves from the stall. You will tread down the wicked, they will be ashes under the soles of your feet..." (Mal. 4:2-4). In other words, Malachi has the people doing the same things that the other prophets have the mountains doing. People can literally do these things, mountains can't. The mountains, therefore, are used as metaphors to signify both God's judgment and God's people.

Zechariah's imagery of the splitting mountain symbolized both: 1) God's judgment, and 2) God's people. It makes perfect sense that this would represent the situation at the time of Christ. The first-century Jews would be forced to decide regarding the claims of Christ. The severance of the mountain characterized the severing effect that decision would have upon all involved. The outcome of their individual choice would make all the difference for them in terms of the judgment coming down the road. Jesus was "the stone which the builders rejected" (Matt. 21:42), that would crush those upon whom it fell (Matt. 21:44). That's the judgment. His message would divide the father against son, and mother against daughter (Lk. 12:53). That's the severing of the people. Zechariah captures it all through one vivid illustration.

Concerning this illustration, it's quite appropriate that Zechariah pictures, not just any mountain being divided, but the Mount of Olives specifically. In other words, Zechariah was telegraphing the exact spot where Jesus would speak the pivotal words that would set everything into motion and change redemptive history forever.

### **The Great Divide and The Valley of Decision**

Jesus' powerful message would create a "great divide" among the people, and Zechariah portrays this through a picture of a large valley being cut straight through the splitting mountain. This coincides with the message of the Prophet Joel, almost 300 years earlier:

"Multitudes, multitudes, in the valley of decision! For the day of the Lord is near in the valley of decision. The sun and the moon are darkened, and the stars withdraw their shining" (Joel 3:14-15).

We know from the Apostle Peter that Joel's prophecies found their ultimate fulfillment in the "last days" of the first century (Acts 2:16-21). Stephen M. Thurstan does a nice job tying Joel 3 in with Zechariah 14 as both prophets' messages converged:

"...a supernatural 'highway' is created by God wherein all natural obstacles are

taken out of the way so that all peoples from all over the world can come to His holy mountain and city, the New Jerusalem from above that is also depicted for us in Zechariah chapter 14 and Joel chapter 3. None of these ideas being presented to us are to be taken literally, but are only natural ideas being used to convey a spiritual deliverance of God's people using the analogies of past deliverances, animals or whatever, for illustrative purposes." [11]

In other words, the prophets used vivid imagery, based on natural geography, to convey spiritual truth.

### **Northward and Southward Movement**

This vivid imagery, based on natural geography, takes on even deeper significance regarding the northward and southward movement of Zechariah's splitting mountain. For the ancient Israelite, north and south were far more than merely directional points on a map. As Bernard Batto puts it, these directional points carried "heavy mythic connotations." [12] Generally speaking, the south was viewed in a positive light, being associated with Yahweh and faithfulness to Him. The north, on the other hand, had negative connotations and was associated with apostasy, rebellion and idolatry.

Earlier, Habakuk 3:3 was cited as an example of the Biblical usage of mountain terminology. This same passage also serves as an indicator to show how the south was more than merely a spot on the compass, as well. According to that verse, the Lord came to His people from the south: "God came from Teman, and the Holy One from mount Paran. Selah." Teman is the Hebrew word for "south." As John Calvin comments, "When they spoke of the south, they said Teman. And when the Jews wished to designate a wind from Africa, they said: 'It is a Teman wind.'" [13] Habakuk also mentions "mount Peran," which is a mountain located to the south of Israel. According to the Bible then, God came to His people from the south.

### **The Evil Influence of the North**

In stark contrast to this, the north would have been the "polar opposite" for an ancient Hebrew in more ways than one. Beyond Israel's northern border lay places like Bashan, Sidon, Tyre, and Ugarit. "The worship of Baal was central in these places," writes Michael Heiser, and the "fact that the center of Baal worship was just across the border was a contributing factor in the apostasy of the Northern Kingdom of Israel." [15]

The spiritual adultery stemming from the influence of the northern lands is evident in Ezekiel chapter 8. [16] In a vision, Ezekiel is lifted "by the Spirit" and taken "to Jerusalem, to the entrance of the gateway of the inner court that faces north" (Ezek. 8:3). Ezekiel is told to lift his eyes toward the north, and he sees an "idol of jealousy" at the northern gate (Ezek. 8:5). Then the Lord says to Ezekiel,

"Son of man, do you see what they are doing, the great abominations that the house of Israel are committing here, to drive me far from my sanctuary? But you will see still greater abominations" (Ezek. 8:6). These greater abominations included "women weeping for Tamuz" at the "north gate of the house of the Lord" (Ez. 8:14). Because of these and other abominations, the Lord declares: "I will act in wrath. My eye will not spare, nor will I have pity. And though they cry in my ears with a loud voice, I will not hear them" (Ezek. 8:18).

## **The Movement of Zechariah's Splitting Mountain**

These glimpses into the world of ancient Israel help us to understand the associations that God's people would have made with terms like "north" and "south."<sup>[17]</sup> When an Israelite thought of the north in theological terms, he or she would have recalled apostasy from the Lord, while the south would have brought to mind faithfulness to Him. It is quite fitting then that the great divide among the people, created by Jesus' stance on the Mount of Olives, would have been symbolized by the splitting mountain moving in northward and southward directions, specifically. This reinforces the correlation between these directional points and the theological messaging that they convey – the difference between spiritual adultery and covenant loyalty.

According to Stephen in Acts chapter seven, the first-century Jews who rejected their Messiah were doing just as their fathers had done (Acts 7:51) when they served the host of heaven and worshiped false gods (Acts 7:41-42). In other words, Stephen's message to them was that rejecting Jesus is equivalent to idolatry. Perhaps this is why Jesus told them, "You are of your father, the devil" (Jn. 8:44). Just as their fathers had a choice to make between following the Lord, who came to them from the south, or following the false gods of the pagan nations to the north, Jesus was now the final ultimatum between loyalty and apostasy. Stephen laid that ultimatum out early on in Acts, and Zechariah symbolized it through the movements of the splitting mountain even earlier in 520 BC.

## **Moving Through Zechariah 14**

While the intent of uber-literalism isn't to rob the passage of its depth of meaning, this is the net result as it completely misses the beauty and magnificence of Zachariah's imagery. The key to understanding Zechariah 14:4 is connecting the dots between the images he uses and the usage of those images elsewhere in Scripture. When this is done, Zechariah's splitting mountain is no different than the Psalmist's skipping mountains, Micah's melting mountains, or John the Baptist's leveling mountains. None of this is to be understood literally, but all of it literally has profound theological implications when understood Biblically.

<https://burrosofberea.com/zechariah-14-part-4-the-splitting-mountain/>

**Zechariah 14:5** And you shall flee to the valley of my mountains, for the valley of the mountains shall reach to Azal. And you shall flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the LORD my God will come, and all the holy ones with him.

Perhaps nothing highlights the connection between these two passages (Zechariah 14 and The Olivet Discourse) more than the theme of the flight to the mountains. Amidst the calamities that come upon Jerusalem when the city is taken (Zech. 14:2), God's people are to flee to the valley of His mountains (Zech. 14:5). Similarly, Jesus told His first-century listeners:

"But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near. Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let those who are inside the city depart, and let not those who are out in the country enter it, for these are the days of vengeance, to fulfill as all that is written" (Luke 21:21-22).

The flight to the mountains, as the Christians exited the city and the judgments that were befalling it, is reminiscent of the Israelites' flight from Egypt and the judgments that befell it. In this sense, Jesus and Zechariah are both very much describing a new exodus event.

## **The New Exodus**

Seeing the departure from earthly Jerusalem as a new exodus makes sense considering the progressive revelation of the New Testament. In the book of Revelation, John says Jerusalem is "spiritually called Sodom and Egypt" (Rev. 11:8). Old Jerusalem had become the new Egypt, and the members of the New Jerusalem were making the new exodus. Peter J. Leithart paints a wonderful picture of the exodus theme being depicted in the words of Jesus and Zechariah.

"Luke 21 also describes a siege of Jerusalem (v. 20), an escape for the faithful (v. 21), and a coming of the Lord (v. 27). Like Zechariah 14, Jesus prophesies the collapse of a universe (v. 25). Luke is describing a series of events in the first century (vv. 32-33), the events leading up to and including the destruction of the temple in AD 70. In the light of Zechariah 14, however, we can look at this incident in a different way. These are 'days of vengeance' (v. 22) against those who attack the disciples of Jesus, but these events are also a new exodus, a deliverance of the future Israel. When the disciples of Jesus follow His instructions and flee Jerusalem, they become the streams of water flowing to the nations. The Lord's coming is a moment of judgment and destruction, but also a moment of deliverance, the beginning of the discipling of the nations." [2]

The description of the original disciples' flight from Jerusalem as "streams of water flowing to the nations" is somewhat reminiscent of a passage in Josephus. According to Josephus, "many of the most eminent of the Jews swam away from

the city, as from a ship when it was going to sink.”[3] The Church historian, Eusebius, describes the exodus from Jerusalem like this:

“The whole body, however, of the Church at Jerusalem, having been commanded by a divine revelation, given to men of approved piety there before the war, removed from the city, and dwelt at a certain town beyond the Jordan, called Pella. Here those that believed in Christ, having removed from Jerusalem, as if holy men had entirely abandoned the royal city itself, and the whole land of Judea; the divine justice, for their crimes against Christ and his Apostles finally overtook them, totally destroying the whole generation of these evildoers from the earth.”[4]

Just as their ancestors fled the slavery and oppression of Egypt, these first-century Jews fled the slavery and oppression of the crumbling Old Covenant system (cf. Acts 15:10; Gal. 5:1). As Rabbi Julie Zupan writes, regarding the first Exodus: “In the Book of Exodus (3:8), God promises to take the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt to a ‘good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey.’ The Hebrew word for Egypt is mitzrayim, which literally means ‘narrow places.’ In other words, a life of slavery is constricted and oppressive, while living in freedom in Israel is wide and spacious. A land so fertile that it flows with milk and honey stands in contradiction to the place of oppression.”[5] In the New Exodus, Jesus’ first-century followers demonstrated their faith in Him, and the freedom that He offers, by obeying His command to flee to safety in Pella when they saw Jerusalem being surrounded by armies.

## **Safety at Pella**

Pella is a suitable location for pinpointing Jesus’ admonishment to flee from Judea and to the mountains (Lk. 21:21-22). As J. Julius Scott, Jr. points out, “The site of ancient Pella lies among rugged hills and sharp valleys in the modern country of Jordan, about 2.5 miles east of the Jordan River and 17 miles south of the Sea of Galilee.”[6] Craig Koester concurs, stating: “it is worth noting that Pella lies in the foothills of the Transjordanian highlands and could have fulfilled this requirement.”[7] Archeologist Mark Wilson believes that the phrase, “the mountains,” is such a precise description of Pella’s situated location that Jesus’ terminology could have been a nuanced reference to the very site itself. Wilson writes:

“Jesus, while looking over the temple mount in Jerusalem shortly before his death, prophesied that its beautiful stones would be thrown down within a generation. He warned that the residents should flee Jerusalem to the mountains when they saw the Roman armies surrounding the city. Jesus’ admonition is found in each of the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew 24:15-22; Mark 13:14-20; Luke 21:20-24). Perhaps Jesus visited Pella during his visit to the Decapolis (Mark 7:31) and Perea (Matthew 19:1; Mark 10:1), and recalling its secure location, cryptically referred to it in this prophecy.”[8]

In Koester's article on the topic, he goes on to highlight the fact that Luke 21:21-22 bears such a close resemblance to the flight to Pella that skeptics and critics have argued that Luke wrote his words after the fact.[9] "Many scholars assume," writes Koester, "that Luke has revised Mark 13:14-16 to reflect events surrounding the fall of Jerusalem in A.D." [10] For those who accept the authority of and divine inspiration of Scripture, there is no need to see Luke's words as vaticinium ex eventu. Jesus foretold of the events, Luke recorded His words, and within a generation it all came to pass (Lk. 21:32). Jay Rogers does a nice job putting the historical pieces together:

"...the Flight to Pella most likely took place in the autumn of AD 66 after the Jews had won a short-lived victory and had driven the Roman troops back to Caesarea. There the Roman general Cestius Gallus sent word to Nero of the defeat and promptly committed suicide. At this point, the early Christians fled the city, but the Jews rejoiced thinking God was favoring them in victory over the Romans. This peace lasted until the following year until the spring of AD 67, when Roman legions under Vespasian and Titus invaded Judea from the north and south. This campaign began in April of AD 67 and lasted another three-and-a-half years until the destruction of Jerusalem in September of AD 70." [11]

When Jesus' followers saw the events of the war beginning to unfold all around them, they knew the exodus was here. The words of both Zechariah and Jesus were finally coming to pass, and it was time for them to flee to the mountains. Like their forefathers leaving Egypt centuries before, they would exit the city that had spiritually become Egypt and find redemptive freedom (cf. Exod. 6:6; Lk. 21:28). Only this time, they would enter the last and final phase of redemptive history. Unlike the old and temporary covenant, the new and permanent covenant would not be weighed down with ritual, repetition, and the return of their sins. This is telegraphed by Zechariah's next phrase in Zechariah 14:5.

### **Where or What is Azel?**

Zechariah says that the valley of God's mountains, where their flight takes place, "shall reach to Azel." According to the IVP Bible Background Commentary, "There is no clear consensus regarding the location of Azel." [12] A lexical search on the word will yield a vague answer: "a place near Jerusalem, site presently unknown." [13] Scholars simply do not know what to do with this word.

Goerge Klien says, "The precise meaning of 'Azel' is unclear" and "complicated by the fact that this is the only occurrence of this word in the Old Testament." [14] Kline continues: "...the noun Azel represents a place name whose precise location has eluded interpreters." [15] Mark J. Boda notes that there is "much speculation about the location of Azel." Anthony R. Petterson simply says, "the location of 'Azel' is "unknown." [16] Paul L. Redditt takes it a step further and concludes, "certainty about its meaning or location is impossible." [17]

All in all, pinning down the exact location of Azel has left commentators frustrated and confused. Perhaps they're looking in the wrong "place," however, because it isn't really a "place," per se? At this point, the prophet's messaging is not as much topographical as it is theological. Zechariah's words here transcend literal geography and rise to the level of cosmic geography – based upon the structure of Israel's festivals.

## **The Festal Pattern in Zechariah 14**

As Mike Bull writes, "The key to interpreting the prophecy is its structure. It follows a formula which is second nature to Jewish people: the process of Israel's annual feasts. If they had their wits about them, the Jews would hear these words and be able to say, 'I see what you did there.' Once they are recognized as literary art, these words are not only completely intelligible, they are also brilliant and beautiful." [18] With this in mind, Zechariah 14 comes to a close by highlighting the Feast of Tabernacles (Zech. 14:17-19). Preceding the Feast of Tabernacles in Israel's ritual calendar is the Day of Atonement, [19] and this is where the reference to Azel ties in.

Regarding this word, Bull makes this observation: "The mention of Azel possibly links this event with the 'Azel' goat on the Day of Atonement." [20] The connection between Zechariah's "Azel" and the "Azazel" goat on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:8, 10) is perceptive since "many commentators believe that Azazel originates from Azel," according to Andrew Paul Ward. [21] In fact, Tom Douglas shows that "Azazel" (Lev. 16) is simply "another form" of the word "Azel" (Zech. 14). [22] The reference to Azel, consequently, would make a conceptual connection to the Day of Atonement in the mind of Zechariah's original audience.

## **The Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16)**

On the Day of Atonement, in Leviticus 16, two male goats were reserved for the atonement rituals (Lev. 16:5). One goat was sent aside for Yahweh, the other was set aside for Azazel (Lev. 16:8). The goat set aside for Yahweh was killed, and its blood was sprinkled on the mercy seat in the Holy of Holies inside the Tabernacle (Lev. 16:15). In the ritual ceremony, Israel's sins were transferred to the second goat (Lev. 16:21-22), commonly called the "scapegoat." The scapegoat then carried the people's sins away deep into the wilderness – "to Azazel" (Lev. 16:10). [23] The problem was, those sins always came back. As Micheal Heiser put it, the Day of Atonement was "essentially a reset button," [24] and the Israelites had to reboot the whole thing and start over again every year (Lev. 16:29-32).

With Jesus, there is no "reset button." Christ's atoning work on the cross was a "finished" work, once and for all (Jn. 19:30). Zechariah says that the valley carved out by Jesus, when He splits the Mount of Olives in two (Zech. 14:4), will

“reach to Azel” (Zech. 14:5). This is the theological messaging behind the imagery Zechariah is using: the finished work of Christ was going to cut all the way through to the other side where our sins were taken. His atoning work was that complete and that comprehensive – it reached to Azel. When we put our faith and trust in the finished work of Christ, He carries our sins away, and those sins never return.

## **The Lord Comes with All His Holy Ones**

The conclusion of the Zechariah 14:5 says, “Then the Lord my God will come, and all the holy ones with him.” This is similar to the language of Jude 14 and the Lord coming “with many thousands of His holy ones,” which Jude makes applicable to his readers’ own day and time. Jude’s prophecy pertained to a judgment of “these men” (Jude 14) who had “crept in unaware” (Jude 4) among the assemblies of first-century believers (Jude 12). Likewise, Jesus speaks of His cloud-coming in judgment, accompanied by His angels (Matt. 24:30-31), before the first-century generation passed away (Matt. 24:34). Earlier, He had told His Disciples that He would come “in the glory of His Father with His angels” before they had all passed away (Matt. 16:27-28). Zechariah’s words coincide with the language of Jesus’ judgment-coming in the first century. Jesus came in judgment with His angels – with all His holy ones. There is no need to catapult the words of Zechariah, Jesus or Jude into the far-distant future.

## **Following the Path**

Following the path of the verses that precede it, Zechariah 4:5 mirrors Jesus’s Olivet Discourse and the events that were to befall the first-century generation (Matt. 24:34, Mk. 13:30; Lk. 21:32). This includes everything from the coming of the Lord with His holy ones to the flight to the mountains. Jesus’ original followers in Judea did in fact flee the city, embarking upon the New Exodus, when the Romans began their assault. As such, they were the members of the first generation of believers whose sins never return because of their confidence in Christ’s completed work. Jesus carved the path, they walked the path, and we follow in their footsteps when we embrace Him as our Lord and Savior. Jesus’ original followers in Judea paved the way for us by ensuring that Christianity didn’t go down in flames with Jerusalem when they fled the city, just as Jesus had instructed them.

<https://burrosofberea.com/zechariah-14-part-5-the-flight-to-the-mountains/>

**Zechariah 14:6** On that day there shall be no light, cold, or frost.

**Zechariah 14:7** And there shall be a unique day, which is known to the LORD, neither day nor night, but at evening time there shall be light.

## **Day and Night are Reversed**

The prophet speaks of a “unique day” in which “there will be no light” and the created order is in disarray. It’s an ominous time of cosmic portents that will bring light at the time of the evening (Zech. 14:6-7). When reading these verses, we’re immediately reminded of the words of another Old Testament prophet, Jeremiah, who prophesied roughly 100 years prior to Zechariah.[1] Jeremiah explains exactly what this role reversal between day and night meant for Old Covenant Israel:

This is what the Lord says, He who gives the sun for light by day, and the fixed order of the moon and the stars for light by night, Who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar— The Lord of armies is His name: ‘If this fixed order departs From Me,’ declares the Lord, ‘Then the descendants of Israel also will cease To be a nation before Me forever’” (Jeremiah 31: 36-37).

“The word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, saying: ‘Thus says the Lord: If you can break my covenant with the day and my covenant with the night, so that day and night will not come at their appointed time, then also my covenant with David my servant will be broken... and my covenant with the Levitical priests my ministers... Thus says the Lord: If I have not established my covenant with day and night and the fixed order of heaven and earth, then I will reject the offspring of Jacob and David my servant...’” (Jeremiah 33:19-20, 25-26).

Andrew R. Angel succinctly summarizes Jeremiah’s words: “...if the created order were ever to cease, then Israel would cease to be a nation.”[2] Basically, Jeremiah is saying: if day turns into night, and night turns into day, this is an omen to ethnic Israel that God’s unique relationship with them was over. Zechariah is tracking on the same theme as the former prophet and letting his readers know that Jeremiah’s warning will in fact become a reality.

### **Day Turns to Night and Night Turns to Day**

Day would turn to night, and night would turn to day – signaling the end of the Old Covenant era and the dawn of a whole new age in redemptive history. During the 40-year transition period in the first century, God providentially made sure that both portents couldn’t possibly be missed by those who rejected their Messiah. The first premonition came when they hung Jesus on the cross:

“And when they came to the place which is called The Skull, there they crucified him, and the criminals one on his right and one on his left... And when it was about the sixth hour, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. And while the sun’s light failed, the curtain of the temple was torn in two. Then Jesus called out with a loud voice saying, ‘Father into your hands I commit my spirit!’ And having said this he breathed his last breath” (Luke 23:33, 44-46; cf. Matthew 27:45).

Day had turned to night when they sealed their own fate by crucifying the Lord of glory. Next, night turned into day as the events of the Roman Jewish war began. These are the very events that would precipitate the destruction of the temple and wipe away the last vestiges of the Old Covenant forever. Josephus speaks of "a star, resembling a sword, which stood over the city, and a comet, that continued a whole year." [3] In conjunction with this occurrence, he specifically notes a phenomenon which turned night into day:

"Thus also before the Jews' rebellion, and before those commotions which preceded the war, when the people were come in great crowds to the feast of unleavened bread, on the eighth day of the month Xanthicus, 2 [Nisan,] and at the ninth hour of the night, so great a light shone round the altar and the holy house, that it appeared to be bright day time; which lasted for half an hour." [4]

### **Misreading the Signs**

The strange phenomenon emanating from the temple, on that fateful night, was completely misinterpreted by those who should have known better. Josephus informs us that "this light seemed to be a good sign to the unskillful" and they completely missed the fact that "the signal foreshadowed the desolation that was coming upon them." [6] They should have read Jeremiah. They should have read Zechariah. They should have known what this meant, but they didn't.

Josephus tells us that the Zealots who remained in the city, along with "the miserable people" who were "persuaded by these deceivers... did not give credit to the signs that were so evident and did so plainly foretell their future desolation." [7] In other words, it went right over their heads. Josephus describes them as men "without eyes to see" or "minds to consider" the "denunciations that God had made to them." [8] The signs weren't meant to signal their triumph, they were meant to signal their defeat.

Jesus put it this way: "The days are coming upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you, surround you, and hem you in on every side. And they will tear you down to the ground, you and your children with you. They will not leave one stone upon another, because you did not recognize the time of your visitation" (Lk. 19:44). The time of their visitation had come when day turned into night at the cross, and night turned into day as the war began. Just as Jesus had foretold, most of them didn't recognize it.

### **The Time Between Night and Day**

The darkness at Christ's crucifixion should take our minds all the way back to the original darkness at the beginning of creation in Genesis 1:2. [9] Jesus came to make all things new (2 Corinthians 5:17; Revelation 21:5). He came to start all over again with a new creation. He established an infallible covenant, which would

not be like the first one – that was fading away into darkness and obscurity (Hebrews 8:13). Between the transition of the Old Covenant's darkening and the New Covenant's dawning, Paul told the Romans: "The night is almost gone, and the day is at hand" (Romans 13:2).

They were living during this unique time between the "night" of the Old Covenant and the "day" of the New Covenant, that both Jeremiah and Zechariah had prophesied about in ages past. Accordingly, Peter tells His readers to "pay attention" to the "prophetic word" as "to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your heart" (2 Peter 1:19). And the light of that morning star shines forevermore in the hearts of true believers who live in the everlasting "day" of the New Covenant. There is "no more night" in the city (Revelation 22:5), [10] and we are living out the fulfillment envisioned in Isaiah 60:1-3:

"Arise, shine; for your light has come, And the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. For behold, darkness will cover the earth, And deep darkness the peoples; But the Lord will rise upon you, And His glory will appear upon you. Nations will come to your light, And kings to the brightness of your rising" (Isa. 60:1-3).

Zechariah's "unique day" imagery was meant to telegraph the idea that a new day would dawn, and everything would change. In a manner of speaking, it was "lights out" for Old Covenant Israel as the light of the New Covenant began to break forth into the world. Ethnic Israelites could be a part of this new creation, but only by leaving the shadows of the old creation in the darkness as it passed away.

<https://burrosofberea.com/zechariah-14-part-6-zechariah-146-8/>

**Zechariah 14:8** On that day living waters shall flow out from Jerusalem, half of them to the eastern sea and half of them to the western sea. It shall continue in summer as in winter.

## **Living Waters**

In verse 8, Zechariah's imagery shifts from light and darkness to water and seasons. Zechariah says, "And on that day living waters will flow out of Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea and the other half toward the western sea; it will be in summer as well as in winter" (Zechariah 14:8). It's impossible not to hear Zechariah's reference to "living waters" being echoed in the words of Jesus on the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles:

"Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, 'If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. The one who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, from his innermost being will flow rivers of living water'" (John 7:37-38).

**John 7:37** On the last day of the feast, the great day, Jesus stood up and cried out, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to me and drink."

**John 7:38** Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'"

**John 7:39** Now this he said about the Spirit, whom those who believed in him were to receive, for as yet the Spirit had not been given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

According to Jesus, He is citing "Scripture" when He says that "living water" will flow from a person's "innermost being." The word translated as "innermost being" is koilia, and it literally means "belly" or "stomach." As any commentary on John 7:37-38 will reveal, interpreters hit a major roadblock when trying to pin down the source of Jesus' quotation. Elisabeth Johnson summarizes the issue: "The puzzling thing about Jesus' statement in John 7:38 is that it is difficult to find a verse of Scripture that matches what Jesus says about rivers of living water flowing from the 'belly.' Many Scriptures have been suggested as a reference." [11]

David B. Curtis concurs: "The problem is that these words do not exactly quote any one particular passage in either the Hebrew Tanakh or in the Greek Septuagint translation. Yeshua may have phrased it this way because He wanted us to think of several different passages that are relevant which reference flowing streams of spiritual water." [12] Indeed, there is consensus among scholars that "no one Old Testament text" alone "fits the quotation" of Jesus in this passage. [13]

Johnson and Curtis both point to Zechariah 14:8 as being among the passages which constitute Jesus' combined Old Testament referent, [14] and this is certainly the case. In fact, Zechariah 14:8 fits the bill more so than any other Old Testament passage. This in turn has major implications regarding the timing of fulfillment with respect to Zechariah's prophecy. In order to highlight the importance of Zechariah 14:8 as the preeminent passage in Jesus' Old Testament quotation, it's helpful to look at the other passages that are commonly believed to work into His words in John 7:37-38.

## **An Incomplete Picture**

Typically, Isaiah 44:3, 55:1 and 58:11 are thought to comprise the combined Old Testament background of Jesus' statement. [15] While these three passages all contain elements of the spiritual-water motif, each of them falls short of completing the picture that Jesus presents in John 7.

Isaiah 44:3 speaks of water (i.e., God's Spirit) being poured out on dry and thirsty ground (God's people). Isaiah 55:1 speaks of water, wine and milk being given freely without cost. Isaiah 58:11 speaks of God's provision being like "springs of water" and God's people being as a "watered garden." Without

question, Jesus had Isaiah's words in these verses in mind as part of the contextual backdrop for His proclamation in John 7:38. Nonetheless, these passages all lack one key element that Jesus' statement includes. The Scriptural amalgam behind John 7:38 is left unfinished without Zechariah.

## **A More Complete Picture**

Zechariah provides the crucial ingredient to the mixture of Old Testament references that is missing in Isaiah. Jesus does not merely speak of water, but He specifically speaks of **living** water. As Glenn Balfour writes, Zechariah 14:8 "holds a vital key," namely, it's "reference to living water." [16] With this in mind, Jeremiah 17:13 also contains the "vital key" (i.e., living water) and should be considered as another source for Jesus' quotation:

"O Lord, the hope of Israel, All who forsake You will be put to shame. Those who turn away on earth will be written down, Because they have forsaken the fountain of living water, even the Lord" (Jeremiah 17:13).

While Isaiah provides a general backdrop for Jesus' quotation, Jeremiah and Zechariah are more specific in that they mention not only "water," but more precisely, "living water." With that said, Zechariah 14:8 alone contains the last essential component in Jesus' statement that is missing in even the Jeremiah text.

## **The Final Piece of the Puzzle**

As mentioned above, Jesus says that these "living waters" would flow from the believer's "belly" or "stomach." On the surface, this seems like a bizarre image – water flowing from a person's belly? As Michael Houdmann says, "In John 7:38, Jesus makes a seemingly odd metaphorical statement." [17] Joel Marcus refers to it as "the strange circumstance that John describes," [18] and Maarten J.J. Menken states that "almost every possible solution has been tried out" to explain these words. [19]

After surveying the plethora of Old Testament texts that are thought to undergird the peculiar image of living water flowing from a person's belly, specifically, Menken concludes that Zechariah 14:8 is the single passage that "best explains the final words of John 7:38." [20] Perhaps, this is not immediately obvious? Jesus said the living waters would flow from the bellies of believers, and Zechariah said the living waters would flow from Jerusalem. At first glance, the correlation between the two passages might not be apparent to our modern eyes. Once we understand how the city of Jerusalem was viewed by an ancient Israelite, however, the connection becomes as crystal clear as the waters being spoken of in the passage.

## **The Naval of the Earth**

In his article on John 7:37-38, Balfour emphasizes that Zechariah's "living waters" flow "out of Jerusalem," and Jerusalem was regarded as "the navel of the earth"[21] (Ezekiel 5:5; 38:12). In fact, Paul Redditt points out that the boundary markers in Zechariah 14:8 and 10 are specifically meant to highlight this "depiction of Jerusalem as the navel of the earth." [22] The picture that Zechariah paints, then, is a picture of living water flowing from the navel of the earth.

Needless to say, water flowing from the belly and water flowing from the navel are nearly identical, for all intents and purposes. Consequently, Balfour's article goes on to observe that Jesus "replaces Jerusalem with something else." [23] With "John 7:38 being a quotation primarily of Zechariah 14:8," writes Balfour, the "imagery opens up" [24] and the prophecy was "transferred from Jerusalem to the believer." [25]

### **The People and the City**

Rather than a transferal "from Jerusalem to the believer," a better way to understanding it might be as a transferal from the type or shadow to the antitype or reality. In other words, old earthly Jerusalem was merely a shadow or symbol of the new and heavenly Jerusalem. With that said, the New Jerusalem isn't a literal city with geographical boundaries and physical walls; rather, the New Jerusalem is very much defined in terms of its citizenry – of its people.

This is most clearly seen by the dimensions of the city given in the book of Revelation. In John's vision, the city is measured, and its length, height and width are all equal: 12,000 stadia (Rev. 21:15-16). This converts to 1500 miles long by 1500 miles wide by 1500 miles high. [26] While much can be said about the significance of these dimensions, for the purpose of this article, attention is called the city's length and width.

Its longitude and latitude equal the approximate size of the Roman Empire in the first century, [27] the area that the Gospel had already reached by the time John penned the book of Revelation (cf. Romans 10:18; 16:25-26; Colossians. 1:5-6; 23). In other words, there were now born-again believers throughout the entire Roman empire by this point in time. Consequently, the golden city had already expanded that far. John's messaging is clear: where God's People are, God's City is.

As Robert H. Gundry explains, in Revelation 21, John transforms "Jerusalem into a symbol of the saints themselves... John is not describing the eternal dwelling place of the saints; he is describing them, and them alone." [28] Ken Gentry puts it this way: "The new Jerusalem is a symbol of the redeemed people of God in whom God dwells (Revelation 21:3), much like the 'temple' in Paul's writing often represents the people of God and not a physical building (1 Corinthians 3:16-17;

6:19; 2 Corinthians 6:16; Ephesians 2:21).”[29]

The New Testament’s progressive revelation concerning the New Jerusalem as God’s People is epiphanic in unveiling the connection between John 7:37-38 and Zechariah 14:8. Zechariah’s living waters flowing from Jerusalem find their fulfillment in Jesus’ living waters flowing from His people, who comprise the New Jerusalem.

### **The Feast of Tabernacles and Zechariah 14**

The fact that Jesus spoke these words on that last day of the Feast of Tabernacles (John 7:37) makes the connection to Zechariah 14 unmistakable. As Balfour puts it, “the Feast is the pivot on which 7:38 swings,” and “Zechariah 12-14 was a central passage in the Feast’s liturgy” with “Zechariah 14 being one of its prophetic Haphtaroth.”[30] The Haphtaroth was the reading from the Prophets that followed the reading from the Law. In other words, Zechariah’s words would have been fresh on His listeners’ minds when Jesus stood and uttered His own words on “the last day of the great feast” (John 7:37).

The significance of the circumstances surrounding Jesus’ statement about “living waters” is impossible to miss at this point. With Zechariah’s words echoing in their heads, Jesus’ words fell on their ears. Undoubtedly, He wanted them to make the connection between what they were thinking about on that day, and what they were hearing as He spoke. In John 7:37-38, Jesus is telling His followers that Zechariah 14:8 is fulfilled, first through Him, and second through them. Jesus is the source of the living water, and His people will become the conduit through which that water flows. Given the time and setting of Jesus’ statement, His original audience would have gotten it right away.

### **Living Out the Fulfillment**

While the textual triggers in Jesus’ announcement recall a number of Old Testament passages, Zechariah 14:8 alone incorporates all the key elements – making it the target text. If in fact Jesus was announcing the fulfillment of Zechariah 14:8 in John 7:37-38, the implications are as clear as they are devastating to the Futurist interpretation of Zechariah 14. In verse 39, John says, “But this He said in reference to the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified” (John 7:39). That was then, this is now. Jesus has been glorified (Acts 3:13), and the Spirit has been given (Acts 2:4). Rather than waiting for the fulfillment of Zechariah’s words, we should be living it out.

The prophecy isn’t about literal water flooding the streets of earthly Jerusalem someday. It’s about living believers being the conduit through which God’s Spirit brings life to the lost and transforms the world. With the light of the morning star shining in our hearts (2 Peter 1:19), and his glory upon us (Isaiah. 60:1-3), we

illuminate the way for the nations (Revelation 21:24). As His image bearers in the new creation, the light of the lamb shines through us (Revelation 21:3), and the water of life flows from us (John 7:37-38; Revelation 22:1). If we miss this by misunderstanding and misapplying Zechariah's prophecy, we will miss all that God intends us to be. In this way, we're not much different than those first-century Jews who missed what the signs being shown to them were intended to mean.

<https://burrosofberea.com/zechariah-14-part-6-zechariah-146-8/>

**Zechariah 14:9** And the LORD will be king over all the earth. On that day the LORD will be one and his name one.

These verses (9-11) speak of both the exclusiveness and the extent of Christ's reign. Zechariah looks forward to a time when the Lord is the only one, and He is king over all the earth. This is accomplished through His people who comprise the New Jerusalem, which is pictured as rising above the rest of the land which becomes a flat plain. The exclusivity of the Lord among His people is reinforced by the idea that all accursed things are removed from the newly raised Jerusalem as God's people dwell securely in Him.

## **An Old Problem**

Throughout Old Covenant Israel's history, God's people had a problem, and it wouldn't go away. They had a problem with the second commandment: "You shall have no other gods besides me" (Exodus 20:3).

Despite all that the Lord had done for them, time and again, the ancient Israelites constantly reverted back to worshipping other gods. It started right away with the golden calf (Exod. 32:1-10) and the goat demons in the wilderness (Lev. 17:7) and continued until it sent them into exile (Zeph. 4:1-6). By the time of the New Testament, Stephen informs us that nothing had changed. When he was dragged before the high priest and the synagogue council, Stephen recounted the apostate deeds of their ancestors and told them, "...you are doing just as your fathers did" (Acts 7:40-43; Acts 7:51). It seems like polytheism was a persistent predicament under the Old Covenant – then Jesus stepped in and established a New Covenant.

Unlike the Old Covenant, the Writer to the Hebrews tells us that everything would change under the New Covenant – specifically with regard to the matter of worshipping other gods: "...I will put My laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be My people" (Heb. 8:10b). The last line of this verse from Hebrews is nearly identical to the words of Revelation 21:3, describing the New Jerusalem: "Behold the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people and God himself will be with them as their God." The New Jerusalem isn't a literal city with physical walls. The city is the people themselves, and the people are the city. Where God's people are, God's city is. God is present in and through His people, and His people

worship Him exclusively. Old Covenant Israel's problem with polytheism doesn't exist under the New Covenant, in the New Jerusalem.

## **A New Solution**

From the beginning, this has been what God has always wanted: a human family who would exercise believing loyalty to Him and to Him alone. In order to do this, however, God Himself had to join His human family and establish an infallible covenant that couldn't be broken. As the late Dr. Michael Heiser wrote, "...God's children needed new hearts and God's presence to help them believe. They needed a means to be saved from themselves and from a destiny that didn't include everlasting life with the God who loved them. There had to be a way for God to honor his covenant promises...and to help his people continue in their faith. God's solution to these problems was radical. He had to become a man. He had to join the human race. This is where Jesus enters the story. Jesus was God become man (John 1:1, 14-15; Col 1:15-20; 2:6-9). He was the solution to every one of these obstacles." [1]

With the solution to our problems provided through the work of Christ, New Covenant believers are loyal to Him and Him alone. The true believer has no other gods besides Him. When we put our faith and trust in Jesus, He becomes "the only one, and His name the only one" (Zech. 14:9b). Zechariah's prophecy was looking forward to the day when this would become a reality. That day became a reality when the New Covenant began to dawn through the atoning work of Jesus Christ. Centuries later, the light of that day continues to shine through us (Isa. 60:1-3; 2 Pt. 1:19), and the nations should be walking by the light that we provide (Rev. 21:24). We have the solution, and our job is to share that solution with the world around us.

## **King Over All the Earth**

Zechariah said that "the Lord will be King over all the earth" (Zech. 14:9a). These words are echoed in John's words in Revelation when he says that "Jesus Christ" is "the firstborn of the dead" and "the ruler of the kings of the earth" (Rev. 1:5). As David Chilton wrote, "As the Firstborn, Christ possesses the crown rights of all creation: 'All authority in heaven and earth has been given to Me,' He claimed (Matt. 28:18). All nations have been granted to Him as His inheritance, and the kings of earth are under court order to submit to Him (Ps. 2:8-12)." [2] As New Covenant believers and His image bearers in the new creation, we are His representatives who are supposed to be issuing this "court order" to the world. We share the Gospel, we advance the kingdom, and we grow the city. The anticipation of Zechariah 14:9 finds its fulfillment in Revelation 1:5, and we should be getting the memo out: Jesus Christ is the King over all the earth. <https://burrosofberea.com/zechariah-14-part-7-zechariah-149-11/>

**Zechariah 14:10** The whole land shall be turned into a plain from Geba to

Rimmon south of Jerusalem. But Jerusalem shall remain aloft on its site from the Gate of Benjamin to the place of the former gate, to the Corner Gate, and from the Tower of Hananel to the king's winepresses.

## **The Rising of the City**

Christ's kingship, as it is manifested through His people (the members of the New Jerusalem), is portrayed in verse 10 as Jerusalem being elevated while the land around is leveled. This is similar to the words of John the Baptist, where the geographical movements of mountains are clearly not meant to be understood literally (Luke 3:5). Having said that, extreme literalism reaches new heights (pardon the pun) in its approach to the city of Jerusalem rising above all that it surrounds (Zech. 14:10). "This amazing prophecy," we are told, "will literally redraw the map of Africa and the Arabian region, as well as Israel." [3]

According to the latest theory, a somewhat recently discovered rift in the earth's crust will cause tectonic activity resulting in the city of Jerusalem being physically raised in its elevation. "In an astonishing turn of events," writes Jonna Marcaida Calagui, "geologists discovered a major fault line composed of multiple fractures under Mount Olives in 1964 when the Jordanians tried to build a hotel on the fabled mountain." [4] In reaction to finding out about the fault line, Leisha Cole of Tandem Hope ministries exclaims, "Did you know about the geographical fault line near the Mount of Olives? I sure didn't. Hello, Prophecy! Hello, Reality." [5]

## **Cracks in the Road**

This newly detected fault line is the key to everything for extreme literalists. Josh Wander, of Israel 365, spends time making videos as he looks for "cracks in the road" on the Mount of Olives. Wander says that he is investigating as to whether this is the "unfolding of the actual prophecy of Zechariah himself" [6] One might question why the Mount of Olives doesn't just split already if in fact the prophesied fault-line rupture has begun. The Futurists assure us that we should not be dissuaded by this apparent lull in the action. According to Lisa Muhar, we are merely experiencing some prophetic "down time" before these splits "eventually create the 'very great valley' that Zechariah predicted." [7] And these splits are critical to Jerusalem's rising in verse 10, or so we are told.

W.J.J. Glashouwer, chairman of Christians for Israel, informs us that when the Mount of Olives splits in two, "geological activities will take place resulting in pushing up the earth's crust under Jerusalem." [8] This is all thought to work together to fulfill Zechariah 14:4 (the Mount of Olives splitting) and Zechariah 14:10 (the City of Jerusalem rising). Zechariah's words are often coupled with the words of the earlier prophet, Isaiah, who said:

"It shall come to pass in the latter days, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established as the highest of the mountains and shall be lifted up

above the hills; and all the nations shall flow to it" (Isaiah 2:2).

Both prophets speak of the rising of the mountain of the house of the Lord or Jerusalem, as well as the nations flowing to it. In Zechariah, this happens yearly during the Feast of Tabernacles (Zechariah 14:16). Envisioning a future fulfillment of these events, Professor Klaus Wengst writes:

"Israel and its Messiah will come together. In the end, when the times of the nations come to an end, Israel will accept its Messiah and then the 'kingdom for Israel' will also be restored (Acts 1:6; cf. Mt 23:37-39; Lk 21:24; Rom 11:26). Then the great prophecy of Isaiah 2:1-5 will be fulfilled, that the nations of the world will stream up to Jerusalem to worship the God of Israel – what a tremendous perspective!"[9]

Wengst's choice of words is apropos. He speaks of the nations streaming "up" to Jerusalem, which is exactly what they'll have to do – go up, way up. If Jerusalem is literally going to be raised above every other mountain in the world, this will be quite the climb!

### **Rocky Mountain High**

The highest point in the Rocky Mountains is almost 3 miles, the Himalayas reach 5 ½ miles in stature, and the tallest mountain on earth is Mauna Kea which is approximately 6 ½ miles high.[10] If these passages are to be understood literally, the new and improved Mount Zion would have to be higher in elevation than all of these. Do we really believe everyone in the world is going to climb this newly formed mountain? Additionally, aside from the height of the climb itself, there wouldn't be much room to move while making the climb. Every time the Feast of Tabernacles rolls around (Zech. 14:16), every single person on the face of the planet will show up, equipped with harnesses and mountain climbing gear, making the annual expedition up the world's largest mountain.

Of course, literalists could argue that people will fly to the mountain in planes and helicopters. This wouldn't be a very literal interpretation, however, since neither Zechariah nor Isaiah mention anything about planes and helicopters. Zechariah does mention "horses" several times, and Jack Kelley argues that the Hebrew word for horse "would be something like leaper in English" and could refer to "helicopters and planes." [11] So there's that. But this just creates even greater problems. Is there going to be enough room on the peak of this new mountain for all the helicopters and planes to land? This is especially the case because of all the hotels needed to accommodate the 8 billion people hanging out in Jerusalem for the week-long feast. Whether they fly or climb to get there, the literal interpretation is a "mountain" of a problem for the literalists.

Sensing this very problem, the authors of The Beyond Today Bible Commentary argue: "The nations going up annually to Jerusalem to observe the Feast of

Tabernacles does not mean that every person in every nation is to go to Jerusalem every year. Rather, the Feast will be observed globally, with each nation sending a representation [sic] to Jerusalem.”[12] The problem with this is that Zechariah specifically says, “whichever of the families of the earth does not go up to Jerusalem to worship the king, the Lord of hosts, there will be no rain on them” (Zech. 14:17). This being the case, any family on the earth could justly protest a drought due to their absence. After all, their national representative was there... right?

## **A More Down to Earth Approach**

Much like climbing the rough side of a mountain, an uber-literal understanding of the passage encounters insurmountable obstacles. Those who follow this approach never “top out” because the answer to each previous difficulty just presents a new “bouldering problem.”[13] Akin to the effects of thin air at high altitudes, the popular approach to Zechariah 14 can leave a person feeling dizzy and confused. In comparison, a biblically grounded interpretation is like a breath of fresh air – closer to the ground where oxygen levels are higher.

Peeling away the layers of the futurist approach, the passage says nothing about national delegates, helicopters or even mountain climbers. Zechariah’s messaging isn’t topographical, it’s theological. Touching on the themes of both Zechariah 14:10 and Isaiah 2:2, Ken Gentry writes:

“The mountain of the house of the LORD. The ‘house of the LORD’ refers to the new covenant church (1 Cor. 3:16; 6:19; 2 Cor. 6:16; Eph. 2:19–22; 1 Pet. 2:5), which was ‘established’ (Heb., *kun* implies of permanent duration) on earth ‘in the last days’... It is a ‘mountain’ in that it is a city set on a hill (Matt. 5:14; Heb. 12:22). It is to be “the chief of the mountains” (v. 2d) in that it will eventually be the world’s leading influence. Contrary to dispensationalism, this is not to be taken literalistically, as if Jerusalem will physically be elevated higher than Mount Everest (with all the health difficulties that would bring).”[14]

The rising of the mountain is simply imagery meant to capture the preeminence and prominence of the work accomplished by Jesus Christ in and through His people. Since no mountain in the world can truly depict the magnitude of that accomplishment, Isaiah describes it as being higher than any other mountain. In more modern terms, Marvin Gaye and Tammy Terrell would say, “There Ain’t No Mountain High Enough.” The work of Christ takes His people to new levels, and everything else is like a flat plain beneath them. Zechariah and Isaiah are using visual illustrations to paint the wonder of the reality of fulfillment in Christ.

<https://burrosofberea.com/zechariah-14-part-7-zechariah-149-11/>

**Zechariah 14:11** And it shall be inhabited, for there shall never again be a decree of utter destruction. Jerusalem shall dwell in security.

## Nothing Accursed in the New Jerusalem

In verse 11, Zechariah says of the New Jerusalem: "People will live in it, and there will no longer be a curse, for Jerusalem will live in security." Due to the wording of this verse in the English (NASB), the natural inclination is to recall the "curses" of Genesis 3. However, this is not the same word for "curse" that is used in Genesis,[15] and Zechariah is not promising that snakes will start walking upright (Gen. 3:14) or that the ground will stop producing thorns and thistles (Gen. 3:17).[16] The word translated "curse" in Zechariah 14:11 is *cherem* and it refers to "a devoted thing" that is "put under a ban."[17] Deuteronomy 7:25-26 is the key verse in understanding the meaning of this word and the concept behind it:

"The carved images of their gods you shall burn with fire. You shall not covet the silver or the gold that is on them or take it for yourselves, lest you be ensnared by it, for it is an abomination to the Lord your God. And you shall not bring an abominable thing (*cherem*) into your house and become devoted to destruction (*cherem*) like it. You shall utterly detest and abhor it, for it is devoted to destruction" (*cherem*) (Deut. 7:25-26, ESV).

In this verse, the *cherem* or "abominable things" are the graven images of the false gods of the surrounding nations. When the Israelites take possession of the land, they are strictly forbidden to take possession of the former occupants' objects of worship. Anyone who has ever read the Old Testament knows that ancient Israel didn't always do so well in this regard. A classic example is found in Joshua chapters 6-7. Before the conquest of Jericho, the Lord tells His people:

"But you, keep yourselves from the things devoted to destruction (*cherem*), lest when you have devoted (*cherem*) them you take any of the devoted things (*cherem*) and make the camp of Israel a thing for destruction (*cherem*) and bring trouble upon it" (Joshua 6:18).

Those who've read the story know that not everyone in the camp followed through, and the victory at Jericho was followed by a swift defeat at Ai (Joshua 7:1-9). The reason for the defeat is spelled out in Joshua 7:10-12:

"The Lord said to Joshua, 'Get up! Why have you fallen on your face? Israel has sinned; they have transgressed my covenant that I commanded them; they have taken some of the devoted things (*cherem*); they have stolen and lied and put them among their own belongings. Therefore the people of Israel cannot stand before their enemies. They turn their backs before their enemies, because they have become devoted for destruction (*cherem*). I will be with you no more, unless you destroy the devoted things (*cherem*) from among you'" (Joshua 7:9-12).

This is exactly what Moses said would happen in Deuteronomy 7:25-26. Rather

than devoting the pagan objects of worship to destruction, some in the camp took them, kept them, and brought them into their own households. When God's people do this, they bring destruction upon themselves.

### **No Cherem for New Covenant Believers**

Zechariah is saying that under the New Covenant, in the New Jerusalem, there will be no cherem. Graven images, Idols, and false gods have no place in the life of a true believer. Whatever we "worshiped" before coming to Christ is to be "devoted to destruction." He and He alone is first and foremost in our life, and we do all that we do unto the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31). This ties in perfectly with the theme of the exclusivity of the Lord introduced in verse 9, and this is what it is all about. The "old things are passed away, and all things become new" (2 Cor. 5:17). We turn our backs on the gods of men and the idols that we worshiped before turning to the Lord. For the believer, "the Lord" is "the only one, and His name is the only one" (Zech. 14:9). And even the common ordinary things in our life, right down to our means of transportation and cooking utensils in our kitchen, are to be "HOLY TO THE LORD" (Zech. 14:20-21). In the New Jerusalem, everything is sacred,[18] and there is no room for anything unsacred or profane.

This is identical to what John says regarding the New Jerusalem in the book of Revelation:

"No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads" (Revelation 22:3-4).

The word translated "accursed" is katanáthema, and it refers to a thing "which is devoted or given over to a deity, accursed thing," according to BDAG.[19] According to Thayer, it is "specifically, an offering resulting from a vow, which after being consecrated to a god was hung upon the walls or columns of the temple, or put in some other conspicuous place." [20] It is a form of the same Greek word used to translate the Hebrew cherem in the Septuagint version of Zechariah 14:11.[21]

Thus, John and Zechariah are both tracking on the same idea. The meaning is not the reverse or removal of the Genesis curses, but the removal of anything that is "accursed" in the life of a true believer. As members of the New Covenant community, we don't worship false gods anymore, nor do we make a false god out of anything in our life. For us, every aspect of our lives and all that we do is sacred, holy, and devoted to the Lord. The people of the New Jerusalem "dwell securely" by removing everything "devoted to destruction," to not incur God's anger and to ensure God's blessing.

### **Rising Up and Moving Forward**

As Jesus' representatives in the world that He has reclaimed, we exercise believing loyalty in Him and Him alone. In so doing, we extend the invitation to accept Christ to the world around us. As people embrace Him, His Lordship embraces every area of life. As that happens, the city continues to expand and elevate.

The prophecies of Zechariah and Isaiah aren't about tectonic shifts in the earth's crust, they are about paradigm shifts caused by transforming power of Gospel. It is life changing, not just individually but collectively, and should permeate every aspect of life. We don't need to look for cracks in the road in modern-day Israel, but we should be looking to crack through every barrier and obstacle that stands in the way of advancing His Kingdom here on this earth: "Destroying all arguments and all arrogance against the knowledge of God," we are to take "every thought captive to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:5).

As Abraham Kuyper said, "There is not a square inch in the whole domain of our human existence over which Christ, who is Sovereign over all, does not cry, Mine!"[22] As Isaiah and Zechariah pictured the mountain rising, we must rise to meet the challenges in our own lives personally and in the culture around us. Our message to the world should be: the Lord is "King over all the earth," and "His name is the only one" (Zech. 14:9).

<https://burrosofberea.com/zechariah-14-part-7-zechariah-149-11/>

**Zechariah 14:12** And this shall be the plague with which the LORD will strike all the peoples that wage war against Jerusalem: their flesh will rot while they are still standing on their feet, their eyes will rot in their sockets, and their tongues will rot in their mouths.

As the New Jerusalem rose up,[1] the Old Jerusalem would be torn down and reduced to rubble.[2] Those inside the city would suffer greatly in their vain attempt to save it. These verses speak to the sad reality that befell them as they clung to that which was fading away rather than embracing the new reality materializing through Jesus Christ. The popular approach of our day doesn't see it this way, however. Instead of Zechariah's words describing horrors of the past, today's pop-prophecy pundits spin these verses as horrors still awaiting our future. Fittingly, the scenario they describe is very much like a futuristic sci-fi thriller – or even a horror movie.

## **Nuclear War, End Time Zombies, and The Big Screen**

In his article "Zechariah Prophecy & The Neutron Bomb," Marshall Beeber informs us: "This prophecy seemed like a horrific fantasy until the dawn of the nuclear age. In the 1970s Samuel Cohen, a nuclear physicist, invented a new tactical nuclear weapon called the 'neutron bomb' which would have the exact effect that Zechariah's prophecy stated." [3]

What is extremely relevant for those seeking to truly understand Zechariah's prophecy in its historical context is just how extremely irrelevant the prophecy would have been to Zechariah's original audience – if Beeber is correct. More the point, it was apparently irrelevant to anyone living prior to the 1970s!

The real irony here is that those who argue that Zechariah foretells a nuclear war also argue that the New Testament's time statements[4] merely mean that Jesus could come "at any moment," rather than meaning that He would come in the first-century. As the popular lingo of our day goes, Christ's return has been "always imminent." [5] By this, they mean that Christ could have come back at any time during the last 2000 years – stretching right up to the present.

But how could His return have been "always imminent" before the predicted nuclear wars were even a possibility? How could He have come back before the technology was in place? How could it have happened before the 1970s?

Undaunted by this somewhat obvious contradiction, this remains one of our Dispensational friends' favorite passages because it seems to play right into the sci-fi sensationalism that characterizes their approach. Dr. Roger Barrier says that Zechariah 14:12 "mirrors the incredible melting of human bodies that results from the intense heat produced by a nuclear bomb." [6] One popular website opens its treatment of this verse with these words: "Anyone who has seen Raiders of the Lost Ark recalls a most incredible scene when the Germans open the Ark of the Covenant and their flesh melts. Eyes and tongues are destroyed, making them unable to see or to speak!" [7] Shelby Hunt thinks the movie World War Z is a better fit than Raiders of the Lost Ark and claims this verse is describing end-time "Zombies" in the last days. [8]

Interpreting the Bible in light of feature film isn't the best hermeneutical approach. We don't need movies starring Harrison Ford or Brad Pitt, or even a nuclear explosion to help us figure out this verse. And how would Zechariah's original audience have even made heads or tails out of it if this were the case? The truth is, there are better ways to understand the passage than catapulting it thousands of years into the future of the original audience, and onto the big screen or news headlines of our own time.

### **Famine in the City During the War**

Zechariah describes the plague as follows: "...their flesh will rot while they stand on their feet, and their eyes will rot in their sockets, and their tongue will rot in their mouth." While Zechariah's prophecy isn't about our own day and age, this horrific scene is something that is unfortunately common to every day and age. Consequently, it's not difficult to figure out what is going on in this verse. The prophet gives a very apt description of the effects of starvation upon the human body.

As Gary DeMar writes, "There was a famine during the siege of Jerusalem. A woman was found cooking and eating her child. A tactic of warfare is to wait out the enemy by surrounding the adversary and starving them out. 'Jerusalem was isolated from the rest of the nation, and factions within the city fought over strategies of defense. As the siege wore on, people began dying from starvation and plague. The high priest's wife, who once basked in luxury, scavenged for crumbs in the streets.' Their emaciated bodies would look like rotting corpses. Plagues often follow starvation and the stench and disease of literal rotting corpses." [12]

Likewise, Darrell G. Young informs us: "The Jewish zealots, reacting in opposition to Caligula's campaign began a revolt against Rome, a revolt which led to Roman legion soldiers from Syria destroying the food stocks of the Zealots and the local Jewish population. The inhabitants of the city of Jerusalem died in great numbers via starvation." [13] Additionally, it is a commonly known fact that the Jewish Zealots themselves burned stockpiles of dry food within their own city in order to "induce the defenders to fight against the siege, instead of negotiating peace." [14] This resulted in "many city dwellers and soldiers" dying "of starvation during the siege." [15]

In short, Zechariah's description of the plague (Zech. 14:12) matches the results of starvation and malnourishment, and this was unfortunately what awaited many who remained within the city's walls during that time.

This, however, raises the question of whom the plague was to befall. An English reading of the text seems to indicate that the intended victims were those who went to war against Jerusalem rather than those who went to war for Jerusalem. How can we square this with the text if in fact Zechariah is describing the starvation of those who remained in the city, desperately fighting on its behalf?

### **Upon Whom Did the Plague Fall?**

Even among those who understand this passage in terms of past fulfillment, the tendency is to equate the plague with Jerusalem's attackers rather than her defenders. In this case, it would have been the Romans, instead of the Jews, who suffered the judgement of Zechariah 14:12. From history, however, we know that the Romans did not experience starvation in the aftermath of the war.

Once again, the entire meaning of a verse hinges greatly upon the translators' choice of words. One single word can completely change the whole dynamic of what's being said. In this case, it's The Hebrew preposition ('al). In English, the passage reads, "this is the plague that will strike those who have gone to war against Jerusalem," but there is nothing in the raw grammar of the verse that necessitates that this word must mean "against." Regarding this particular Hebrew preposition, the context determines the nuance of the word, and many times it means the exact opposite of "against." For example:

Exodus 18:19 says that "Jethro rejoiced OVER all the goodness which the Lord had done to Israel." [17]

Deuteronomy 4:21 says, "Now the Lord was angry with me, ON ACCOUNT OF you." [18]

Deuteronomy 9:18 says, "I neither ate bread nor drank water, BECAUSE OF all your sin." [19]

Likewise, Ruth 1:19, "The city was stirred BECAUSE OF them." [20]

Nehemiah 1:6 says, "I am praying before Thee now, day and night, ON BEHALF OF the sons of Israel." [21]

If we were to plug any of these possible meanings into Zechariah 14:12, the verse would look like this: "Now this will be the plague with which the LORD will strike all the peoples who have gone to war over Jerusalem," "on account of Jerusalem," "because of Jerusalem," or "on behalf of Jerusalem ." In this case, it is not those who are attacking the city upon whom the plague falls, but those who are defending it. In other words, the plague of verse 12 hits Zealots and the people whom they persuaded to stay behind and fight – rather than flee to the mountains as Jesus instructed. These are the ones who would experience the plague of starvation, which would in turn contribute to the internal fighting among those inside the city.

<https://burrosofberea.com/zechariah-14-part-8-zechariah-1412-15/>

**Zechariah 14:13** And on that day a great panic from the LORD shall fall on them, so that each will seize the hand of another, and the hand of the one will be raised against the hand of the other.

### **Panic and Conflict Within the City**

This seems to be a fitting depiction of the infighting within the city as the Zealot factions and their respective followers were at odds with one another. [22] Additionally, these verses tend to rule out nuclear war or even a volcanic eruption. Simply put, there wouldn't be anyone left alive to fight amongst themselves after such catastrophes. Starvation, on the other hand, would precipitate just such a conflict as the inhabitants of the city fought over whatever remaining food sources could be found.

**Zechariah 14:14** Even Judah will fight at Jerusalem. And the wealth of all the surrounding nations shall be collected, gold, silver, and garments in great abundance.

### **Titus' Payday Parade**

Amid Jerusalem's internal conflict, Zechariah then says, "...the wealth of all the surrounding nations will be gathered, gold, silver, and garments in great abundance" (Zech. 14:14b). As history would have it, Josephus recounts how the Romans openly flaunted their wealth while "poverty" had "seized" those inside the city "and a great many had died already for want of necessities." [23] Zechariah's prophecy and Josephus' history are very much like mirror images of each other, with Zechariah peering forward to the events of the Roman-Jewish War while Josephus looked back upon them.

The flaunting of the Roman wealth occurred after Jerusalem's second wall was demolished. [24] At that point in time, Titus resolved to "relax the siege for a little while" in order to "distribute subsistence money to the soldiers" and "give every one of the soldiers their pay." [25] This lasted for "four days," [26] with the Roman soldiers in full battle array. Even the Romans' horses were adorned "in their fine trappings." [27] Steve Mason describes this extravaganza as one of the ways in which the "Romans used every opportunity to exploit the appearance of their superbly equipped army, massed in rank and file." [28] As Mason explains:

"Opportunities were few during a siege, but Josephus describes Titus using such a tactic just after taking Jerusalem's second wall. Instead of continuing the assault immediately against the city's innermost, oldest, and strongest wall, he staged an elaborate payday parade over four days. Legionaries were paid three times per year, and this may simply have been the scheduled time, but Josephus portrays it as a tactic to intimidate. The legions parade in full uniform, their polished swords drawn. Even the horses are decked out in armor and shiny decorations, the bright sun giving the whole scene an otherworldly radiance. 'The broad area in front of the city gleamed with gold and silver, and nothing was more exhilarating than this spectacle to themselves, or more terrifying to the [Judaean] enemy' (War 5.348-55). The city's north wall is crowded with spectators craning their necks, and Josephus characteristically reads their minds: 'dire consternation overtook even the most daring, as they observed this force all massed together and the fineness of the weapons and the good order of the men.' He has the Jerusalemites admit that they would have surrendered right then and there, had they not gone too far to expect clemency." [29]

## **Roman Victory Parades**

Apart from Titus' Payday Parade, a possible further fulfillment of verse 14 might be found in the Roman victory parades following the destruction of Jerusalem itself. Josephus speaks of "Titus's and Vespasian's Triumph" in which they "exhibited magnificent shows in all the cities of Syria" and beyond. [30] During these displays, Titus "made use of the captive Jews as public instances of the destruction of that nation." [31] When he left Antioch and made his way to Zeugma, messengers from "Vologeses king of Parthia" met him "and brought him a crown of gold upon the victory he had gained over the Jews." [32] Journeying in

to Egypt with the captive Zealot leaders,[33] Vespasian and Titus were “crowned with laurel” and “clothed” with “ancient purple garments” as they sat down upon “ivory chairs” accepting shouts of victory.[34]

Josephus says that “it is impossible to describe the magnitude of the shows as they deserve and the magnificence of them all.”[35] He speaks of “the variety of riches” and “rarities of nature,” “admirable and all costly in nature,” and “all brought together” to demonstrate “the vastness of the dominions of the Romans” during these elaborate celebrations of their victory over the Jews.[36] He elaborates, “For there was here to be seen a mighty quantity of silver, and gold, and ivory, contrived into all sorts of things” carried along “in a pompous show” and “running along like a river.”[37] “Some parts,” he says, “were composed of the rarest purple hangings” and accurately represented the embroidery of “the Babylonians.”[38] Josephus speaks of “precious stones,” “crowns of gold,” “very costly materials,” and “purple garments” that were “interwoven with gold.”[39] This all accords quite well with Zechariah’s words: “...the wealth of all the surrounding nations will be gathered, gold, silver, and garments in great abundance” (Zech. 14:14b).

<https://burrosofberea.com/zechariah-14-part-8-zechariah-1412-15/>

**Zechariah 14:15** And a plague like this plague shall fall on the horses, the mules, the camels, the donkeys, and whatever beasts may be in those camps.

The starvation of those who camped inside the besieged city would have befallen their animals as well as the people themselves, while even the Romans’ horses were in full health and vigor. The contrast could not be greater. The wealth of the “surrounding nations” was “gathered” in “great abundance” (Zech. 14:14) while those inside the city wasted away (Zech. 14:12) along with their animals (Zech. 14:15).

### **Predicted, Fulfilled, and Recorded**

All that Zechariah predicted in these verses was fulfilled and then recorded by Josephus after the prophet’s words came to pass in the Roman-Jewish War of the first century. There is no need to watch the latest apocalyptic thriller movie to understand Zechariah’s prophecy, but there is a great need to acquaint ourselves with history in order to understand it. The answers to our questions about Zechariah’s prediction lay in the distant past and not the future – whether that be the near or far future.

Embracing Christ and following His admonition to flee the city would have saved everyone who went down with the city. It would have also made them a part of the new city, the New Jerusalem,[40] which began to rise and expand in the first century and continues to do so unto this day (Zech. 14:10-11). Many chose to flee to the mountains as Jesus instructed, and many chose to stay. Those who made the latter choice faced famine and defeat as their enemies were victorious

and prosperous. Zechariah's words in verses 12-15 speak to these events and Zechariah aptly portrays the contrast between the fate of the old, earthly Jerusalem and the destiny of the new, heavenly Jerusalem depicted in the previous verses.

<https://burrosofberea.com/zechariah-14-part-8-zechariah-1412-15/>

**Zechariah 14:16** Then everyone who survives of all the nations that have come against Jerusalem shall go up year after year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Booths.

In verses 16-19, Zechariah speaks of the nations of the earth sojourning to Jerusalem every year to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles (i.e., booths). The consequences of not making this trek and participating in the celebration are a lack of rainfall for those who sit it out. This is a vivid picture illustrating the need to come to Christ coupled with the outcome of rejecting him. In short, the imagery pictures the realities of the New Covenant age.

Many, however, see this as a renewal of the Old Covenant rites and rituals during a future Millennium. In other words, they teach that the Feast of Tabernacles will be reinstituted with everyone on earth required to travel to Jerusalem to physically celebrate it – just as it was celebrated in Old Testament times. This would be logistically impossible.[1] More importantly, it is Biblically impossible. Jesus is the embodiment and fulfillment of all such types and shadows (Colossians 2:16-17), and the New Testament warns against returning to the physical observance of such things (Galatians 4:10-11).

The Feast of Tabernacles was a fall-harvest festival which commemorated the Israelites living in booths after their Exodus from Egypt. It was also eschatologically oriented as it looked forward to a time when Gentiles would likewise dwell in the tabernacling presence of God's grace and mercy.[2] Jesus fulfills every aspect of this feast and the invitation to embrace Him is unending. Zechariah 14:16-19 is about turning to Him, not returning to ceremonies that pointed to Him.

### **The Fulfillment of the Feast**

Jesus stood up on the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles and declared: "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. The one who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, from his innermost being will flow rivers of living water" (John 7:37b-38). D.A. Carson makes the connection between the timing of this feast, the imagery of water and rainfall, and the significance of Jesus' words on that day:

"It is clear that this Feast was associated with adequate rainfall and interestingly enough, this chapter (cf. Zc. 14:16-17— from Zechariah was read on the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles in the liturgy prescribed in B. Megilla 31a), not

surprisingly in light of the harvest connections... The water-pouring ceremony is interpreted in these traditions as a foretaste of the eschatological rivers of living water foreseen by Ezekiel (47:1-9) and Zechariah (13:1). In these traditions the water miracle in the wilderness (Exodus 17:1-7; Numbers 20:8-13; cf. Psalms 78:16-20) is in turn a forerunner of the water rite of the Feast of Tabernacles... In general terms, then, Jesus' pronouncement is clear: he is the fulfillment of all the Feast of Tabernacles anticipated. If Isaiah could invite the thirsty to drink from the waters (Isaiah 55:1), Jesus announces that he is the one who can provide the waters."<sup>[4]</sup>

## **Jesus is Our Tabernacle**

Apart from the imagery of a fall feast being associated with water and adequate rainfall, Jesus fulfills the essence of the feast itself in that He is our tabernacle. Scripture tells us that "the Word was made flesh, and dwelt [tabernacled] among us" (John 1:14). The term used here for "dwelt" is *skenoo*, and it means: "to pitch a tent, encamp; to tabernacle, dwell in a tent; to dwell, have one's abode."

The same word is used by John again in the book of Revelation: "And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Behold the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell [tabernacle] with them, and they will be his people and God himself will be with them as their God'" (Revelation 21:3). This is the reality of the relationship that we have with the Lord in the New Covenant – He pitches His tent and tabernacles among us. The Old Testament feast was merely a type or shadow of that reality. Jesus is the embodiment of all that the Feast of Tabernacles signified and symbolized.

## **Tabernacles and the Exodus**

The purpose of the feast was to commemorate God's people dwelling in tabernacles in the wilderness after the Exodus from Egypt (Leviticus 23:39-43). As such, the Israelites were to gather "the foliage of beautiful trees, palm branches, and boughs of leafy trees and willows of the brook" and "rejoice before the Lord" (Leviticus 23:40). A beautiful picture of Jesus as the fulfillment of this is seen in the Gospels when He rides into Jerusalem on a donkey (Mark 11:1-6), and the people spread out "leafy branches which they had cut from the fields" (Mark 11:8), and they declare: "Hosanna! Blessed is He who comes in the name of the Lord" (Mark 11:9).

In Zechariah 14:16, coming to Christ is symbolized by the nations making the journey to Jerusalem from "year to year" to "celebrate" this feast which pictured the Exodus. Regarding the Exodus, the Psalmist depicts the Israelites' tabernacling in the wilderness (Psalms 107: 4, 10) as the time when God "brought them out of darkness" (Psalms 107:10, 14). As James Kugel says, the Psalmist describes "the entire Exodus as a going forth from darkness."<sup>[5]</sup> Just as the ancient Israelites made their exodus from the darkness of the land of Egypt,

all New Covenant believers make a personal exodus out of spiritual “darkness” and into “His marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9). When we do this, He tabernacles with us, and we tabernacle in Him.

### **From Year to Year**

Zechariah says this happens “from year to year” in order to telegraph the idea that the Gospel invitation is ongoing and unending. God’s mercies are new every morning (Lamentations 3:22-23). The Tree of Life yields its fruit every month and its leaves are for the healing of the nations (Revelation 22:2). In order for a person to experience God’s healing and tabernacling presence, however, a person must embrace Christ. In other words, we must make that journey to Him. It’s a spiritual journey to the “mountain” that can’t be “touched” (Hebrews 12:18) – to the true “Mount Zion,” to the “city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem” (Hebrews 12:22).

### **Why the Feast of Tabernacles?**

Finally, the question must be asked: of all the Old Testament feasts, festivals and rituals that signified these New Testament realities, why does Zechariah single out the Feast of Tabernacles specifically? Why is it this feast, in particular, that all the “families of the earth” (Zech. 14:17) are required to celebrate? Why did he focus on this one exclusively in conjunction with “the nations” (Zech. 14:18)?

Perhaps one could argue that Tabernacles was a pilgrimage festival and this best fits Zechariah’s theme, but so were Passover and Pentecost.[6] So this narrows it down, but the question now becomes: of the three pilgrimage festivals, why is Zechariah’s attention drawn solely to this one? With that in mind, there is one last aspect of the Feast of Tabernacles that provides the answer.

This final feature of the feast comes to us from Numbers 29:12-34. This passage “describes the sacrifices involved in the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles, called in Hebrew, the Feast of Sukkot (“Booths”). Included in those sacrifices were 70 bulls, a number that far exceeds any other Israelite festival.”[7]

Scholars have long taken note of this number and determined that it can’t be arbitrary. For example, Noga Ayali-Darshan, of the Hebrew University in Israel observes: “This huge number of offerings is striking, especially in comparison with other Pentateuchal festivals, none of which requires more than two bulls per day...”[8] As Yoel Halevi writes, “The Torah in Numbers 29:12-34 requires the Israelite priests to sacrifice 70 bulls during the great feast... the question standing before most people who read this text is why 70?”[9]

The answer to this question is found early on in the book of Genesis. The number 70 corresponds to the Table of Nations in Genesis 10. This is where the Lord divided the nations and “set the boundaries of the people,” according to Moses

(Deuteronomy 32:8). Corresponding to this, Paul said that God set these “boundaries” so that people “should seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him...” (Acts 17:26-27). Thus, God divided the original peoples of the world into 70 distinct nations for the purpose of those nations finding their way back to Him.

The 70 bulls sacrificed during the Feast of Tabernacles corresponds to these 70 representative nations, and the Jews viewed the ritual as a means of intercession for those nations. According to Jewish tradition, “these 70 bulls were sacrificed for the sins of the 70 nations descended from the three sons of Noah.”[10] Rabbi Milgrom put it this way, “You find that on Sukkot, Israel offers to Him [God] seventy bulls as an atonement for the seventy nations.”[11]

Putting this together, the sacrifice of the 70 bulls during the Feast of Tabernacles was a means of intercession for the surrounding Gentile nations. How fitting is it then that Zechariah chose this feast to picture the Gentiles coming to Christ? Under the New covenant, we don’t need to sacrifice 70 bulls anymore. Jesus is our intercessor now (Romans 8:34), and He is the only mediator between God and man (1 Timothy 2:5). His mediation and intercession for the Gentile nations was pictured during the Feast of Tabernacles, and our coming to Him is pictured as a Journey to Jerusalem to celebrate that feast. If a people don’t make that journey to Him, Zechariah says no rain will fall upon them (Zech. 14:17).

<https://burrosofberea.com/zechariah-14-part-9-zechariah-1416-19/>

**Zechariah 14:17** And if any of the families of the earth do not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, there will be no rain on them.

### **No Rain Will Fall Upon Them**

In the previous verses, we saw how imagery from the natural world is used metaphorically to communicate spiritual realities. In verse 4, a splitting mountain represents God’s judgment and the choice a person must make regarding the claims of Christ. In verse 9, a rising mountain symbolizes the preeminence and prominence of Christ as He works in and through His people. In verse 17, the imagery switches from mountains to rain. The “plague” and “punishment” for those who refuse to celebrate the Feast (i.e., embrace Christ) is that “there will be no rain on them” (Zech. 14:17).

In the Bible, rain is used as a metaphor for God’s presence and His blessings in a person’s life. In modern times, we use “cats and dogs” as a metaphor for “rain.” Sometimes, the Biblical metaphors make far more sense than the modern ones! [12] The background for Zechariah’s rain imagery comes from passages like Deuteronomy 32:2 and Hosea 6:3.[13]

1 “Listen, you heavens, and I will speak; And let the earth hear the words of my mouth!

2 May my teaching drip as the rain, My speech trickle as the dew, As droplets on the fresh grass, And as the showers on the vegetation.

3 For I proclaim the name of the Lord; Ascribe greatness to our God!" (Deuteronomy 32:1-3).

1 "Come, let's return to the Lord. For He has torn us, but He will heal us; He has wounded us, but He will bandage us.

2 He will revive us after two days; He will raise us up on the third day, That we may live before Him.

3 So let us know, let us press on to know the Lord. His appearance is as sure as the dawn; And He will come to us like the rain, As the spring rain waters the earth." (Hosea. 6:1-3).

The Dictionary of Biblical Imagery captures the Scriptural sentiment of rain as a metaphor: "So vibrant are the feelings of the biblical writers for the refreshment represented by rainfall that we sometimes feel the rain almost as a plant might be imagined to experience it, as we read about 'ground that drinks up the rain falling on it' (Hebrews 6:7)."[14] In order for God's "rain" to fall upon us, we must embrace His teachings and press on to know Him, as Moses and Hosea indicate. Bottom line: Jesus Christ is the way, the truth and the life, and no one comes to the Father except through Him (John 14:6). If someone doesn't make that journey and embrace Christ (Zech. 14:16), no "rain" will fall upon them (Zech. 14:17).

This is not unlike the words of the prophet Amos who spoke of the spiritual drought and famine that comes upon those who disregard God and His Word:

11 "Behold, the days are coming," declares the Lord God. 'When I will send a famine on the land, Not a famine of bread or a thirst for water. But rather for hearing the words of the Lord.

12 And people will stagger from sea to sea. And from the north even to the east. They will go to and fro to seek the word of the Lord. But they will not find it" (Amos 8:11-12).

Similarly, Isaiah says:

5 "So now let Me tell you what I am going to do to My vineyard: I will remove its hedge and it will be consumed; I will break down its wall and it will become trampled ground.

6 I will lay it waste; It will not be pruned nor hoed, But briars and thorns will come up. I will also command the clouds not to rain on it.

7 For the vineyard of the Lord of armies is the house of Israel, And the people of Judah are His delightful plant. So He waited for justice, but behold, there was bloodshed; For righteousness, but behold, a cry for help" (Isaiah 5:5-7).

<https://burrosofberea.com/zechariah-14-part-9-zechariah-1416-19/>

**Zechariah 14:18** And if the family of Egypt does not go up and present themselves, then on them there shall be no rain; there shall be the plague with which the LORD afflicts the nations that do not go up to keep the Feast of Booths. **Zechariah 14:19** This shall be the punishment to Egypt and the punishment to all the nations that do not go up to keep the Feast of Booths.

### **Why is Egypt Singled Out?**

In verses 18-19, Egypt is specifically signaled out as being punished with no rain. This has left commentators baffled. For example, Paul Redditt asks, "Why do these verses focus on Egypt? It was hardly the central player in the Levant at any time during the Persian period. Persia's exercise of control, moreover, generally left religious matters to locals. It is difficult to see any of that context as the stimulus for condemning Egypt." [15] Understanding the passage in light of AD 70 and the progressive Revelation of the New Testament illuminates this otherwise obscure reference to Egypt.

In the book of Revelation, the old Jerusalem becomes the new Egypt (Revelation 11:8). This is fitting. In the book of Acts, Stephen tells the first-century Jews that the hearts of their fathers "turned back to Egypt" (Acts 7:39) and they were doing just as their fathers had done (Acts 7:51). As noted in a previous installment, old Jerusalem's new status as spiritual Egypt was also physically pictured in the deportation of many of its inhabitants back to Egypt after the city fell. [16] As the Old Testament foretold, God's Old Covenant people eventually returned to Egypt (cf. Deut. 28:68; Hos. 8:13) – literally and figuratively. And now, just like a person from Egypt or any other nation on earth, their salvation is found in Christ and Christ alone.

Ethnic Israelites no longer have special covenantal status apart from the New Covenant in Jesus' blood (Luke 22:20) – which in and of itself is an echo back to Zechariah (cf. Zech. 9:11) – but like everyone, they can have special status in God's eyes through the atoning work of His Son. Jews and Gentiles alike must embrace the embodiment of the Feast of Tabernacles, i.e., Jesus Christ, if the rain of God's presence and blessing is to fall upon them.

### **Is This Literal Rain?**

Understanding these words as referring to literal rain is nonsensical if one takes the time to think it through. This is especially the case with respect to the popular Futuristic approach of our day, which sees Zechariah 14 as yet to be fulfilled. For instance, imagine a neighborhood with 50 houses lining the street. If 45 of the families in those houses make the trek to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles but five don't, is the rain going to strategically miss the other 5 houses? And if those 5 families wanted to get rained on badly enough, why not just go next door and get wet? More to the point, with respect to modern public water systems, why not just turn on the sprinkler?

Even in ancient times, the threat of no literal rain with respect to Egypt, specifically (vs. 18), would have been rather inept. As Robert S. Rayburn puts it: "A contemporary of Zechariah might well have thought of the promise of withholding rain, 'Well, that wouldn't hurt Egypt very much.'"[17] George Klein explains why: "Unlike the other nations that depended on rainfall for their agricultural yield, Egypt relied on irrigation water provided by the Nile (Deuteronomy 11:10-11; Jeremiah 46: 7-8)."[18] Consequently, "a threat to withhold rain would have been ridiculous" with regard to Egypt, says G. Michell. [19] The numerous problems posed by understanding "rain" literally in these verses literally show how its best to understand the reference to "rain" in a non-literal manner.

### **A Bigger Problem than Lack of Rain**

As it turns out, the rain problem is only a minor storm compared to the greater difficulty the passage poses for the popular approach of our day. As Kim Riddlebarger points out, "Evil in the Millennial Age" is "A Huge Problem for Premillennarians." [20] Basically, if these verses are describing a time after the future second coming of Christ, Zechariah 14:18-19 must refer to the Millennium. Yet, there are nations still in rebellion against God who refuse to travel to Jerusalem to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles?

Edward McComiskey captures the dilemma: "No such nations will exist in this time..." [21] Goerge Klein puts it this way: "In the day when... God finally reigns on earth, it is difficult to imagine sin reemerging to mar God's creation with such flagrant disobedience to the Lord." [22] This leads Klien to conclude: "It is unclear whether the circumstances sketched by Zechariah in v. 17 are hypothetical or actual." [23] Extreme literalism literally faces an extreme dilemma at this point. This being so, many opt for the first choice: Zechariah is simply describing a hypothetical situation that could never actually happen in a future utopian state.

For example, McComiskey argues that the drought experienced by the disobedient is merely a "hypothetical allusion," and even goes so far as to call it a "hypothetical illusion." [24] In other words, it's just Zechariah imagining what would happen if the "hypothetical nations" could choose to "disobey God's rule" during the time of "the absolute rule of God." [25] This is supposedly despite the fact that Zechariah himself knows fully well that they couldn't. If this is true, one wonders why Zechariah would have put so much time and effort into writing about something that's merely an "illusion" – hypothetically speaking, of course. It's safe to hypothesize that most are not going to buy the "hypothetical" explanation.

Opting for the second choice, actual fulfillment, another writer proposes a solution wherein resurrected Saints (who cannot sin) will be living alongside of Armageddon survivors (who can sin) during the Millennium. [26] "Those folks will

still be able to sin and disobey,” he says, “and if they do, no rain.”[27] But this just takes us right back to the neighborhood street with the 50 houses and the targeted rainfall. What if an Armageddon survivor lives right next to a resurrected believer? Again, they can just go next door and get some rain. Understanding the passage literally provides no more help than understanding it hypothetically. At the end of the day, the solution is to understand the passage Scripturally.

## **Interpreting Scripture with Scripture**

With Scripture alone as our guide, Zechariah’s messaging is clear. God withholds the rain of His presence from those who don’t embrace His Son as their Lord and Savior. The Feast of Tabernacles was a picture of Jesus and all that He accomplished. He is our intercessor and our high priest, and He tabernacles among those who make the Exodus out of spiritual darkness and into the light of His grace and mercy. The ongoing offer of the salvation provided in and through Him is continual and unending. All people everywhere can make that journey to Him anytime forever. Zechariah’s imagery in these verses comes to life in the person and work of Jesus Christ. To interpret this passage in an uber-literal fashion and return to the types and shadows that pictured Christ’s work, is to completely miss the magnitude and magnificence of what is being evoked by the prophet. Jesus is the fulfillment of the Feast of Tabernacles, and Zechariah 14:16-19 is fulfilled when people find their fulfillment in Him.

<https://burrosofberea.com/zechariah-14-part-9-zechariah-1416-19/>

**Zechariah 14:20** And on that day there shall be inscribed on the bells of the horses, “Holy to the LORD.” And the pots in the house of the LORD shall be as the bowls before the altar.

These verses (20-21) loop back to the theme introduced in verse 9, i.e., the exclusivity and extent of Christ’s reign.[1] For the New Covenant believer, “old things are passed away, and all things become new” (2 Cor. 5:17). The Lord is “the only one, and His name is the only one” (Zech. 14:9).

This being the case, even the common ordinary things in our life, right down to our means of transportation and the cooking utensils in our kitchen, are to be “HOLY TO THE LORD” (Zech. 14:20-21a). Under the Old Covenant, all consecrated items had to be sanctified for their use in the holy place (Exod. 28:38). Under the New Covenant, The Lord Himself is our temple (Rev. 21:3), and we are His temple (1 Cor. 3:16). For that reason, Zechariah is telegraphing the idea that everything in our lives is to be consecrated and set apart for God’s glory.

In other words, all that we have, all that we think, and all that we do, is sacred. There is no room for anything unsacred or profane in the New Jerusalem. More to the point, that which was unsacred and profane should become consecrated and pure. Everything, even our eating and drinking, is to be done to the glory of God (1 Cor. 10:31). As New Covenant believers, Jesus Christ becomes the central

focus of our lives and all that our lives entail.

In the final words of the chapter, Zechariah says, “there will no longer be a Canaanite in the house of the Lord.” With these words, Zechariah looks forward to a specific event in Jesus’ life regarding the Old Covenant, physical temple. This event, in turn, has far-reaching implications with respect to the New Covenant, spiritual temple – of which all true believers are a part. Jesus’ actions in the physical temple were meant to inform us regarding our behavior in the spiritual temple, as we live out the fulfillment of the realities envisioned by Zechariah.

### **Holy to the Lord**

Zechariah says that “the bells of the horses” will bear the inscription, “Holy to the Lord.” Even the most mundane items, like “cooking pots,” will be “Holy to the Lord.” The significance of this inscription being applied to animals and common everyday items would have been startling to an ancient Israelite. Under the Old Covenant, that phrase was reserved for the golden engraving fastened to the high priest’s turban (Exod. 28:36-37). Additionally, the high priest wore a “golden bell” whenever he entered and left the holy place (Exod. 28:34-35). Zechariah’s prophecy anticipates a time when access to sacred space is no longer restricted, and everything becomes sanctified in the life of the believer.

To put it another way, the inscription on the high priest’s turban now applies to us. For those who believe in Jesus, we are all kings and priests (1 Pt. 2:9; Rev. 5:9-10) and sacred space is no longer limited to the holy of holies, in the physical temple, in earthly Jerusalem. That temple, in fact, doesn’t exist anymore. It hasn’t existed for almost 2000 years now. Regarding the physical temple, Jesus said, “not one stone will be left upon another” (Matt. 24:2). According to Peter, those stones have been replaced by “living stones” being “built up as a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood” offering “spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (1 Pt. 2:4).

We are those “living stones” and, unlike the high priest, we don’t enter the temple on occasion. We are always in the temple because we are the temple. This being the case, the spiritual sacrifices that we offer aren’t meant to be occasional either. The new spiritual reality in which we exist encompasses every area of life, at all times. Our entire life is to be a living sacrifice presented to God (Rom. 12:1).

### **The Eschatological Dwelling of God**

Just as everything in the physical temple had to be sprinkled and cleansed with blood (Heb. 9:21-22), “so now,” writes Andrew M. Mutua, “the blood of Jesus purifies the believers, enabling them to establish the new connection to God. And while the OT sacrifices and sprinkling took place on the altar at the sanctuary, the sacrifice of Jesus is on the cross” (1 Pt. 1:18-19) “and the ‘sprinkling’ is on those

that make up the new 'spiritual house'" (1 Pt. 2:5), "the eschatological dwelling of God." [2]

As "the eschatological dwelling of God," our "new connection to God" means that the space we occupy is sacred space, and the ground we stand upon is holy ground. Michael Heiser put it this way: "We are the place where God dwells—the same presence that filled the temple in the Old Testament." [3] As such, all that we have is to be set apart for the Lord and His purposes, and even our very thoughts are to be taken "captive to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:5). As God's new priests in His new temple, "all things become new," as Paul said (2 Cor. 5:17). This is the reality of a fulfilled life under the New Covenant, and this is the reality that Zechariah's prophecy pictured. Even the most common and mundane things in our life are "Holy to the Lord." The ordinary becomes extraordinary when God's people realize who they are in Christ and who He is in them.  
<https://burrosofberea.com/zechariah-14-part-10-the-cleansing-of-the-temple-zechariah-1420-21/>

**Zechariah 14:21** And every pot in Jerusalem and Judah shall be holy to the LORD of hosts, so that all who sacrifice may come and take of them and boil the meat of the sacrifice in them. And there shall no longer be a trader in the house of the LORD of hosts on that day.

### **No More Canaanites in the House of the Lord**

Further realities of what should characterize this life of fulfillment in God's spiritual temple were foreshadowed through Jesus' actions in the old, physical temple during His earthly ministry. And Jesus' actions in the temple were foreseen by Zechariah when he said, "And there will no longer be a Canaanite in the house of the Lord of armies on that day" (Zechariah 14:21). The NASB uses the word "Canaanite," while the ESV renders the verse as: "There will no longer be a trader in the house of the Lord." So, which one is right? The answer is that both translations are correct.

The Canaanites were famous for mercantile exchange and the weighing out of precious metals (Zeph. 1:11). As such, the word "Canaanite" itself became an idiom for merchants or traders – especially the dishonest ones (Hos. 2:17). [4] With this in mind, it's hard to miss Zechariah's influence upon the Gospel accounts of Jesus cleansing the temple (Matt. 21:12-13; Mk. 11:15-17; Lk. 19:45-47; Jn. 2:14-16). This being the case, more than a few scholars have noted the connection. [5] The story is familiar enough to most Christians and the tie-in with Zechariah 14:21 is all but transparent. Jesus enters the temple, overturns the tables of commerce, and drives the money changers out with force. The striking parallel of Jesus' actions with Zechariah 14:21 carries as much force as the actions themselves.

As N.T. Wright maintains, the similarity between Jesus' actions and Zechariah's

words cannot be chalked up to mere literary redaction on the part the Gospel writers. Jesus was self-consciously fulfilling Zechariah's prophecy. "Zechariah 14," says Wright, "which celebrates the coming of YHWH and his kingdom, ends with the temple being cleansed of traders. There should be no doubt that Jesus knew this whole passage, and that he saw it as centrally constructive of his own vocation, at the level of not just ideas but agendas." [6] In intentional fulfillment of Zechariah's text, Jesus was ridding His Father's house of the Canaanites.

In all three synoptic versions of the story, the Olivet Discourse follows closely on the heels of this episode in Jesus' life (Matt. 24; Mk. 13; Lk. 21). In the discourse, Jesus makes it clear that the temple He had just cleansed was going to be destroyed (Matt. 24:2; Mk. 13:2; Lk. 21:5-6). Putting two and two together, Henk Jan de Jonge succinctly summarizes what's going on in the synoptic narrative: "... the story of Jesus' action in the temple now became the account of a prophetic act" that "foreshadowed the destruction of the Jewish temple in 70 CE." [7] Despite Jesus' attempt to restore the earthly temple to what God intended it to be, the first-century Jews didn't learn their lesson. The merchants and traders (Canaanites) returned to the temple, [8] and Jesus returned on the clouds to destroy it before that generation passed away (cf. Matt. 24:2, 34).

### **No Room for Zealots**

Apart from the word "Canaanite" being a synonym for "merchant" or "trader," its raw definition simply means "zealous." Mark, in particular, appears to be tracking on this Zealot theme in his version of the story. As Cecil Roth points out, Jesus makes a "seemingly irrelevant" [9] statement in Mark's rendition which is absent in Matthew and Luke: "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations" (Mk. 11:17). Luke includes the clause about "a house of prayer," but drops the part about "all nations" (Lk. 19:46). That phrase is totally unique to Mark in the Gospel accounts of the temple-cleansing incident. As Roth observes, Mark goes "out of his way to add this point, not mentioned by the other evangelists." [10] Mark's addition means that he's following the common synoptic thread condemning temple usage for financial gain (Mk. 11:15), while adding another layer to the thoroughness of Jesus' purging of that temple. [11] Mark's extra layer underscores the root meaning of "Canaanite" (i.e., zealous), from Zechariah 14:21, when all the pieces are put in place.

This is evident in that Mark's statement about "all nations" follows immediately after another phrase unique to Mark. In the previous verse, Mark alone mentions the prohibition about carrying items into the temple: "And he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple" (Mk. 11:16). The word translated "anything" (*skeuos*) is a common term which could refer to everything from household goods, to furniture, or even instruments on a ship. [12] But none of this makes much sense out of the context. How would commerce with common items such as these prevent people from the other "nations" from entering the house of the Lord? More to the point, what is the connection between these two

phrases which Mark alone mentions? Why are they there, and what is Mark trying to tell us?

In his article, "No More Zealots in the House of the Lord," Joel Marcus unlocks the seeming mystery. As Marcus demonstrates, *skeuos* "can mean not only 'pot' or 'utensil' but also 'weapon.'" [13] The usage of the word in the Septuagint version of Genesis 27:3 [14] and Deuteronomy 1:41 [15] bears this out. The question is: who would carry weapons into the house of the Lord and why? The answer is: Jewish Zealots who wanted to keep the Gentiles out. This being the case, Jesus was taking aim at early, anti-Gentile revolutionaries who would eventually rise up in the revolt against Rome and restrict Gentile access to the temple through armed force. [16] Marcus puts it together: "The Markan Jesus, then, attacks" not only "the mercantile desecration of the temple in the early thirties of the first century, but also prophetically rebukes the Zealotic desecration of it in the late sixties, close to Mark's own time." [17]

### **The Zealots and the Abomination of Desolation**

The eventual "Zealot desecration" of the temple makes sense out of Jesus' statement about the Abomination of Desolation "standing in the holy place" (Matt. 24:15), "where it should not be" (Mk. 13:14a). As Marcus points out, these words reflect the "series of events" culminating in "the occupation of the Temple by Eleazar son of Ananias in the winter of 67-68." [18] This was the signal for Jesus' followers to flee Judea and run to the mountains (Mk. 13:14b; Matt. 24:16). At this point in time, "the temple had failed to fulfill its destination: instead of becoming a religious center for all nations, it had become a garrison of Jewish insurrectionists." [19]

Those whom Jesus had chased out of the temple had not only returned to the temple, but they gained control of it as well. This would have certainly been considered an "abomination," in every sense of the word. For example, Josephus lamented the fact that his own countrymen would have allowed these wicked murderers to stand in the holy place with their blood-stained hands. [20]

This abomination within the city led to the desolation that came from without. At this point in time, Vespasian had begun his campaign but had not yet "completely conquered the area around Jerusalem and thus isolated the city." [21] This harmonizes Luke with Matthew and Mark. For Luke, the signal was Jerusalem being surrounded by armies (Lk. 21:21-22). In short, Jesus' prophetically precise instructions were: When the Zealots enter the temple and the Romans start closing in, get out! When all was said and done, that temple didn't matter anymore anyway. God was building a new one (1 Pt. 2:4-5).

### **The Living and Active Implications**

Like all that precedes it, all the key elements of Zechariah's final verses in this

chapter find their fulfillment in the first century. As with the previous verses, however, this doesn't mean that Zechariah 14:21 doesn't have any application for us today. It does. God's Word is not dead and stagnant, it's living and active (Heb. 4:12). It comes to life and speaks today, and Zechariah's words, as well as Jesus' actions in the temple, are still relevant.

With the earthly temple gone, we are now God's temple (1 Cor. 3:16) and He is our temple (Rev. 21:22). The reality of the New Covenant is the Lord in us and us in Him. As such, Jesus' actions in the physical temple demonstrate how we are to conduct ourselves today in this new spiritual temple, of which we are all a part. In this regard, the Apostle Paul warned against those who would use the word of God for greed (1 Tim. 6:5-7). The implications are clear. While there is nothing wrong with commerce and financial gain, the visible expression of God's temple on earth (i.e., His Church) is no place for such things.

Likewise, the Zealot attitude of ethnic exclusion has no place in the true temple either. God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34), and Jesus' death has purchased people from every tongue, tribe and nation (Rev. 5:19-14). Trade and commerce indeed have their place, outside of God's house, and racism has no place – inside or outside of God's house. While the Abomination of Desolation is a thing of the past, any form of racial superiority is still an abomination in God's eyes, and believers should flee from it just as Jesus' followers fled to the mountains.

Every area of our life, every thought, and every action should be set apart for the glory of God. Through the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit (1 Pt. 1:2), we should likewise strive to completely remove anything that God would consider to be abominable in our lives. From the "bells" of our "horses" to the "cooking pots" in our kitchen, all that we have, and all that we do, should be "Holy to the Lord" (Zech. 14:20-21).

<https://burrosofberea.com/zechariah-14-part-10-the-cleansing-of-the-temple-zechariah-1420-21/>

**(NASB) Malachi 1:11** "For from the rising of the sun even to its setting, My name *will be* great among the nations, and in every place incense is going to be offered to My name, and a grain offering *that is* pure; for My name *will be* great among the nations," says the LORD of hosts.

When most Christians think of the worship of the one true God in Old Testament times, they envision it as confined – constrained within the boundaries of Israel and restricted to the Temple, the priesthood, and the covenant people.

Yet Malachi 1:11 makes a striking claim that challenges this assumption. This verse reveals that God's name was being honored and magnified among the Gentiles – so much so that it was putting Israel's own half-hearted worship to

shame.

The implications of this are profound: during Malachi's time, God had already begun drawing worship from the ends of the earth – paving the way for the full-scale Gospel mission to all the earth, in New Testament times.

This commentary will examine the textual issues involved in translating Malachi 1:11, the contextual backdrop in which Malachi's statement is made, the historical events that led to Gentile inclusion in his day, and the ongoing implications of this for our own day.

## Textual Issues

Malachi 1:11 is considered "one of the most difficult texts in the OT, both exegetically and theologically," and there is no "scholarly consensus" on either its proper translation or its meaning.[1] In fact, the exegetical difficulty is evident at that most basic level of translation.[2] Should the verse be understood in the present tense or the future tense? With this, the translations are divided on which way to go. For example:

"My name ***will be*** great among the nations, from where the sun rises to where it sets. In every place incense and pure offerings will be brought to me, because my name ***will be*** great among the nations," says the LORD Almighty" (Malachi 1:11 NASB, emphasis added).

"For from the rising of the sun to its setting my name ***is*** great among the nations, and in every place incense is offered to my name, and a pure offering; for my name ***is*** great among the nations, says the Lord of hosts" (Malachi. 1:11 RSV, emphasis added).

As the above two examples indicate, the verse contains three distinct main or independent clauses over which the translations differ:

- 1) My name is/will be great among the nations (from where the sun rises to where it sets)
- 2) In every place incense (and pure offerings) is/will be offered (brought)
- 3) My name is/will be great among the nations

In the first and third clauses, notice that the words "will be" are in italics in the NASB, indicating that those words have been added by the translators and are not there in the original. In Hebrew, the adjective "great" is simply followed by the noun "name," without the connecting verb (i.e., the verb to be). The RSV likewise supplies the same connecting verb, only it expresses it in the present tense.

In both cases, the addition of the verb is for the ease of reading and

understanding in English. Generally speaking, when handling an adjective this way, the present tense of the added verb is assumed.[3] The RSV, consequently, would be the normal and natural rendering.

Regarding the middle clause in the verse, it contains the participle “to bring” or “to offer.” Again, the NASB uses the future tense, but it is not actually a future tense verb in the original Hebrew; rather, it is a passive participle. And once again, the present tense would be the normal and natural reading. Recognizing this, the Septuagint (LXX) translators rendered the verse as such:

“For from the rising of the sun even to the going down thereof my name has been glorified among the Gentiles; and in every place incense is offered to my name, and a pure offering: for my name is great among the Gentiles, saith the Lord Almighty” (Malachi 11:1 LXX, emphasis added).[4]

So, the whole thing boils down to two issues:

- 1) Two clauses that don’t contain a verb, and
- 2) a clause containing a passive participle.

The NASB and RSV along with the LXX represent how the translations are divided on the way to handle these clauses. Is Malachi speaking of a present reality in his own time, or is he speaking of a future fulfillment not yet realized in his time?[5]

### **Present or Future?**

With respect to the middle clause, which contains the passive participle, commentators who opt for the future sense point out that this grammatical construction can sometimes indicate future events on rare occasions.[6] From there, they postulate that Malachi 1:11 speaks of the future effects of the Gospel on the nations following the work of Christ. In other words, “God speaks here of a future time, using a current tense to indicate the certainty of His prediction of the day when His name will be great among the nations (v 11).”[7] So the argument goes.

While this approach certainly aligns with the broader historical-redemptive narrative of Scripture (e.g., Matt. 28:18-20), it’s a case of the right doctrine but the wrong text. The desire to warp-speed Malachi 1:11 directly to the worldwide Gospel mission in the New Testament, while bypassing Malachi’s own time, is thrown off course by two major navigational hazards.

First, those who take this approach to the middle clause readily concede that when this particular form of a Hebrew participle[8] bears the future sense it is always the “immediate”[9] or “imminent”[10] future that is in view with the events resulting in those actions already in motion. But there is never a disconnect, much less a gap, of hundreds or thousands of years.[11] With that

said, Malachi wrote around 430 BC.[12] The Great Commission initiated by Christ, five centuries later, hardly fits the bill as something “immediate” or “imminent” to the time of Malachi.

Second, Malachi specifically mentions two Old Covenant rituals, incense burning and grain offerings, which were among the types and shadows done away with in Christ. To transpose these Old Testament types and shadows into the New Testament age is disjointed, out of place and incompatible with Christian worship. Undeterred by this mismatch, proponents of the future tense in Malachi 1:11 point out that the “use of incense is still a ritual in many Christian traditions.”[13] In fact, the Roman Catholic view is that Malachi 1:11 “refers to a prediction of the Mass.”[14]

But modern liturgical practice scarcely justifies the practice itself and the New Testament nowhere condones, much less warrants, such a return to the Old Testament types and shadows. To the contrary, the entire book of Hebrews is a move in the exact opposite direction.[15] Despite efforts to parse the passage to the contrary, the specific mention of two Old Testament rites in Malachi 1:11 points directly to the time in which those rites were practiced – the time of the Old Testament.

### **A Present-Tense Reading**

Rather than trying to force a future tense onto Malachi 1:11 and import Old Testament rituals into the New Testament era, perhaps it’s best to simply let the text say what it says – as per the RSV translation, the LXX, and many others.[16]

In other words, let’s just take Malachi at his word and believe God’s Word, that Yahweh’s name was great among the nations, and that the Gentiles were worshiping Him in every known place at the time. Scripture is its own best interpreter and this would comport with what Malachi himself reiterates in verse 14 – which even the NASB translates in the present tense: “My name is feared among the nations” (Malachi 1:14c NASB)[17]. In short, worship of Yahweh had breached the borders of Israel in Malachi’s own day and was not exclusively a promise of some future day.

Additionally, there is very little in the entire chapter to indicate any prophetic statements and certainly nothing Messianic. Both 1:10 and 1:12 are clearly about conditions in Malachi’s time.[18] There is simply no contextual reason to “jump ahead” in 1:11, only to “jump back” in 1:12.

### **Following Malachi’s Lead**

With that said, we must keep in mind that Malachi’s whole point in his first chapter was to shame the Jews of his day, who were offering impure sacrifices (Mal. 1:6-10), by comparing them to the Gentiles who were worshiping the Lord

with purity and sincerity. God tells His own people that He will “not accept an offering” from them (Mal. 1:10). Whereas His name was great among the nations and honored in every other place (Mal. 1:11), Malachi’s audience was profaning the Lord’s table with defiled food (Mal. 1:12). The prophet’s rhetorical punch would lose its sting if he were speaking of the far-distant future – a future that his own audience wouldn’t even live to see.[19]

But this brings us to the central question: how could Gentiles have been worshiping the Lord with pure offerings in Malachi’s day?

### **Cyrus and the Dawning of a New Day**

The answer to this question emerges when we consider the post-exilic period – the period that began with the call to come home. One particular phrase in Mal. 1:11 should help pinpoint this more clearly.

The verse begins with these words: “From the rising of the sun to the setting.” This phrase appears several times in the Old Testament to refer to the expanse of God’s glory. But the one reference especially relevant to what Malachi is expressing is in Isa. 45:6.

The section of Isaiah 45:1-7 is a prophecy where God specifically points to Cyrus as the one who will initiate the subduing of the nations (vs. 1). This is done for the sake of Israel, thus referring to the restoration from exile (vs. 4), but it goes beyond that. In verse 6, Isaiah makes this statement regarding the result of what Cyrus would accomplish among the nations:

“So that people may know from the rising to the setting of the sun That there is no one besides Me. I am the Lord, and there is no one else” (Isa. 45:6).

Or, as the Septuagint interprets it:

“So that they who are from the rising of the sun and from its going down may know that there is no one beside me” (Isa. 45:6, LXX).[20]

Malachi shows the fulfillment of this statement: “From the rising of the sun to the setting, my name is great among the nations.” The spreading of God’s name among the Gentiles was one of the reasons for the restoration and it began to take on concrete shape in the lives and loyalties of freed exiles. The impact of Cyrus’s decree and God’s providential hand created conditions in which Yahweh’s fame grew beyond Israel’s borders.

### **From Cyrus’s Decree to Esther’s Victory**

Historically, this began to play out after the victory by Esther, Mordecai, and the Jews over Haman’s forces in 510 BC,[21] where we read that “many from the

peoples of the country declared themselves Jews, for fear of the Jews had fallen on them" (Esth. 8:17).[22] The Septuagint even goes a step further, indicating that they were also circumcised.[23] Subsequent generations would then have been born into God-fearing families throughout the entire empire – right down to Malachi's time, 80 years later.

This trajectory continued on into New Testament times, as indicated by the God-fearing centurion Cornelius (Acts 10:1-2, 22) and the God-fearing Gentiles "in every nation" (Acts 10:35).[24] Hence, we find both Jews and Gentiles attending the Jewish synagogues on the Sabbath in the book of Acts (Acts 14:1; 17:17; 18:4). So, in the end, Malachi 1:11 does ultimately weave its way into the larger scope of the redemptive reality accomplished by Christ but not by skipping the middle step of Gentile inclusion before Christ.

In a nutshell: what began during the time of Esther continued through to the time of Malachi and then on into New Testament times – paving the way for the Gospel to be brought to "God-fearing Gentiles" (Acts 17:17 NASB). These God-fearers (from Esther to Malachi to Acts) represent the historical bridge between the Old Covenant and the Gospel's worldwide expansion in the New Covenant under Christ. Before the exile, worship was done in the temple. After the return from exile, worship was expanded to include local synagogues.[25] In the New Testament, these synagogues became the patterns for the local churches. There was a clear progression – a steady movement forward, setting the stage for the Gospel to take root and spread across the world. That progression continues to this day as His name continues to grow among the nations.

## **Recap**

Malachi 1:11 need not be pressed into a future mold nor do incense and grain offerings need be pressed into Christian worship. This verse reflects the present reality in Malachi's own day. Gentiles had met Israel's God after the exile was over and were worshiping Him sincerely in "every place" that the sun's light reached. The supposed difficulty associated with this verse is only such if we assume that this didn't happen rather than simply taking God at His word and believing that it did.

This preserves the grammatical integrity of the passage, honors its immediate historical context, and coheres with redemptive history – all without retrofitting Old Testament rituals into the New Testament and warp-speeding Malachi's words centuries into the future.

In short, Malachi recognized a genuine worship among the nations of his time, and not just a prophecy of times to come. Gentile worship of the Lord on foreign soil tilled that soil for the Gospel seed to be planted.

## **Takeaways for Today**

From Cyrus to Esther to Malachi, a trajectory of Gentile inclusion was unfolding. This laid the groundwork for the spread of the Gospel in the New Testament. The New Testament, in turn, laid the groundwork for the spread of the Gospel in our own time. Paul wrote that the “surpassing riches of His grace” would be “shown in the ages to come” (Eph. 2:7), and that His “glory in the Church” and “in Jesus Christ” is for “all generations forever” (Eph. 3:21). As believers today, we are part of a bigger story – a story that began centuries ago. We’re called to keep the story going, and the kingdom growing, so God’s name would be “great among the nations” of our own day – just as it was in Malachi’s day (Mal. 1:11).

In this light, Malachi 1:11 shows us that God’s glory is not bound by borders nor confined to ethnicity. The returning exiles began learning this, the New Testament believers continued to learn this, and His people must never unlearn this. God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34) and there is no room for racism of any kind in His kingdom. God draws people from every nation to Himself (Jn. 12:32) and His love transcends national and cultural boundaries.

Malachi’s first chapter also teaches us that sincere worship is more important than religious formality. God rejected Israel’s offerings because they were impure and insincere. By contrast, Gentiles (outsiders) were honoring God with genuine devotion. Ritual, tradition, and appearance don’t trump sincere worship from the heart. Jesus called it worshiping in “spirit and truth” (Jn. 4:23-24).

Malachi also speaks to the fact that the Israelites of His day weren’t bringing God the best they had to offer (Mal. 1:8-10). This should cause us to reflect and ask ourselves some questions. Does our devotion to the Lord take first place in our lives or is He an afterthought once we’ve gone through our daily business? How does our time in prayer compare to other things that consume and occupy our time? Do we spend the time that we should reading His word, studying it, and meditating upon it? An honest answer to these questions will reveal if our devotion is real.

Finally, Malachi 1:11 shows that God was receiving worship from outside the expected channels. With that said, we all have our own faith traditions within the Christian community. Believers today have differing preferences with regard to expressing worship, and we prefer fellowship with others who share those preferences. This speaks to the fact that there is a place for all true and sincere believers within the body of Christ and Malachi reminds us that our preferred place is not the only place where God prefers His Spirit to be moving!

<https://burrosofberea.com/the-greatness-of-gods-name-a-historical-theological-look-at-malachi-111/>

## **New Testament Commentary**

**Matthew 2:15** and remained there until the death of Herod. This was to fulfill

what the Lord had spoken by the prophet, "Out of Egypt I called my son."

**Hosea 11:1** "When Israel *was* a child, I loved him, And out of Egypt I called My son.

While many examples of the Old Testament concealing the plan (Plan of Salvation) could be cited, Matthew's use of Hosea 11:1 is the classic case in point. The storyline in Matthew is familiar enough. A jealous King Herod learns of the Messiah's birth. In reaction, he starts killing all the male children in Bethlehem, who are two years old and under (Matt. 2:16). But his efforts are in vain since Mary and Joseph had already taken their child to Egypt (Matt. 2:15a). According to Matthew, this was to fulfill the words of the prophet: "Out of Egypt did I call my son" (Matt. 2:15b). In its original context, however, Hosea 11:1 isn't a forward-looking prophecy about the coming Messiah but a historical look back at the Exodus.[16]

From the progressive revelation of the New Testament, we can now look back as well and understand that the Israelites' Exodus from Egypt typified the embodiment of Israel, i.e., Jesus the Messiah. After His resurrection, Jesus opened the disciples' minds to understand these things (Lk. 24:45). In hindsight, we benefit from their enlightenment. But Hosea's original audience would have never gotten that out of his original words. And, more importantly, neither would Herod. If Herod could have figured it out, he would have known exactly where to look, find the baby, and kill Him.

### **Giving Satan Advanced Notice?**

With this in mind, the New Testament is rather straightforward with respect to all of its prophecies. This is quite the contrast to the ambiguity of the Old Testament. The Man of Lawlessness will take his stand in the temple, and the Lord will slay him with the breath of his mouth (2 Thes. 2:8). The beast will persecute the Saints for 3 ½ years, only to get tossed into the lake of fire (Rev. 19:20). Satan will attempt one final rebellion that will turn out to be his final undoing (Rev. 20:7-10). If knowing the outcome in advance would have dissuaded God's enemies from going along with the script the first time, why would they follow it the second time?

More to the point, why would Satan, having listened to the loud proclamations of the Dispensationalists for 200 years now, follow the script that they have supposedly uncovered? One thing that all Dispensationalists agree on is that Satan is clever. Remember, the serpent was more "crafty than any beast of the field" (Gen. 3:1). The Hebrew word for "crafty" is *arum* and it means: "subtle, shrewd, sly, sensible, prudent." He might be evil, but he's not stupid.

With that said, 2000 years is more than enough time for God's enemies to figure out His endgame if the New Testament prophecies are in fact about the end of the

world. On the other hand, there wouldn't have been enough time or available information for counterintelligence if these prophecies were about the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70.

<https://burrosofberea.com/the-rapture-its-no-secret-anymore-so-whos-going-to-buy-the-antichrists-lure/>

**Matthew 24:4** And Jesus answered them, "See that no one leads you astray.

**Matthew 24:5** For many will come in my name, saying, 'I am the Christ,' and they will lead many astray.

It scarcely requires proof to show that "The Sign of Deception" was on full display in the first century. Deception was a clear and present danger among the original generation of Jesus' followers, and entire epistles were written to counteract the threat. Paul's letter to the Galatians deals with the Judaizers who were bent on deceiving Gentile believers into thinking the rite of circumcision was still required. The book of Hebrews was written to warn Jewish believers not to be deceived into returning to the types and shadows of the Old Covenant. In 1 John, the deceptive Antichrists were evidence that it was the "last hour" then — in the first century. Jude is written to warn the first-century believers of deceivers in their own day who had crept in unnoticed (Jude 2). Deception was rampant in the first century, and much of the New Testament was written in direct response to it.

Scripture itself is our guide for understanding the signs of the end of the age, not the latest news headlines. The signs were given to Jesus' first-century disciples and deal with events leading up to and including the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. This is the who, when, and where of the context. The signs are not about us, today, in the modern world.

<https://burrosofberea.com/four-signs-that-a-bible-teacher-doesnt-understand-the-signs/>

**Matthew 24:6** And you will hear of wars and rumors of wars. See that you are not alarmed, for this must take place, but the end is not yet.

Regarding the matter of "wars and rumors of war" (Matt. 24:6), Demar makes the point that this is something that Jesus's original audience was "about to" hear about:

"'You are about [MELLO] to hear.' According to several secular histories of the era, wars were common throughout the Roman Empire prior to the destruction of the temple in AD 70. 'The forty years that intervened before the destruction of Jerusalem were full of these in all directions; but we may probably think of the words as referring specially to wars, actual or threatened, that affected the Jews, such, e.g., as those of which we read under Caligula, Claudius, and Nero (Jos.

Ant. xx. 1, 6). The title which the historian gave to his second book, The Wars of the Jews, is sufficiently suggestive.' Rome was an empire of nations held together by forced allegiance to Rome and her god-like emperors." [15]

In short, Jesus was speaking to believers of His own generation regarding things that they were about to begin seeing and hearing. These events would escalate and intensify as the destruction of the city and its temple drew closer. He wasn't giving 21st century Americans divine news footage in advance.

<https://burrosofberea.com/tribcon-2-dispensationalism-on-high-alert/>

**Matthew 24:7** For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and there will be famines and earthquakes in various places.

While the prophecy gurus of our day claim "nothing" in history shows that these events happened in the first century, [4] the Bible itself records it for us. As Gary DeMar writes, "Nothing? Jesus predicted that there would be earthquakes before that first-century generation passed away. There were earthquakes (Matt. 27:54; 28:2; Acts 16:26) and famines (Acts 11:28; cf. Rom. 8:35), just like Jesus predicted (Matt. 24:7)." [5]

Famine and pestilence only increased as AD 70 drew closer. F.W. Farrar writes, "The incidents of the famine which then fell on the besieged are among the most horrible in human literature. The corpses bred a pestilence. Whole houses were filled with unburied families of the dead. Mothers slew and devoured their own children. Hunger, rage, despair, and madness seized the city. It became a cage of furious madmen, a city of howling wild beasts, and of cannibals—a hell!" [6]

"The Sign of Disputes Among Nations" would have been especially pertinent in the first century when Jesus' words were spoken. In order for something to truly be a "sign," it would have to be out of the ordinary. Nations rising against one another (Matt. 24:7) is hardly out of the ordinary for almost any period in human history. The operative word here is "almost." When Jesus uttered these words to His first-century disciples, they were currently living in a time period known as the Pax Romana (Roman Peace) that began with the reign of Augustus and his establishment of the "Age of Peace" in 17 B.C. [7] Beginning in the mid to late 60s, the Roman-Jewish War was a significant interruption to this, and Jerusalem was destroyed in 70. "Wars and rumors of war" (Matt. 24:6) can only be a "sign" during a period of relative peace.

<https://burrosofberea.com/four-signs-that-a-bible-teacher-doesnt-understand-the-signs/>

**Matthew 24:9** "Then they will deliver you up to tribulation and put you to death, and you will be hated by all nations for my name's sake.

Jesus wasn't telling us, twenty-first century Americans, that we would see this Tribulation. He was talking about a Tribulation that His first-century followers

would experience.

We may or may not see tribulation in our own time, but it would have nothing to do with THE Tribulation Jesus was talking about 2000 years ago.

When Jesus said they will deliver “you” to tribulation, He was using the second-person plural. In fact, He uses the second-person plural, “you,” repeatedly throughout the Olivet Discourse. He is speaking to His first-century disciples and telling them that they would witness the deception, the disputes among nations, and the devastation. If He meant that some other generation would experience these things, He would have used the third-person plural, “they,” just as we do now when referring to them (i.e., His first-century followers). This is also how we today would refer to a future generation, 2000 years from now. Did the Creator of the languages of the earth (Gen. 10:7-8) not know how to use language properly?

The reality is that they did indeed experience the tribulation of which Jesus spoke. In fact, the Apostle John tells the first-century believers of Asia Minor that he was their “fellow partaker in the tribulation” (Rev. 1:9). John is not referring to tribulation in general but to THE Tribulation. The definite article is there in the Greek. As David Chilton comments, “St. John is thinking about a special period of hardship; not just tribulation in general, but the tribulation, the subject of much apostolic writing as the age of the Last Days progressed to its climax (1 Thess. 1:6; 3:4; 2 Thess. 1:4-10; 1 Tim. 4:1-3; 2 Tim. 3:1-12).”[3]  
<https://burrosofberea.com/four-signs-that-a-bible-teacher-doesnt-understand-the-signs/>

**Matthew 24:15** “So when you see the abomination of desolation spoken of by the prophet Daniel, standing in the holy place (let the reader understand),

### **The Zealots and the Abomination of Desolation**

The eventual “Zealot desecration” of the temple makes sense out of Jesus’ statement about the Abomination of Desolation “standing in the holy place” (Matt. 24:15), “where it should not be” (Mk. 13:14a).

This was the signal for Jesus’ followers to flee Judea and run to the mountains (Mk. 13:14b; Matt. 24:16). At this point in time, “the temple had failed to fulfill its destination: instead of becoming a religious center for all nations, it had become a garrison of Jewish insurrectionists.”[19]

Josephus lamented the fact that his own countrymen would have allowed these wicked murderers to stand in the holy place with their blood-stained hands.[20]

This abomination within the city led to the desolation that came from without.

For Luke, the signal was Jerusalem being surrounded by armies (Lk. 21:21-22). In short, Jesus' prophetically precise instructions were: When the Zealots enter the temple and the Romans start closing in, get out! When all was said and done, that temple didn't matter anymore anyway. God was building a new one (1 Peter. 2:4-5).

<https://burrosofberea.com/zechariah-14-part-10-the-cleansing-of-the-temple-zechariah-1420-21/>

**Matthew 24:34** Truly, I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.

In Matthew 24:34, Jesus says: "...this generation will not pass away until all these things take place." Throughout Matthew's Gospel, "this generation" always refers to the generation to whom Jesus was speaking. In other words, the people of the first-century generation. And throughout chapter 24, Jesus repeatedly uses the second-person plural, "you." He was telling the people living at that time that all those events of which He spoke, in Matthew 24, would happen within their lifetime. This isn't rocket-science. It's basic grammar.

Nonetheless, since the rise of Dispensationalism, the generation to whom Jesus was speaking is supposedly not really the generation to whom Jesus was speaking after all. It's another generation. A different generation. A generation in the far-distant future. In fact, it's our own generation! We are the ones who will see "all these things take place." Or so the pop-prophecy pundits tell us as they line their pockets selling sensationalism.

This entire scheme, of replacing their generation with our generation ("replacement theology" if there ever was such thing), is apparently justified on the sole basis that Jesus mentions something about a "fig tree" in verse 32. The "fig tree" supposedly budded when Israel became a nation again in 1948, and prophetic speculation was more than ripe by the early 70s. A generation, we were told, was "something like 40 years," and "all these things" were supposed to start happening by 1988. Actually, 1981 if you factor in the Pretribulation rapture, but they didn't do the math. At any rate 1981, along with 1988, came and went without a prophetic trace. Rather than throwing the now rotten fruit of prophetic speculation out the window, however, new replacement schemes (their generation for our generation) continued to "bud," as it were.

2028 is the new 1988 in the pop-prophecy paperbacks, and it looks like we have five more years before this song stops playing. Supposedly, a Biblical "generation" isn't 40 years after all. It's really 80 years (they use Psalm 90:10), and  $1948 + 80 = 2028$ . So, on New Year's Day 2029, will the prophecy-speculation timeclock finally stop ticking? Unfortunately, it doesn't look like it will. As the infomercials say: "But wait, there's more!"

Based on Genesis 6:3, some are proposing that a Biblical generation is not 40 years, not 80 years, but 120 years. If this is the case, we have to wait until 2068 before all the insanity stops. "But wait, there's more!" Again.

What if 1948 wasn't the date after all? What if the real budding of the fig tree was the Six-Day War in 1967? If we go with the latest possible date for the budding of the fig tree (1967), and the longest possible length of time for a Biblical generation (120 years), this points us to the year 2087 before it all finally comes to an overdue "end." Not the "end" of the world, but the "end" of these failed predictions. As sure as the sun comes up every morning, the year 2088 will dawn. If there was a chance I'd still be alive then, I'd put a lot of money on that bet.

In the meantime, our culture continues to crumble and we're losing our Country. We are waiting for Jesus to take us out of this world while He's waiting for us to finally start doing our job and start changing it. When the expiration date for the date setters finally arrives in 2087, I hope that generation will finally get "this generation" (Matt. 24:34) right and start making things right in this world. And if this post is still floating around in cyber space and someone reads it in 2087, I'm afraid my generation has left you with much work to do. We've spent our lives and years waiting for something that already happened nearly 2000 years when Jesus said it would.

<https://burrosofberea.com/heres-hoping-a-future-generation-will-get-this-generation-right/>

Understanding the words of Jesus in this passage isn't rocket science. He said "this" generation, meaning the generation to whom He was speaking at the time. If Jesus had meant some other generation, two thousand years in the future, He would have said "that" generation. "This generation" is used repeatedly throughout Matthew's Gospel, and it always means the same thing; it always means the generation of the first century. This was the Biblical "terminal generation."

Additionally, Jesus' repeated use of the second-person plural (you) throughout Matthew 24 is self-explanatory. He was telling them, His first-century disciples, that they would witness and see "all these things" that He was describing. Anyone who is even faintly familiar with the Roman-Jewish War of the first century knows that they did, indeed, see "all these things." Jesus made good on His word.

<https://burrosofberea.com/dispensationalism-abortion-and-the-terminal-generation/>

Jesus couldn't have been clearer that this convergence of events was to come upon the first-century generation (Matt. 24:34; Mk. 13:30; Lk. 21:32). When reading through the discourse, notice how many times Jesus uses the second person plural ("you"). Simple grammar dictates that Jesus is telling his first-century followers what would befall them and their own generation.

<https://burrosofberea.com/tribcon-2-dispensationalism-on-high-alert/>

**Matthew 27:45** Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land until the ninth hour.

## **Day Turns to Night and Night Turns to Day**

Day would turn to night, and night would turn to day – signaling the end of the Old Covenant era and the dawn of a whole new age in redemptive history. During the 40-year transition period in the first century, God providentially made sure that both portents couldn't possibly be missed by those who rejected their Messiah. The first premonition came when they hung Jesus on the cross.

Day had turned to night when they sealed their own fate by crucifying the Lord of glory. Next, night turned into day as the events of the Roman Jewish war began. These are the very events that would precipitate the destruction of the temple and wipe away the last vestiges of the Old Covenant forever. Josephus speaks of "star, resembling a sword, which stood over the city, and a comet, that continued a whole year." [3] In conjunction with this occurrence, he specifically notes a phenomenon which turned night into day:

"Thus also before the Jews' rebellion, and before those commotions which preceded the war, when the people were come in great crowds to the feast of unleavened bread, on the eighth day of the month Xanthicus, 2 [Nisan,] and at the ninth hour of the night, so great a light shone round the altar and the holy house, that it appeared to be bright day time; which lasted for half an hour." [4]

## **Misreading the Signs**

The strange phenomenon emanating from the temple, on that fateful night, was completely misinterpreted by those who should have known better. Josephus informs us that "this light seemed to be a good sign to the unskillful" and they completely missed the fact that "the signal foreshadowed the desolation that was coming upon them." [6] They should have read Jeremiah. They should have read Zechariah. They should have known what this meant, but they didn't.

Josephus tells us that the Zealots who remained in the city, along with "the miserable people" who were "persuaded by these deceivers... did not give credit to the signs that were so evident and did so plainly foretell their future desolation." [7] In other words, it went right over their heads. Josephus describes them as men "without eyes to see" or "minds to consider" the "denunciations that God had made to them." [8] The signs weren't meant to signal their triumph, they were meant to signal their defeat.

Jesus put it this way: "The days are coming upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you, surround you, and hem you in on every side. And they will tear you down to the ground, you and your children with you. They will

not leave one stone upon another, because you did not recognize the time of your visitation" (Luke 19:44). The time of their visitation had come when day turned into night at the cross, and night turned into day as the war began. Just as Jesus had foretold, most of them didn't recognize it.

## **The Time Between Night and Day**

The darkness at Christ's crucifixion should take our minds all the way back to the original darkness at the beginning of creation in Genesis 1:2.[9] Jesus came to make all things new (2 Corinthians 5:17; Revelation 21:5). He came to start all over again with a new creation. He established an infallible covenant, which would not be like the first one – that was fading away into darkness and obscurity (Hebrews 8:13). Between the transition of the Old Covenant's darkening and the New Covenant's dawning, Paul told the Romans: "The night is almost gone, and the day is at hand" (Romans 13:2).

They were living during this unique time between the "night" of the Old Covenant and the "day" of the New Covenant, that both Jeremiah and Zechariah had prophesied about in ages past. Accordingly, Peter tells His readers to "pay attention" to the "prophetic word" as "to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your heart" (2 Peter 1:19). And the light of that morning star shines forevermore in the hearts of true believers who live in the everlasting "day" of the New Covenant. There is "no more night" in the city (Revelation 22:5),[10] and we are living out the fulfillment envisioned in Isaiah 60:1-3:

"Arise, shine; for your light has come, And the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. For behold, darkness will cover the earth, And deep darkness the peoples; But the Lord will rise upon you, And His glory will appear upon you. Nations will come to your light, And kings to the brightness of your rising" (Isaiah 60:1-3).

Zechariah's "unique day" imagery was meant to telegraph the idea that a new day would dawn, and everything would change. In a manner of speaking, it was "lights out" for Old Covenant Israel as the light of the New Covenant began to break forth into the world. Ethnic Israelites could be a part of this new creation, but only by leaving the shadows of the old creation in the darkness as it passed away.

<https://burrosofberea.com/zechariah-14-part-6-zechariah-146-8/>

**Mark 11:17** And he was teaching them and saying to them, "Is it not written, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations'? But you have made it a den of robbers."

## **No Room for Zealots**

Apart from the word "Canaanite" being a synonym for "merchant" or "trader," its

raw definition simply means "zealous." Mark, in particular, appears to be tracking on this Zealot theme in his version of the story. As Cecil Roth points out, Jesus makes a "seemingly irrelevant"[9] statement in Mark's rendition which is absent in Matthew and Luke: "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations" (Mk. 11:17). Luke includes the clause about "a house of prayer," but drops the part about "all nations" (Lk. 19:46). That phrase is totally unique to Mark in the Gospel accounts of the temple-cleansing incident. As Roth observes, Mark goes "out of his way to add this point, not mentioned by the other evangelists." [10] Mark's addition means that he's following the common synoptic thread condemning temple usage for financial gain (Mk. 11:15), while adding another layer to the thoroughness of Jesus' purging of that temple. [11] Mark's extra layer underscores the root meaning of "Canaanite" (i.e., zealous), from Zechariah 14:21, when all the pieces are put in place.

This is evident in that Mark's statement about "all nations" follows immediately after another phrase unique to Mark. In the previous verse, Mark alone mentions the prohibition about carrying items into the temple: "And he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple" (Mk. 11:16). The word translated "anything" (skeuos) is a common term which could refer to everything from household goods, to furniture, or even instruments on a ship. [12] But none of this makes much sense out of the context. How would commerce with common items such as these prevent people from the other "nations" from entering the house of the Lord? More to the point, what is the connection between these two phrases which Mark alone mentions? Why are they there, and what is Mark trying to tell us?

In his article, "No More Zealots in the House of the Lord," Joel Marcus unlocks the seeming mystery. As Marcus demonstrates, skeuos "can mean not only 'pot' or 'utensil' but also 'weapon.'" [13] The usage of the word in the Septuagint version of Genesis 27:3 [14] and Deuteronomy 1:41 [15] bears this out. The question is: who would carry weapons into the house of the Lord and why? The answer is: Jewish Zealots who wanted to keep the Gentiles out. This being the case, Jesus was taking aim at early, anti-Gentile revolutionaries who would eventually rise up in the revolt against Rome and restrict Gentile access to the temple through armed force. [16] Marcus puts it together: "The Markan Jesus, then, attacks" not only "the mercantile desecration of the temple in the early thirties of the first century, but also prophetically rebukes the Zealotic desecration of it in the late sixties, close to Mark's own time." [17]

<https://burrosofberea.com/zechariah-14-part-10-the-cleansing-of-the-temple-zechariah-1420-21/>

**Luke 17:20** Being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, he answered them, "The kingdom of God is not coming in ways that can be observed,

Dispensationalism and other forms of Futurism argue for a kingdom that is either

exclusively in the future, or exclusively internal – existing only in the hearts of believers. Some will concede that the kingdom is “now,” but any visible manifestations of it are “not yet.” Thus, all efforts to advance God’s kingdom, in time on earth and in every area of life and society, are futile.

Luke 17:20-21 is often appealed to in support of the idea that God’s kingdom is exclusively internal, in the heart of the believer, with no external effects on the physical world around us. But notice, Jesus isn’t speaking to His disciples here. His words are addressed to the Pharisees.

<https://burrosofberea.com/luke-1720-21-and-the-timing-of-the-kingdom/>

**Luke 17:21** nor will they say, ‘Look, here it is!’ or ‘There!’ for behold, the kingdom of God is in the midst of you.”

Is Jesus really telling those who rejected Him, and eventually had Him crucified, that the Kingdom of God was “inside” of them?

Remember, this is the same group of establishment hypocrites of whom He said: “...the Kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people producing its fruit” (Matt. 21:43 cf. vs. 45). Why would Jesus be telling the Pharisees that the Kingdom of God existed “inside” of them? He wasn’t.

Part of the problem is the KJV rendering of verse 21: “the Kingdom of God is within you.” Other translations render the phrase differently. For example: “the Kingdom of God is in your midst” (NASB), “the Kingdom of God is in the midst of you” (ESV). These translations comport with the way in which BDAG posits the usage of “entos” in the passage: “in the sense of among you, in your midst.” Additionally, the plural “you” is being used in this passage – reinforcing the idea of “in your midst.”

And this is in keeping with the question Jesus was answering. “He was questioned by the Pharisees as to when the Kingdom of God was coming” (Luke 17:20). This isn’t a question as to the nature of the Kingdom, but a question about its timing. Jesus is telling them that He has already kick-started the Kingdom of God, and they never saw it coming. In essence: “Your messiah and king is standing right in front of your face. You’re completely missing it, and it’s only going to get worse if you don’t get this.” The Kingdom of God was back, and it was launched in stealth mode. But it was not to remain that way.

Our Lord goes on to tell them: “For just as the flashing, lightning illuminates everything below heaven, from one end to the other, such will be the Son of Man on his day” (Luke 17:24). Elsewhere, Jesus had told His disciples that this would be the time when “the kingdom” comes “with power” and some of them would live to see it (Mark 9:1). When Jerusalem went down, the light of the kingdom in its full power began to arise. What began dimly during His earthly ministry, as He traveled the dusty streets of ancient Israel, lit up the sky in AD 70 when He

returned in power and glory.

That light continues to shine through the darkness, and this is where we come in. We should be proclaiming "the mighty acts of Him" who calls people "out of darkness" into His kingdom of "marvelous light" (1 Peter 2:9).

"Basileia" (kingdom) is the "reign" or "rule" of God, and He rules and reigns over everything (Heaven & Earth), and His authority extends to every area of life. Thus, we should be "demolishing every argument and all arrogance raised against the knowledge of God" and "taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ" (2 Cor. 10:5).

Jesus Christ is, right here and right now, the "ruler (archon) of the kings (basileus) of the earth" (Rev. 1:5). As His Image Bearers, we're supposed to be getting the message out and applying the Bible to every area of life. Since the rise of Dispensationalism, God's People have been failing miserably in this task. It's time for a change. The kingdom has arrived. Dispensationalists and the world of unbelievers need to get the memo.

<https://burrosofberea.com/luke-1720-21-and-the-timing-of-the-kingdom/>

**Luke 21:20** "But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near.

**Luke 21:21** Then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, and let those who are inside the city depart, and let not those who are out in the country enter it,

**Luke 21:22** for these are days of vengeance, to fulfill all that is written.

The flight to the mountains, as the Christians exited the city and the judgments that were befalling it, is reminiscent of the Israelites flight from Egypt and the judgments that befell it. In this sense, Jesus and Zechariah are both very much describing a new exodus event. As Milton Terry wrote, "As God signally interposed to rescue His chosen people at the beginning of their national history, and both their exodus from Egypt and their entrance into the promised land opened for them a pathway through the waters (Exod. xiv, 22; Josh. iii, 14-17), so in the great day of their messianic salvation will He cleave the mountains for their help (comp. Hab. III, 6)."[1]

## **The New Exodus**

Seeing the departure from earthly Jerusalem as a new exodus makes sense considering the progressive revelation of the New Testament. In the book of Revelation, John says Jerusalem is "spiritually called Sodom and Egypt" (Rev. 11:8). Old Jerusalem had become the new Egypt, and the members of the New Jerusalem were making the new exodus. Peter J. Leithart paints a wonderful picture of the exodus theme being depicted in the words of Jesus and Zechariah.

"Luke 21 also describes a siege of Jerusalem (v. 20), an escape for the faithful (v. 21), and a coming of the Lord (v. 27). Like Zechariah 14, Jesus prophesies the collapse of a universe (v. 25). Luke is describing a series of events in the first century (vv. 32-33), the events leading up to and including the destruction of the temple in AD 70. In the light of Zechariah 14, however, we can look at this incident in a different way. These are 'days of vengeance' (v. 22) against those who attack the disciples of Jesus, but these events are also a new exodus, a deliverance of the future Israel. When the disciples of Jesus follow His instructions and flee Jerusalem, they become the streams of water flowing to the nations. The Lord's coming is a moment of judgment and destruction, but also a moment of deliverance, the beginning of the discipling of the nations." [2]

The description of the original disciples' flight from Jerusalem as "streams of water flowing to the nations" is somewhat reminiscent of a passage in Josephus. According to Josephus, "many of the most eminent of the Jews swam away from the city, as from a ship when it was going to sink." [3] The Church historian, Eusebius, describes the exodus from Jerusalem like this:

"The whole body, however, of the Church at Jerusalem, having been commanded by a divine revelation, given to men of approved piety there before the war, removed from the city, and dwelt at a certain town beyond the Jordan, called Pella. Here those that believed in Christ, having removed from Jerusalem, as if holy men had entirely abandoned the royal city itself, and the whole land of Judea; the divine justice, for their crimes against Christ and his Apostles finally overtook them, totally destroying the whole generation of these evildoers from the earth." [4]

Just as their ancestors fled the slavery and oppression of Egypt, these first-century Jews fled the slavery and oppression of the crumbling Old Covenant system (cf. Acts 15:10; Gal. 5:1). As Rabbi Julie Zupan writes, regarding the first Exodus: "In the Book of Exodus (3:8), God promises to take the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt to a 'good and spacious land, a land flowing with milk and honey.' The Hebrew word for Egypt is *mitzrayim*, which literally means 'narrow places.' In other words, a life of slavery is constricted and oppressive, while living in freedom in Israel is wide and spacious. A land so fertile that it flows with milk and honey stands in contradiction to the place of oppression." [5] In the New Exodus, Jesus' first-century followers demonstrated their faith in Him, and the freedom that He offers, by obeying His command to flee to safety in Pella when they saw Jerusalem being surrounded by armies.

## **Safety at Pella**

Pella is a suitable location for pinpointing Jesus' admonishment to flee from Judea and to the mountains (Lk. 21:21-22). As J. Julius Scott, Jr. points out, "The site of ancient Pella lies among rugged hills and sharp valleys in the modern country of Jordan, about 2.5 miles east of the Jordan River and 17 miles south of the Sea

of Galilee.”[6] Craig Koester concurs, stating: “it is worth noting that Pella lies in the foothills of the Transjordanian highlands and could have fulfilled this requirement.”[7] Archeologist Mark Wilson believes that the phrase, “the mountains,” is such a precise description of Pella’s situated location that Jesus’ terminology could have been a nuanced reference to the very site itself. Wilson writes:

“Jesus, while looking over the temple mount in Jerusalem shortly before his death, prophesied that its beautiful stones would be thrown down within a generation. He warned that the residents should flee Jerusalem to the mountains when they saw the Roman armies surrounding the city. Jesus’ admonition is found in each of the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew 24:15–22; Mark 13:14–20; Luke 21:20–24). Perhaps Jesus visited Pella during his visit to the Decapolis (Mark 7:31) and Perea (Matthew 19:1; Mark 10:1), and recalling its secure location, cryptically referred to it in this prophecy.”[8]

In Koester’s article on the topic, he goes on to highlight the fact that Luke 21:21–22 bears such a close resemblance to the flight to Pella that skeptics and critics have argued that Luke wrote his words after the fact.[9] “Many scholars assume,” writes Koester, “that Luke has revised Mark 13:14–16 to reflect events surrounding the fall of Jerusalem in A.D.”[10] For those who accept the authority of and divine inspiration of Scripture, there is no need to see Luke’s words as vaticinium ex eventu. Jesus foretold of the events, Luke recorded His words, and within a generation it all came to pass (Lk. 21:32). Jay Rogers does a nice job putting the historical pieces together:

“...the Flight to Pella most likely took place in the autumn of AD 66 after the Jews had won a short-lived victory and had driven the Roman troops back to Caesarea. There the Roman general Cestius Gallus sent word to Nero of the defeat and promptly committed suicide. At this point, the early Christians fled the city, but the Jews rejoiced thinking God was favoring them in victory over the Romans. This peace lasted until the following year until the spring of AD 67, when Roman legions under Vespasian and Titus invaded Judea from the north and south. This campaign began in April of AD 67 and lasted another three-and-a-half years until the destruction of Jerusalem in September of AD 70.”[11]

When Jesus’ followers saw the events of the war beginning to unfold all around them, they knew the exodus was here. The words of both Zechariah and Jesus were finally coming to pass, and it was time for them to flee to the mountains. Like their forefathers leaving Egypt centuries before, they would exit the city that had spiritually become Egypt and find redemptive freedom (cf. Exod. 6:6; Lk. 21:28). Only this time, they would enter the last and final phase of redemptive history. Unlike the old and temporary covenant, the new and permanent covenant would not be weighed down with ritual, repetition, and the return of their sins.

<https://burrosofberea.com/zechariah-14-part-5-the-flight-to-the-mountains/>

**Luke 23:44** It was now about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour,

### **Day Turns to Night and Night Turns to Day**

Day would turn to night, and night would turn to day – signaling the end of the Old Covenant era and the dawn of a whole new age in redemptive history. During the 40-year transition period in the first century, God providentially made sure that both portents couldn't possibly be missed by those who rejected their Messiah. The first premonition came when they hung Jesus on the cross.

Day had turned to night when they sealed their own fate by crucifying the Lord of glory. Next, night turned into day as the events of the Roman Jewish war began. These are the very events that would precipitate the destruction of the temple and wipe away the last vestiges of the Old Covenant forever. Josephus speaks of "star, resembling a sword, which stood over the city, and a comet, that continued a whole year." [3] In conjunction with this occurrence, he specifically notes a phenomenon which turned night into day:

"Thus also before the Jews' rebellion, and before those commotions which preceded the war, when the people were come in great crowds to the feast of unleavened bread, on the eighth day of the month Xanthicus, 2 [Nisan,] and at the ninth hour of the night, so great a light shone round the altar and the holy house, that it appeared to be bright day time; which lasted for half an hour." [4]

### **Misreading the Signs**

The strange phenomenon emanating from the temple, on that fateful night, was completely misinterpreted by those who should have known better. Josephus informs us that "this light seemed to be a good sign to the unskillful" and they completely missed the fact that "the signal foreshadowed the desolation that was coming upon them." [6] They should have read Jeremiah. They should have read Zechariah. They should have known what this meant, but they didn't.

Josephus tells us that the Zealots who remained in the city, along with "the miserable people" who were "persuaded by these deceivers... did not give credit to the signs that were so evident and did so plainly foretell their future desolation." [7] In other words, it went right over their heads. Josephus describes them as men "without eyes to see" or "minds to consider" the "denunciations that God had made to them." [8] The signs weren't meant to signal their triumph, they were meant to signal their defeat.

Jesus put it this way: "The days are coming upon you, when your enemies will set up a barricade around you, surround you, and hem you in on every side. And they will tear you down to the ground, you and your children with you. They will not leave one stone upon another, because you did not recognize the time of your

visitation" (Luke 19:44). The time of their visitation had come when day turned into night at the cross, and night turned into day as the war began. Just as Jesus had foretold, most of them didn't recognize it.

## **The Time Between Night and Day**

The darkness at Christ's crucifixion should take our minds all the way back to the original darkness at the beginning of creation in Genesis 1:2.[9] Jesus came to make all things new (2 Corinthians 5:17; Revelation 21:5). He came to start all over again with a new creation. He established an infallible covenant, which would not be like the first one – that was fading away into darkness and obscurity (Hebrews 8:13). Between the transition of the Old Covenant's darkening and the New Covenant's dawning, Paul told the Romans: "The night is almost gone, and the day is at hand" (Romans 13:2).

They were living during this unique time between the "night" of the Old Covenant and the "day" of the New Covenant, that both Jeremiah and Zechariah had prophesied about in ages past. Accordingly, Peter tells His readers to "pay attention" to the "prophetic word" as "to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star arises in your heart" (2 Peter 1:19). And the light of that morning star shines forevermore in the hearts of true believers who live in the everlasting "day" of the New Covenant. There is "no more night" in the city (Revelation 22:5),[10] and we are living out the fulfillment envisioned in Isaiah 60:1-3:

"Arise, shine; for your light has come, And the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. For behold, darkness will cover the earth, And deep darkness the peoples; But the Lord will rise upon you, And His glory will appear upon you. Nations will come to your light, And kings to the brightness of your rising" (Isaiah 60:1-3).

Zechariah's "unique day" imagery was meant to telegraph the idea that a new day would dawn, and everything would change. In a manner of speaking, it was "lights out" for Old Covenant Israel as the light of the New Covenant began to break forth into the world. Ethnic Israelites could be a part of this new creation, but only by leaving the shadows of the old creation in the darkness as it passed away.

<https://burrosofberea.com/zechariah-14-part-6-zechariah-146-8/>

**John 7:38** Whoever believes in me, as the Scripture has said, 'Out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.'"

## **Living Waters**

According to Jesus, He is citing "Scripture" when He says that "living water" will flow from a person's "innermost being." The word translated as "innermost being" is koilia, and it literally means "belly" or "stomach." As any commentary on

John 7:37-38 will reveal, interpreters hit a major roadblock when trying to pin down the source of Jesus' quotation. Elisabeth Johnson summarizes the issue: "The puzzling thing about Jesus' statement in John 7:38 is that it is difficult to find a verse of Scripture that matches what Jesus says about rivers of living water flowing from the 'belly.' Many Scriptures have been suggested as a reference." [11]

David B. Curtis concurs: "The problem is that these words do not exactly quote any one particular passage in either the Hebrew Tanakh or in the Greek Septuagint translation. Yeshua may have phrased it this way because He wanted us to think of several different passages that are relevant which reference flowing streams of spiritual water." [12] Indeed, there is consensus among scholars that "no one Old Testament text" alone "fits the quotation" of Jesus in this passage. [13]

Johnson and Curtis both point to Zechariah 14:8 as being among the passages which constitute Jesus' combined Old Testament referent, [14] and this is certainly the case. In fact, Zechariah 14:8 fits the bill more so than any other Old Testament passage. This in turn has major implications regarding the timing of fulfillment with respect to Zechariah's prophecy. In order to highlight the importance of Zechariah 14:8 as the preeminent passage in Jesus' Old Testament quotation, it's helpful to look at the other passages that are commonly believed to work into His words in John 7:37-38.

### **An Incomplete Picture**

Typically, Isaiah 44:3, 55:1 and 58:11 are thought to comprise the combined Old Testament background of Jesus' statement. [15] While these three passages all contain elements of the spiritual-water motif, each of them falls short of completing the picture that Jesus presents in John 7.

Isaiah 44:3 speaks of water (i.e., God's Spirit) being poured out on dry and thirsty ground (God's people). Isaiah 55:1 speaks of water, wine and milk being given freely without cost. Isaiah 58:11 speaks of God's provision being like "springs of water" and God's people being as a "watered garden." Without question, Jesus had Isaiah's words in these verses in mind as part of the contextual backdrop for His proclamation in John 7:38. Nonetheless, these passages all lack one key element that Jesus' statement includes. The Scriptural amalgam behind John 7:38 is left unfinished without Zechariah.

### **A More Complete Picture**

Zechariah provides the crucial ingredient to the mixture of Old Testament references that is missing in Isaiah. Jesus does not merely speak of water, but He specifically speaks of living water. As Glenn Balfour writes, Zechariah 14:8 "holds a vital key," namely, it's "reference to living water." [16] With this in mind,

Jeremiah 17:13 also contains the “vital key” (i.e., living water) and should be considered as another source for Jesus’ quotation:

“O Lord, the hope of Israel, All who forsake You will be put to shame. Those who turn away on earth will be written down, Because they have forsaken the fountain of living water, even the Lord” (Jer. 17:13).

While Isaiah provides a general backdrop for Jesus’ quotation, Jeremiah and Zechariah are more specific in that they mention not only “water,” but more precisely, “living water.” With that said, Zechariah 14:8 alone contains the last essential component in Jesus’ statement that is missing in even the Jeremiah text.

### **The Final Piece of the Puzzle**

As mentioned above, Jesus says that these “living waters” would flow from the believer’s “belly” or “stomach.” On the surface, this seems like a bizarre image – water flowing from a person’s belly? As Michael Houdmann says, “In John 7:38, Jesus makes a seemingly odd metaphorical statement.”[17] Joel Marcus refers to it as “the strange circumstance that John describes,”[18] and Maarten J.J. Menken states that “almost every possible solution has been tried out” to explain these words.[19]

After surveying the plethora of Old Testament texts that are thought to undergird the peculiar image of living water flowing from a person’s belly, specifically, Menken concludes that Zechariah 14:8 is the single passage that “best explains the final words of John 7:38.”[20] Perhaps, this is not immediately obvious? Jesus said the living waters would flow from the bellies of believers, and Zechariah said the living waters would flow from Jerusalem. At first glance, the correlation between the two passages might not be apparent to our modern eyes. Once we understand how the city of Jerusalem was viewed by an ancient Israelite, however, the connection becomes as crystal clear as the waters being spoken of in the passage.

### **The Naval of the Earth**

In his article on John 7:37-38, Balfour emphasizes that Zechariah’s “living waters” flow “out of Jerusalem,” and Jerusalem was regarded as “the naval of the earth”[21] (Ezek. 5:5; 38:12). In fact, Paul Redditt points out that the boundary markers in Zechariah 14:8 and 10 are specifically meant to highlight this “depiction of Jerusalem as the navel of the earth.”[22] The picture that Zechariah paints, then, is a picture of living water flowing from the naval of the earth.

Needless to say, water flowing from the belly and water flowing from the naval are nearly identical, for all intents and purposes. Consequently, Balfour’s article goes on to observe that Jesus “replaces Jerusalem with something else.”[23] With

“John 7:38 being a quotation primarily of Zechariah 14:8,” writes Balfour, the “imagery opens up”[24] and the prophecy was “transferred from Jerusalem to the believer.”[25]

The New Testament’s progressive revelation concerning the New Jerusalem as God’s People is epiphanic in unveiling the connection between John 7:37-38 and Zechariah 14:8. Zechariah’s living waters flowing from Jerusalem find their fulfillment in Jesus’ living waters flowing from His people, who comprise the New Jerusalem.

## **The Feast of Tabernacles and Zechariah 14**

The fact that Jesus spoke these words on that last day of the Feast of Tabernacles (Jn. 7:37) makes the connection to Zechariah 14 unmistakable. As Balfour puts it, “the Feast is the pivot on which 7:38 swings,” and “Zechariah 12-14 was a central passage in the Feast’s liturgy” with “Zechariah 14 being one of its prophetic Haphtaroth.”[30] The Haphtaroth was the reading from the Prophets that followed the reading from the Law. In other words, Zechariah’s words would have been fresh on His listeners’ minds when Jesus stood and uttered His own words on “the last day of the great feast” (Jn. 7:37).

The significance of the circumstances surrounding Jesus’ statement about “living waters” is impossible to miss at this point. With Zechariah’s words echoing in their heads, Jesus’ words fell on their ears. Undoubtedly, He wanted them to make the connection between what they were thinking about on that day, and what they were hearing as He spoke. In John 7:37-38, Jesus is telling His followers that Zechariah 14:8 is fulfilled, first through Him, and second through them. Jesus is the source of the living water, and His people will become the conduit through which that water flows. Given the time and setting of Jesus’ statement, His original audience would have gotten it right away.

## **Living Out the Fulfillment**

While the textual triggers in Jesus’ announcement recall a number of Old Testament passages, Zechariah 14:8 alone incorporates all the key elements – making it the target text. If in fact Jesus was announcing the fulfillment of Zechariah 14:8 in John 7:37-38, the implications are as clear as they are devastating to the Futurist interpretation of Zechariah 14. In verse 39, John says, “But this He said in reference to the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified” (Jn. 7:39). That was then, this is now. Jesus has been glorified (Acts 3:13), and the Spirit has been given (Acts 2:4). Rather than waiting for the fulfillment of Zechariah’s words, we should be living it out.

The prophecy isn’t about literal water flooding the streets of earthly Jerusalem someday. It’s about living believers being the conduit through which God’s Spirit

brings life to the lost and transforms the world. With the light of the morning star shining in our hearts (2 Pt. 1:19), and his glory upon us (Isa. 60:1-3), we illuminate the way for the nations (Rev. 21:24). As His image bearers in the new creation, the light of the lamb shines through us (Rev. 21:3), and the water of life flows from us (Jn. 7:37-38; Rev. 22:1). If we miss this by misunderstanding and misapplying Zechariah's prophecy, we will miss all that God intends us to be. In this way, we're not much different than those first-century Jews who missed what the signs being shown to them were intended to mean.

<https://burrosofberea.com/zechariah-14-part-6-zechariah-146-8/>

**Acts 2:17** "And in the last days it shall be, God declares, that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh, and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams;

If "the last days" weren't kick-started until 1948, somebody needs to go back in time and let the Apostle Peter know this! He was under the impression that the last days were in motion on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:16-17). Likewise, the Writer to the Hebrews defines "the last days" as the time period when God spoke to mankind through His Son (Heb. 1:2). This was the first century, not the twenty-first century or even the twentieth century.

From a purely Biblical perspective, the New Testament "last days" have nothing to do with the "closing days" of human "history" or the end of the world. The New Testament "last days" were the "last days" of the Old Covenant order and the world as it once was. Everything was about to change. As David Chilton wrote, "...the period spoken of in the Bible as 'the last days' (or 'last times' or 'last hour') is the period between Christ's birth and the destruction of Jerusalem. The early church was living at the end of the old age and the beginning of the new." [4]

We are in that new age now – the New Covenant age, the age of the Messiah. The truth is their "last days" are our "past days." We need to stop interpreting fulfilled prophecy as unfulfilled, or as not fulfilled until 1948. We need to focus on the task at hand to ensure that we are leaving our children and grandchildren a better world than was left to us. If anything, we're moving in the wrong direction. The world today is a mess, and so is our country. Perhaps God's People should start focusing on 2048 instead of 1948 and ask these questions: "What will the world be like 25 years from now?" "What can we do to make it better?" "Can we make it better than it is right now?"

The fulfilled, Biblical prophecies of the "past" are not in our "future." Decades before the X-Men movie, the Moody Blues had an album called, "Days of Future Passed." Another good title, and it also applies to our current situation. It's time that we realized the "last days" of the first-century believers' "future" have "passed." Those days are long gone, far in history's "past."

<https://burrosofberea.com/days-of-past-future/>

**Acts 2:20** the sun shall be turned to darkness and the moon to blood, before the

day of the Lord comes, the great and magnificent day.

**Joel 2:31** The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood,  
Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD.

Circling back to Peter's use of Joel 2:31 and the moon turning to blood (Acts 2:20), the audience on that day included "Jews and proselytes" from all over the Roman Empire – including Mesopotamia (Acts 2:10). Just as the Egyptians (who were also there on that day) worshiped the sun, the Mesopotamians worshiped the moon. Peter's message was that Jesus had been "exalted to the right hand of God" (Acts 2:33), and it was lights out for the gods of the other nations.

As these new believers returned home after the Day of Pentecost, the Gospel would penetrate and permeate the nations from which they came. And they would bring Peter's message with them – the territorial deities, who formerly had dominion over them, were being displaced, disarmed, and defeated (cf. Col. 2:15). The stars fall, the sun is darkened, and the moon turns to blood, as the Morning Star arises in the hearts of Jesus's followers (2 Pt. 1:19).

<https://burrosofberea.com/theres-a-rusty-moon-rising/>

**Acts 7:43** You took up the tent of Moloch and the star of your god Rephan, the images that you made to worship; and I will send you into exile beyond Babylon.'

Stephen brings the covenant lawsuit against the apostate Israelites of his own day. Following in Amos's footsteps, Stephen invokes Amos's words as he prosecutes his case: "You also took along the tabernacle of Molech, and the star of the god Rompha (Saturn), the images which you made to worship them, but I will deport you beyond Babylon" (Acts 7:43).

After recounting this and other apostacies, Stephen rests his case: "...you are doing just as your fathers did" (Acts 7:51). Like the apostates of previous generations, they too had become "betrayers and murders" by opposing "the Righteous One" (Acts 7:35). In other words, they weren't carrying around images of Molech and Saturn anymore, but by perverting justice and righteousness, they might as well have been. It was wormwood all over again!

<https://burrosofberea.com/asteroids-dreams-and-wormwood-revelation-810-11/>

**Romans 2:16** on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.

Recently, the attempt is being made to make the final judgment a part of the Gospel, based on Romans 2:16. And then the leap is made that those who deny a future, general judgment are preaching "another Gospel."

But Paul specifies exactly what the Gospel is: "Now I make known to you,

brothers and sisters, the gospel...Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures..." (1 Cor. 15:1-4).

Paul unequivocally defines "the Gospel" in no uncertain terms. According to Paul: The Gospel = The Death, Burial and Resurrection of Jesus Christ. Nothing more. Nothing less. If Paul had wanted to add more terms and conditions to it, this would have been the place to do it. He didn't.

Regarding Romans 2:16, according to (kata) simply indicates that the idea of judgment is "in accordance with" (BDAG, p. 454) the Gospel and not contrary to it. Also, the present tense, "God judges" seems like an odd way to refer to the final judgment and could simply mean that God's judgment of men's secrets can occur any day at any time. True then. True now. Who denies this?

Nonetheless, Preterists don't deny that there was a judgment to take place right there and then in the immediate future (1 Peter 4:5; James 5:9). And no Preterist denies that "after death comes judgment" (Heb. 9:27). So, the general judgment of those who were in Hades took place and from that time on, judgment still follows death but its immediate –no waiting in Hades.

And isn't this exactly what futurists also believe? Don't people go to Heaven or Hell when they die? If so, they're "judged" immediately. For those who don't believe in Hell, annihilation would qualify as a "judgment" as well. If our eternal destinies are already determined when we leave this world, exactly what "judgment" are these guys waiting for? Wouldn't that be like "double-jeopardy"? Being tried twice?

<https://burrosofberea.com/the-general-judgment-and-the-gospel/>

**Romans 11:25** Lest you be wise in your own sight, I do not want you to be unaware of this mystery, brothers: a partial hardening has come upon Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in.

The key to understanding Romans 11:25-27 is understanding the mission of the man himself who penned those words. Like the rest of the Bible, this passage was written by a real person, to a real audience, in real time. And that real person's real-life mission was driven by a real and burning desire to get to Spain (Rom. 15:24, 28). This burning desire brings the text to full life and fully illuminates the meaning of the phrase "the fullness of the Gentiles."

Paul understands passages like Isaiah 42:6 and 49:6 in light of his own vocation along with Barnabas (Acts 13:47). They are to be the light that Isaiah spoke of bringing salvation "to the end of the earth" (Acts 13:47c). This mission is expressed in Romans by Paul's desire to take the Gospel to places where Christ had not been named (Rom. 15:20) and to reach as far west as Spain (Rom. 15:24, 28). And this is where the mission of Paul, the echoes of Isaiah, and the

message of Romans all come together.

In his letter to the Romans, Paul continues to take his cue from the prophet Isaiah as Spain dominates his horizon. Isaiah 66:19 is a snapshot of the original 70 nations divided up at Babel (see: Gen. 10-11).[2] In that passage, Isaiah speaks of God's "fame" and "glory" being spread among those nations.[3] "It is important to note that Tarshish is the first of the nations mentioned to whom the 'saved' are to declare the Lord's fame and glory," says Roger Aus, "because it is most distant." [4] With that said, the trajectory of Paul's missionary journeys follows an east-to-west pattern culminating in the farthest point west, i.e., Spain (Tarshish).

A trip to Spain would complete the mission and bring the salvation message "to the end of the earth," so to speak.[6] The Gospel seed would then be planted among all the original 70 people groups from which we all descend. This is the driving force behind Paul's endeavors, his life's mission, and his literary backdrop in Romans.

Michael Heiser puts it all together:

"Why is Spain of any concern to us, and why did Paul want so badly to go there? In Paul's day, Spain was where Tarshish was. Tarshish was a Phoenician colony in what was later Spain. The point is profound: Paul was convinced that his life's mission as apostle to the Gentiles—the disinherited nations—would only be finished when he got to Spain. As incredible as it sounds, Paul was conscious that his mission for Jesus actually involved spreading the gospel to the westernmost part of the known world—Tarshish—so that the disinheritance at Babel would be reversed." [9]

<https://burrosofberea.com/romans-1125-27-part-1-a-problem-passage-for-pop-prophecy/>

**Romans 11:26** And in this way all Israel will be saved, as it is written, "The Deliverer will come from Zion, he will banish ungodliness from Jacob";

It's important to note that "all Israel" doesn't mean every single Israelite. As the term "all" is used in Scripture, it often carries the idea of all manner of, all sorts of, all kinds of, etc., rather than each and every one of. Consider the following example:

"Then Jerusalem and **all** Judea and all the region about the Jordan were going out to him" (Matt. 3:5).

Did every single person from Judea go out to see John the Baptist? Doubtful.

**Israel Saved in the Same Way as the Gentiles**

The key to understanding Paul in Romans 11 is once again found in the book of Acts. Once Paul and Barnabas hit the ground running in Acts 13, Gentiles began running to Christ in droves (Acts 13:48). This led to disputes among the Jews on how to deal with this new dynamic, and the Apostolic Council in Acts 15 convened. Amidst the proceedings, Peter said something that would stick with Paul for the rest of his life: "But we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, in the same way as they also are" (Acts 15:11).

The parallels to Romans 11:26 are impossible to miss. By "we," Peter meant himself and his fellow Jews. By "they," Peter meant the Gentiles. Peter's point? He and his fellow Jews are saved in the same way as these new Gentile converts. In Romans 11, Paul is faithful to what Peter said on that day. Romans 11:26 echoes Acts 15:11.

Translations give the idea of Israel's salvation being a result or consequence of the fullness of the Gentiles coming in. However, the word **outos** does not typically carry the force of "therefore," "consequently," or "as a result." Rather, it commonly means "in this manner, in the same way, likewise, similarly." [4]

The ESV and NIV both hit it closer to the mark than many other translations by rendering Romans 11:26 in the same way (there was a pun there). Paul's meaning is simply all Israelites will be saved in the same way as all the Gentiles – just like Peter said back in Acts 15.

The remainder of verse 26 and the beginning of verse 27 bear this out and confirm it. Paul says, "just as it is written" – in other words, he's explaining how Israelites are saved in the same way as Gentiles by appealing to Scripture. Specifically, he combines elements of Psalm 14:7, 53:6, [5] Isaiah 2:3; 27:9, 59:20-21 and Jeremiah 31:33.

The combination of Isaiah 2:3 and 59:20 in Paul's amalgam is particularly interesting. In Isaiah 59:20, the redeemer comes to Zion. In Isaiah 2:3, the law goes forth from Zion. In Paul's quotation, it's the redeemer, and not the law, that is going forth from Zion. In essence, Paul has swapped out the law for Jesus. Scholars such as N.T. Wright and Christopher Bruno observe, "By mixing his citation, Paul has displaced Torah with Christ as that which goes forth from Zion to the nations." [6] Simply put, Israelites are saved in the same way that Gentiles are – through the deliverer from Zion, who removes ungodliness by His infallible covenant and takes away our sins.

In other words, neither Jews nor Gentiles are saved by keeping the law. This dovetails perfectly with what Paul has been saying in Romans all along and ties everything together beautifully. The law is not the means of salvation. Not for Gentiles. Not for Jews. Not for anyone. To be clear, this doesn't mean God's Law is unimportant or to be discarded. [7] But it does mean that salvation is found in the finished work of Christ alone, for Jew and Gentile alike. "In this way all Israel

will be saved,” said Paul (Rom. 11:26), as he reflected Peter (Acts 15:11).

Reflecting back on this and the previous two articles, Israel was partially hardened to the Gospel to force the Apostles to take it beyond her borders. Paul’s desire to reach Spain reflected that mission, the fullness of the Gentiles reflected the Table of Nations, and the Gospel’s light was reflected upon those nations. By the time Paul wrote Colossians, it was mission accomplished (Col. 1:6, 23). The Gospel seed had been planted among all 70 original people groups from which we all descend. Now, our job is to keep it growing – and keep it going.

The good news for modern Jews is that they don’t have to wait until the Church gets raptured and the Antichrist gets the best of them to get in on God’s plan. All Israelites can be saved, right here and right now, the same way as Gentiles – through the atoning work of Jesus Christ. This is the “eternal Gospel” to “those who live on the earth” and “to every nation and tongue and tribe and people” (Rev. 14:6). It was then. It is now. And it always will be.

And today, we must ensure that the “surpassing richness of His grace” continues to be shown “in the ages to come” (Eph. 2:7). Christ’s “glory in the Church” is for “all generations forever” (Eph. 3:21), and this current generation of Jews is welcome – with no “partial hardening” standing in the way! For all people, Jesus alone is the way (John 14:6). And “in this way,” all Israel is saved – and Gentiles too.

<https://burrosofberea.com/romans-1125-27-part-3-the-way-all-israel-is-saved/>

**Romans 15:12** And again Isaiah says, “The root of Jesse will come, even he who arises to rule the Gentiles; in him will the Gentiles hope.”

Isaiah 11:1-5 speaks of a shoot springing from Jesse, who would lead the restoration effort. This accurately describes Zerubbabel, the governor of Judeah, who oversaw the rebuilding of the temple. As a descendant of David, Zerubbabel was a “shoot” or “stem” of Jesse. As such, he prefigured Christ, and Paul applies this prophecy to Jesus (Rom. 15:12), who was the ultimate restorer of all things (Acts 3:21). In both its immediate fulfillment (Zerubbabel) and larger fulfillment (Jesus), the prophecy is in fact fulfilled. As David Chilton wrote, “Isaiah’s prophecy of a ‘golden age’ when the wolf dwells peaceably with the lamb (Isa. 11:1-10) is condensed and cited by St. Paul as a present fulfillment, in the New Covenant age (Rom. 15:12)!”

<https://burrosofberea.com/isaiah-11-and-the-mandela-effect-how-todays-prophecy-pundits-see-things-that-arent-there/>

**Romans 16:20** The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you.

Paul speaks of a clear and present danger to Satan, and he uses another word that means something: “The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.”

This is another text of time. The word soon means “quickly, hastily, speedily, immediately.”[7] Whatever Paul and the Romans were anticipating, it was near and soon to them in their own time.

<https://burrosofberea.com/the-texts-of-time/>

**1 Corinthians 1:7** so that you are not lacking in any gift, as you wait for the revealing of our Lord Jesus Christ,

**1 Corinthians 1:8** who will sustain you to the end, guiltless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The main “take away” when we read Paul addressing the Corinthians in the second person plural here is audience relevance. Does it sound like the “revelation” (1:7) and “the day” of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and term “the end,” are events that Paul perceived as taking place in the far-distant future — thousands of years removed from the time of he and his first-century readers?

No. They were “eagerly awaiting” it; Christ would confirm them to “the end.” “The end” certainly seems like an event that was to take place in the Corinthians’ own lifetime.

<https://burrosofberea.com/identifying-christs-enemies-in-1-corinthians-1524-26/>

**1 Corinthians 2:6** Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away.

**1 Corinthians 2:7** But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory.

**1 Corinthians 2:8** None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.

Regarding Christ’s first coming, Paul tells us that the plan was a “mystery,” “hidden” in “ages past” (1 Cor. 2:6-7). In other words, the messianic profile was intentionally kept veiled and cryptic in the Old Testament. Why? Paul tells us exactly why. Speaking of the rulers of that age, he says, “if they had understood it, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory” (1 Cor. 2:8). Simply put: if they had known the outcome, they wouldn’t have played along.

<https://burrosofberea.com/the-rapture-its-no-secret-anymore-so-whos-going-to-buy-the-antichrists-lure/>

**(NASB) 1 Corinthians 7:29** But this I say, brethren, the time has been shortened, so that from now on those who have wives should be as though they had none;

Paul himself says, “the time has been shortened” (1 Cor. 7:29a). As such, he advocates singleness and celibacy (1 Cor. 7:25-28). He says, “those who have wives should be as those who have none” (1 Cor. 7:29b). Not only is it incongruent to contrast the New Testament’s nearness of time with

appropriateness of time, but one must wonder why the pundits aren't advocating celibacy for believers nowadays. After all, these passages are "just as appropriate today," according to them. Paul's understanding of near seems clear, and if the end is still near today, believers should be living a whole different way. <https://burrosofberea.com/the-texts-of-time/>

**1 Corinthians 15:24** Then comes the end, when he delivers the kingdom to God the Father after destroying every rule and every authority and power.

## **"The End" in 1 Corinthians Chapter One**

"The end," is a term Paul uses here and elsewhere, and a term that Our Lord Himself used in the Olivet Discourse. Popular thinking leads us to believe that this refers to "the end" of the world, "the end of time," "the end" of earth's history. One writer puts it this way: "Earth history ends 'whenever' Christ 'hands over' the kingdom to the Father."

But, does this comport with the Bible's usage of the term? When Paul says, "then comes the end," does he mean "the end" of "earth history?"

First of all, let's back up in 1 Corinthians itself, and see how Paul himself, uses the phrase in chapter one. 1 Corinthians 1:6-8 reads: "Even as the testimony concerning Christ was confirmed in you, 7 so that you are not lacking in any gift, awaiting eagerly the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ, 8 who will also confirm you to the end, blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ."

The main "take away" when we read Paul addressing the Corinthians in the second person plural here is audience relevance. Does it sound like the "revelation" and "the day" of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and term "the end," are events that Paul perceived as taking place in the far-distant future—thousands of years removed from the time of he and his first-century readers?

No. They were "eagerly awaiting" it; Christ would confirm them to "the end." In chapter one, "the end" certainly seems like an event that was to take place in the Corinthians' own lifetime.

As Don Preston has pointed out, "When we come to 'the end' in 1 Corinthians 15, there is no contextual reason whatsoever to delineate between the anticipated end there, and that mentioned earlier in the epistle."

It seems inconceivable then that Paul would speak of one coming of Christ and one "end" in chapter one, and completely switch gears in chapter 15 without any indication whatsoever that he was now speaking of a different coming of Christ, and a different "end."

## **"The End" in Matthew 24:14**

It's only natural that Paul would have expected "the end" to occur in the first century because this is exactly what Our Lord Himself predicted. In Matthew 24:14, Jesus says: "This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all the nations, and then the end will come." This is among the events that Jesus said would take place in that first-century generation (Matthew 24:34).

As the Book of Colossians bears out, "the Gospel" had indeed come into "all the world" (Col. 1:5-6), and had been "proclaimed in all creation under heaven" (Col. 1:23), well before the first century AD had come to a close. According to Our Lord Himself, "the end" was soon to follow.

Notice also that, for Paul, "the end" follows the abolition of all "rule, power and authority" and, for Jesus, "the end" follows the Gospel being preached to all nations. As we shall see, these concepts aren't at all unrelated. In fact, they're closely linked together.

Based upon Our Lord's prediction that "the end" would occur in that "generation," Paul tells the Corinthian believers that the "ends of the ages" had come upon them (1 Cor. 10:11), and Peter tells his readers that "the end of all things" was "at hand" in the first century (1 Peter 4:7). If they were thinking in terms of the end of the world, or the end of history, they were clearly mistaken.

But it wasn't the end of the world, nor the end of history, that Jesus was talking about in the Olivet Discourse. Notice the disciples' original question: "As He was sitting on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, 'Tell us, when will these things happen, and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?'" (Matthew 24:3).

There are two main, over-arching ages in Scripture: The Old Covenant Age, and the New Covenant Age.

It is "the end" of the Old Covenant Age that is in view here—not the end of the world or earth history.

<https://burrosofberea.com/identifying-christs-enemies-in-1-corinthians-1524-26/>

**1 Corinthians 15:25** For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet.

### **"Who are Christ's "enemies" and why does it matter?"**

As to the second part of this question, it matters because, if we (Preterists) believe that Jesus came back in AD 70 (in the first century generation, like He said He would) then we consequently believe "the end" has come, He has abolished all "rule, power and authority," and His "enemies" have been put "under

His feet.”

Are we (Preterists) really making this claim? Is it really possible to believe such things? Are we delusional?

Well, if we (Preterists) define His “enemies” as earthly – physical – human “rulers, authorities and powers,” we’d be delusional indeed. As it turns out, many in fact do define Christ’s “enemies” in this passage in such a manner and do in fact level such a charge against us (Preterists).

How can we maintain the idea that Christ’s enemies have been made a “footstool under His feet” and He has “abolished” all “rule, power and authority?” How can we claim “The End” has come?

**See Comments on 15:24.**

### **The gods of the Other Nations**

One of the distinctive features of that Old Covenant Age was that all of the nations, outside of the nation of Israel, were under the dominion of other gods.

Notice the Lord’s words in his indictment against Israel for forsaking His Covenant with them in Deuteronomy 29:26: “They went and served other gods and worshiped them, gods whom they have not known and whom He had not allotted to them.”

Let’s back up in Deuteronomy to chapter 4, verse 19: “And beware not to lift up your eyes to heaven and see the sun and the moon and the stars, all the host of heaven, and be drawn away and worship them and serve them, those which the Lord your God has allotted to all the peoples under the whole heaven.”

The same thing is echoed in Deuteronomy 17:2-3. God speaks of those who transgress “His covenant” by serving “other gods” and “worshipping them” ... “the sun,” “the moon,” or “any of the heavenly host.” In 2 Kings 15:21, the Israelites had done just that by building “altars for all the host of heaven in the two courts of the House of the Lord.”

1 Kings 11:33 specifically names some of these other gods: “because they have forsaken Me, and have worshiped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, Chemosh the god of Moab, and Milcom the god of the sons of Ammon; and they have not walked in My ways, doing what is right in My sight and observing My statutes and My ordinances, as David did.”

The picture we get is this: “Other gods,” visually represented by “the sun,” “the moon” and “the stars,” were “allotted to” the other nations of the earth. Yahweh’s allotted portion, the people He reserved for Himself, was the nation of Israel. The

clearest, most explicit statement regarding this is found in Deuteronomy 32:7-9:

Deuteronomy 32:7-9 English Standard Version (ESV)

7 Remember the days of old; consider the years of many generations; ask your father, and he will show you, your elders, and they will tell you. 8 When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, when he divided mankind, he fixed the borders of the peoples according to the number of the sons of God. 9 But the Lord's portion is his people, Jacob his allotted heritage.

Of all the nations of the earth, "Jacob" was Yahweh's "allotted heritage." They were Yahweh's "portion," "His People." The other nations had their own inheritance. Other gods were allotted to them.

## **Psalms 2 and 22**

But, it was not to remain this way. Psalm 2, among other places, speaks of a time when Yahweh would reclaim the nations or the peoples of the world for Himself: 7 "I will surely tell of the decree of the Lord: He said to Me, 'You are My Son, Today I have begotten You. 8 'Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, And the very ends of the earth as Your possession" (Psalm 2:6-8).

And, in Psalm 22:27-28: All the ends of the earth will remember and turn to the Lord, And all the families of the nations will worship before You. 28 For the kingdom is the Lord's And He rules over the nations.

Notice in Psalm 2:7 that the nations are given to Christ, the very ends of the earth as His possession, after the Father declares: "You are My Son, today I have begotten you." When was this declaration made? According to Paul, in Acts 13:33, it was when God raised Jesus from the dead.

The next thing that happens after Jesus' resurrection, according to Psalm 2, is the reclaiming of the nations. This is why, after the resurrection, Jesus sends the eleven out to "make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19).

The process of reclaiming the disinherited nations (or peoples) had begun. And the gods of those nations, represented by celestial objects such as the sun, moon and stars, were about to be displaced.

## **Joel 2/Acts 2**

This is how Peter can claim that the events on the Day of Pentecost fulfilled Joel's prophecy of the sun being darkened and the moon turning to blood. Again, the sun and the moon were among the celestial objects that represented the gods of the other nations.

Luke tells us that, on the Day of Pentecost, "devout men from every nation under heaven," the very nations these gods had been allotted to, had come to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast (Acts 2:5). When the Apostles spoke in tongues, these people all heard the message "in their own language, to which they were born" (Acts 2:6-7). Where did all these people go when they left Jerusalem?

Obviously, back home... to "every nation under heaven," the lands of the other gods – taking the Gospel message with them!

Both Egypt and Mesopotamia are specifically mentioned among the nations listed in Acts 2:9-11. The Egyptians worshiped "the sun," and the Mesopotamians worshiped "the moon." (See: Listings for MOON, HELIOS, SHEMESH in DDD).

The sun is darkened, the moon is turned to blood. In modern-day terms, it's "lights out" for these false gods.

With this in mind, it's sort of amazing to read scholars, such as Christopher Hays, in his book *When the Son of Man Didn't Come*, claim that the events of Acts Chapter 2 were only a "partial fulfillment" of Joel's prophecy because the Day of Pentecost was not, according to Hays, accompanied by any quote "cosmic disturbances" or "celestial irregularities" (p. 74).

Contrary to Hays' assertion, Peter doesn't say, "this is part of what was spoken through the Prophet Joel," Peter says: "This is what was spoken of through the Prophet Joel." The events on the Day of Pentecost were fulfilling Joel's Prophecy of the sun being darkened and the moon turning to blood.

I think it's kind of ironic that people accuse us (Preterists) of NOT taking the Bible literally. On the contrary, when Peter says, "This is what was spoken of through the Prophet Joel," we take his words quite literally and don't have to change them to make Peter's statement fit our theology.

The "cosmic disturbances" and "celestial irregularities," to use Hays' terminology, are the prophets' way of saying that the gods, allotted to the other nations, were about to suffer a huge defeat. As a Preterist, I believe this literally happened in the unseen realm in the first century.

## **Blood, Fire and Smoke**

In addition to the "WONDERS IN THE SKY ABOVE" (the sun being darkened and the moon turning to blood)," Joel's prophecy, which according to Peter was being fulfilled, also speaks of SIGNS ON THE EARTH BENEATH: "blood," "fire," and "smoke."

Again, these people were going to take the Gospel back to their own nations. Those who are far off, in the lands of these other gods, are going to get saved.

What does “blood, fire and smoke” have to do with this? What are Peter and Joel trying to convey here?

Blood: In 1 Peter 1:2 & 3, Peter equates being “born again” with being “sprinkled” with “the blood” of Christ. Accordingly, Isaiah prophesied that God’s Servant would “sprinkle many nations” (Isaiah 52:15).

Fire: In Psalms 104:4, Yahweh’s ministers are likened unto “flames of fire” and, in Psalms 97:3, “Fire goes before Him” as He “burns His adversaries round about.”

Smoke: Psalms 18 portrays Yahweh as the Divine Warrior with smoke issuing forth from His nostrils and fire coming from His mouth (vs. 8).

This is the picture that Joel and Peter paint: As the Gospel penetrated and permeated those nations, the territorial deities, who formerly had dominion over them, were being displaced. The messengers of the Divine Warrior were invading their territory and the language of Joel’s prophecy was poetically describing the fact that they were being disarmed, delegitimized and destroyed.

## **Reclaiming the Nations**

If you look at a map of the nations that were disinherited by Yahweh in Genesis 10 and 11 and compare it to the list of nations in Acts 2 on the Day of Pentecost, it’s really quite amazing.

It starts from the farthest points east, where there were heavy Jewish populations, and progresses westward. This gives us a vivid picture of God beginning to reclaim those nations – starting right there in Acts Chapter 2.

And, earlier in the Gospels, Jesus actually previewed this when He sent the seventy out in Luke 10. The number seventy was NOT unintentional. There were 70 nations in the table of disinherited nations in Genesis 10. Our Lord was putting the powers of darkness on notice when He sent the seventy out: Yahweh was about to reclaim those disinherited nations, and their reign over them was coming to an end.

So, it’s not at all coincidental that, in the Olivet Discourse, “the end” of the Old Covenant Age follows the preaching of the Gospel to all nations and in 1 Corinthians 15, “the end” follows the abolishment of all “rule, power and authority.” As the Gospel penetrated the nations that these other gods “ruled” over, their “power” and “authority” was being diminished. Their reign over the nations or peoples of the world was coming to an “end.” This, in fact, is exactly what Paul is driving at by his very choice of vocabulary in 1 Corinthians 15.

## **Rule, Authority and Power**

When you look up the definitions for the terms “rule, power and authority,” as they are being used here by Paul, in any standard lexicon, the meanings given for these terms is consistent and uniform. I’ve chosen to use Thayer’s since it’s easily accessible online:

“Rule” (Arche) “Angels and demons holding dominions entrusted to them in the order of things.”

“Authority” (Exousia) “The leading and more powerful among created beings superior to man, spiritual potentates, used in the plural of a certain class of angels.”

“Power” (Dunamis) “The power of the devil and evil spirits.”

According to scholar Matthew Black, Paul is referring to “cosmic or celestial potentates whose empires are among the host of heaven and most probably the astral deities of Hellenistic religions accommodated within Jewish-Hellenistic angelology, “spiritual evil powers” and “tyrants.”

This is consistent with the Pauline usage of these terms elsewhere. While many examples could be cited, the following are the most self-evident:

Ephesians 3:10 New American Standard Bible (NASB) 10 so that the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places.

Ephesians 6:12 New American Standard Bible (NASB) 12 For our struggle is not against flesh and blood but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places.

Colossians 1:16 New American Standard Bible (NASB) 16 For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him.

Colossians 2:14-15 is particularly interesting... Paul says that by Jesus’ death on the cross he “disarmed the rulers and authorities,” and “made a public display of them, having triumphed over them”.

It would make little sense for Paul to have earthly or human “rulers and authorities” in mind here. In what sense were human rulers and authorities “disarmed” by Jesus’ death on the cross?

The Bottom Line: Paul simply does not have physical-earthly-human “rulers, powers and authorities” in view in these passages or in 1 Corinthians 15. They

are spiritual enemies. As Michael Heiser says, "These terms are part of Paul's stock vocabulary for the powers of darkness in the spiritual realm" (The Bible Unfiltered, p. 205).

Paul's Gentile audience would have grasped this just as surely as any Jew living in the ancient world. According to Clinton E. Arnold: "A very thin line separated Jewish and gentile religious belief in many quarters during the first century. Paul's vocabulary for the principalities and powers drew on the vast reservoir of terms in first-century Jewish angelology and demonology. Paul's gentile audience would have clearly understood him, since (the) different religions shared the same concepts and terminology.

<https://burrosofberea.com/identifying-christs-enemies-in-1-corinthians-1524-26/>

**1 Corinthians 15:26** The last enemy to be destroyed is death.

### **The Last Enemy: Death**

The fact that Paul had spiritual, and not physical enemies in view, is evident by the one enemy he chooses to specifically name several times in the passage. He says in verse 26: "The last enemy that will be abolished is death."

He names the enemy again in verse 54: "...then will come about the saying, DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP IN VICTORY."

It is imperative to understand that Paul is quoting Isaiah 25:8 in this verse. The Ugaritic cognate of the Hebrew word for "death" in Isaiah 25:8 is MOT. MOT was an underworld deity in the ancient world.

Almost any scholarly treatment of Isaiah 25:8 will make note of the fact that this verse is a polemic against the Canaanite god of death, MOT, who was known in the ancient world as "the Swallower." Since this is something we MIGHT NOT be so familiar with, I'm going to quote a few sources here:

First, the entry in DDD (The Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible) for "Mot:"

"The main characteristic of Mot is that he is a voracious consumer of gods and men. He has an enormous mouth and appetite to match. His gullet and appetite are frequently mentioned" He is the swallower (pp. 598-601). "Isaiah 25:8 on the other hand has Yahweh swallowing up Death".

### **Mot: The Swallower**

According to William D. Barker, in his book Isaiah's Kingship Polemic: "The overwhelming number of references to Mot's appetite is evidence that Mot was understood as a voracious and relentless underworld deity. Mot is portrayed as a

warrior, but his primary weapon is his mouth (and his hunger). He can be characterized with an open, gaping mouth that represents a ravenous appetite, which desires the total consumption of deities and humans" (p. 66). "The unique use of this concept," continues Barker, "that is, appetite as the chief weapon of death leads us directly to the conclusion that the Ugaritic material is the sole probable background for Isaiah 25:6-8" (p. 67).

Debra Scroggins Ballentine concurs:

"It is particularly interesting that Isaiah 25:8 describes this act as "swallow up" because in Ugaritic tradition Death (Mot) is characterized as swallowing his enemies, in particular, Baal. Isaiah 25:8 reverses the motif of Death swallowing those he has defeated in order to assert Yahweh's superiority over Death. The notion of Yahweh swallowing Death validates Yahweh's divine royal authority..."

In short: MOT swallows Baal, Yahweh swallows MOT; thus, demonstrating His superiority over both.

Dan G. Johnson writes: "According to the Canaanite myth, even though Baal had defeated Prince Yam, the chaos monster, his victory was not yet complete. There remained one more power with which he must contend: Mot, the ruler of the underworld. But in this battle, Baal is no match for Mot, who defeats him almost without struggle."

He quotes an Ugaritic text, which reads: 'One lip to earth, one lip to heaven, He stretched out his tongue to the stars. Baal entered his mouth, and Descended into his belly' [KTU 1.5 ii 2-5].

Johnson continues: "This depiction of Mot swallowing Baal very likely provides the backdrop for the statement in Isaiah 25.8".

Finally, I'd like to quote Richard Long: "That the Lord consumes the shroud and death by swallowing naturally suggests a connection to the Canaanite god Mot, well known from Ugaritic texts as the god of death, drought, disease, and wickedness, the god who swallows up all life. Isaiah 25:8 should be understood as an allusion to Mot... Mot is destroyed in the way he has destroyed all others: he is swallowed up forever."

## **The Veil Covering the Nations**

By the way, Long's reference to "the shroud" is harkening back to verse 7 of Isaiah 25. Not only does Yahweh swallow "death" in this passage, but also the "shroud," "veil," or "covering" which is "stretched" or "woven" over all the nations. Here, the pantheon of other gods is viewed as a "covering which is over all the peoples" and a "veil which is stretched out over all the nations."

This type of imagery makes sense in light of what the New Testament tells us about the Powers and Principalities. Remember, they are forces of darkness “in the heavenly places” (Ephesians 6:12). Satan was the “prince of the power of the air” (Ephesians 2:2).

As Bruce Malina points out, according to the ancient worldview, there were “myriads of entities that populated the region above the earth and below the fixed stars,” “astral deities” who “inhabited the air.”

All of these other gods, these “astral deities” — the “shroud” or “veil” stretched out over all the nations are “swallowed up” by Yahweh during a “lavish banquet for all the peoples” in Isaiah 25:6... one of the few Old Testament allusions to the marriage supper of the lamb.

This text, here in Isaiah, is a key Old Testament passage that is informing Paul’s thinking in 1 Corinthians 15. You have the same two-fold theme going on in both places: 1) Yahweh’s enemies in the broad sense – the covering or veil stretched out over all the nations or peoples (Isaiah), the demonic rulers, powers and principalities (1 Corinthians) and 2) the last enemy, Death, is singled out in both passages (Isaiah 25:8; 1 Corinthians 15:54).

That this two-fold theme is clearly focusing on spiritual, rather than physical enemies, is blatantly obvious.

Futurists, and even Partial Preterists pretty much everyone except us (Preterists) are going to look at these two passages and interpret “death” in terms of physical death – the cessation of biological existence.

They’re going to say, “Surely, death wasn’t swallowed up in AD 70” and they’re going to couple this with Revelation 21:4 which talks about there being “no more death” in the New Heavens and New Earth.

## **New Heavens and Earth**

The quagmire they’re going to fall into here is the fact that Isaiah 65 is also describing the New Heavens and New Earth.

But, in Isaiah’s New Heavens and New Earth, physical death is still present. So, is sin by the way. The futurist actually has two problems here: There are still sinners in the New Heavens and the New Earth and there is still physical death. Logically, there are only three ways to approach this:

- 1) The Bible contradicts Itself,
- 2) Isaiah and John are describing two different “New Heavens and New Earth,” or
- 3) “Death” does not mean the same thing in both places.

Option #1 is obviously out of the question for evangelical Christians. If Scripture can err then why do we try to figure out the meaning of an errant book? We might as well eat, drink and be merry... for tomorrow we die! What's the point of all this?

Option #2, two different "New Heavens and New Earth," will be argued by some. Isaiah's "New Heavens and New Earth" were "spiritual" while John's were "physical." Or, John's "New Heavens and New Earth" are the physical manifestation of Isaiah's spiritual "New Heavens and New Earth," or something to that effect. Or, How about this one: Isaiah's New Heavens & New Earth" are already, but John's are not yet!

All of these explanations, for two different New Heavens and New Earth, are the result of people trying to make the Bible fit their theology rather than making their theology fit the Bible.

Scripture simply gives no indication that Isaiah and John are describing two different "New Heavens & New Earth." The Bible simply doesn't speak in these terms.

What the Bible does do, on the other hand, is personify "death" and treat it as a real enemy in the spiritual realm. A classic example is Psalm 49:14, where "death" is the "shepherd" of the souls that are being held captive in Sheol.

In contrast to this, Peter tells us that Christ has now become the "Shepherd of our souls" (1 Peter 2:25). He was coming to replace MOT as the Shepherd of the Souls of the People He purchased with His own blood, and free them from their captivity in the underworld.

## **The Gates of Hades**

Again, in the world of the Ancient Near East, Mot was the "god of death" and was "referred to as king of the dead." He kept the "deceased enslaved in the underworld." In the Ugaritic literature, the "underworld," which the Hebrews called "Sheol" and the Greeks called "Hades," was actually referred to as "the city of Mot" – according to the Lexham Bible Dictionary.

A city has gates, as defensive structures to keep intruders out and in the case of Sheol/Hades to keep the inmates in (so to speak). According to The Dictionary of Gods, Demons and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia there were anywhere from seven to fourteen of these gates in the underworld (p. 144) and these gates were guarded by lesser deities known as "gatekeepers" (p. 86).

## **Caesarea Philippi/Mt Hermon**

This sheds a lot of light on Jesus' famous statement to Peter: "Upon this rock will

I build my Church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:18).

In other words, He's the intruder that's going to storm the gates of the "City of Mot" or "Death" and take back what is rightfully His.

Interestingly, the Bible tells us that Jesus and Peter are at Caesarea Philippi when Jesus makes this statement (Matthew 16:13). Caesarea Philippi was situated at the foot of Mount Hermon (Heiser, Reversing Hermon, p. 95). Mount Hermon was the very place where, according to Enoch, "the sons of God of Genesis 6:1-4 chose to launch their rebellion against Yahweh" (Heiser, The Unseen Realm, p.285).

The imagery is absolutely striking: Jesus is at Ground Zero, in terms of Cosmic Geography, launching His assault against the Powers of Darkness. He is going to storm the Gates of Hades (the "City of Mot") and get His People out of there. He Himself will be the Shepherd of their souls. In the Book of Revelation you have "Death" (Mot) and "Hades" (the City of Mot) being thrown into the Lake of Fire (Revelation 20:14). This comports with Paul and Isaiah's idea of death being "swallowed in victory."

Thus, we can harmonize Isaiah's "New Heaven's and New Earth" with John's "New Heavens and New Earth." While there is still physical death in the New Heavens and New Earth, death personified (Mot) and his domain (Hades) are no longer a threat to God's People... We go to Heaven now.

## **Psalm 110**

What about Psalm 110? There is no doubt that Paul is definitely tracking on this Psalm when he says, "For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His Feet" (1 Corinthians 15:25). Psalm 110:1 says:

The Lord says to my Lord: "Sit at My right hand Until I make Your enemies a footstool for Your feet."

Does this Psalm support the idea that these "enemies" are spiritual "rulers, authorities and powers?" Well, verse five states: "The Lord is at Your right hand; He will shatter kings in the day of His wrath."

The fact that the Psalmist mentions "kings" surely excludes the idea of spiritual enemies...Right? Not necessarily.

If we're reading the Bible through our 21st century lenses or filters, this is all we see when we read the word "kings." But, keep in mind: we're far removed from the ancient worldview. For an ancient reader, there is a lot more loaded into this term. The earthly kings were merely pawns for the Elohim over the nations.

## **A Solution for Many MLKM**

According to scholar Lowell Handy, there is a whole hierarchal structure loaded into the term translated “king” and it does not carry the idea of “the sole ruler” or authority. In the Ugaritic narratives, for example, “Baal, Yam, Mot and Athar each rule as an MLK or king, under El simultaneously over their respective realms within the cosmos. This presents a hierarchy,” continues Handy, “extending from the divine realm into the human world.”

And, it’s not just in the Ugaritic literature. In ancient Egypt for example, the Pharaoh was thought to be the incarnation of Horus, the son of Ra. According to Carley L. Couch: “The Egyptian witness to this type of terminology for the pharaoh and his relationship to the gods is abundant, with references including statements that the pharaoh is the son of a deity as well as made in that deity’s image” (Sources: Naked Bible Podcast 264, Carley L. Couch, “Made in the Image of God: The Commissioning of the King and the Chaoskampf of YHWH,” pp. 8-9).

This is precisely why God repeatedly says in Exodus that He will deal with Pharaoh with a “strong hand” and an “outstretched arm.” This is part of the Divine Warrior Motif in the ancient world. In the Pyramid texts of the Egyptian religion, Horus defeated Seth and was known as “Horus the Fighter.” As Horus incarnate, the Pharaoh becomes associated with the images of a “strong hand” and an “outstretched arm.”

This is precisely why the Biblical Writers chose to use these very expressions to describe God’s dealings with Pharaoh.

As Michael Heiser puts it: “This language would have been a direct confrontation to Pharaoh’s status as a deity incarnate who is the greatest military power” (NBPC 266 Transcript, p. 13).

James Hoffmeier is a trained Egyptologist. He wrote a piece called, “The Arm of God Versus the Arm of Pharaoh.” Hoffmeier says: “Yahweh demonstrated his legitimacy as the greatest God by his arm defeating that of Pharaoh. This triumph is reflected in Jethro’s words in Exodus 18:10-11, ‘Blessed be Yahweh who rescued you from the hand of Egypt and from the hand of Pharaoh. Now I know that Yahweh is greater than all other gods’” (“The Arm of God Versus the Arm of Pharaoh in the Exodus Narratives,” *Biblica*, volume 67.3 [1986], p. 387).

Because Yahweh defeated Pharaoh, Jethro concludes that Yahweh is the greatest of all gods. This clearly shows the connection an ancient person would make between the earthly ruler and the divine authorities.

So, in the divine realm, you have more than one king, more than one ruler. There is a hierarchal structure. The earthly kings and rulers are under the authority of

divine beings and extensions of that authority. References to "rulers" or "kings" (Malkim) can and often do have this hierarchal structure in view.

## **Isaiah 14 & Ezekiel 28**

I think we all realize this, but we may not "realize" that we "realize" it. Think about Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28, the "Lucifer" passages. To whom are these passages addressed? In Isaiah, it is the "king of Babylon" (Isaiah 14:4). In Ezekiel, it is the "prince of Tyre" (Ezekiel 28:2) and then the "king of Tyre" (Ezekiel 28:12).

In both of these passages, the imagery seems to oscillate back and forth between a human figure and a divine being. This has sparked much debate on which it really is: Human or Divine?

In Ezekiel 28, for example, we see statements like: "You are a man, and not God" (vs. 2) and "You will die death of the uncircumcised" (vs. 10) which sounds like a human being.

Yet, in verses 14 and 16, he is called "the anointed cherub" and the "covering cherub" which sounds like a divine being and "He walks in the midst of "the stones of fire" (vs. 16). As Michael Heiser says, "stones of fire" are "stock descriptions of divine beings in the ancient world" (NBP 143, Transcript, p. 8).

Interestingly, Ezekiel 28:13 says of the "prince" or "king" of Tyre: (NASB) "You were in Eden, the garden of God; Every precious stone was your covering: The ruby, the topaz and the diamond; The beryl, the onyx and the jasper; The lapis lazuli, the turquoise and the emerald; And the gold, the workmanship of your settings and sockets, was in you. On the day that you were created They were prepared."

The precious stones represent stars which in turn represent divinity. According to DDD, the clothing of the national god of Tyre, MELQART, was in fact "brightly decorated with the stars" (p. 564). Again, the target of the imagery seems to be a divine being.

But, twice in the passage, it speaks of the "prince" or "king" of Tyre increasing his riches through trade (vv. 5 & 18). This would certainly seem to point to the physical, earthly, human realm.

And, in fact, history informs us that The Phoenician city of Tyre experienced tremendous commercial success due to its trading practices. There was a certain shell fish on the sea coast of Tyre from which a crimson dye could be made. You could only get it there, and this dye was in high demand in the ancient world (Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible, Vol. 5, p. 834).

Also interesting: Tyre had a trade history with Israel. Back in Solomon's time, Tyre had provided Israel with all the timber and gold necessary to build the Lord's House (1 Kings 5:8; 9:11). In exchange, Solomon provided the King of Tyre, Hiram, with wheat and oil for 20 years and gave up 20 cities in the land of Galilee to him (1 Kings 5:11; 9:10-11).

In short, the city of Tyre was known for its shrewd business dealings and accumulation of wealth through trade.

So, we can definitely see how the imagery of Ezekiel 28 shifts back and forth between the human realm and the divine realm and Isaiah 14 is much the same.

So, which is it? Do these passages address human beings or divine beings? The answer is... both. The only reason we don't see this is because we're modern people and not ancient people. As Handy's research bears out, an ancient person would have had no problem seeing the hierarchical structure, from divine to human, packed into the term used for "king" in these passages. The back and forth shift, from divine being to human being, would not have been an issue for an ancient person of any culture.

To quote Heiser again: "That whole way of thinking is not contrived. It's something that an ancient Israelite or an ancient Canaanite would have been quite familiar with. It would have been just part of their worldview but we miss that because we're modern. We don't have that stuff in the can, so to speak. We don't have it floating around in our heads" (NBP 176, Transcript, p.21).

So, to be clear, I'm not arguing that Psalm 110:5 cannot be referring to earthly, human kings. It can and most likely is but that's not all it's referring to. There is a human element and a supernatural element packed into these ancient terms for rulership and Paul is definitely tracking on the supernatural side of the equation in 1 Corinthians 15.

Yes, there are going to be human participants because that's how these things play out in time and on earth but the human participants are merely secondary. They are coincidental to the true enemy and/or enemies of Yahweh.

## **Revelation 16:13-16**

Perhaps the clearest expression of this is Revelation 16:13-16, describing God's enemies preparing for the Battle of Armageddon: "And I saw coming out of the mouth of the dragon and out of the mouth of the beast and out of the mouth of the false prophet, three unclean spirits like frogs; for they are spirits of demons, performing signs, which go out to the kings of the whole world, to gather them together for the war of the great day of God, the Almighty... And they gathered them together to the place which in Hebrew is called Har-Magedon."

In Revelation 16 you can clearly see that there were human or earthly “kings” involved but they were merely the pawns, the chess pieces, being used and moved by the dragon, the beast and the false prophet — and the demonic forces sent forth from them. The real enemies, the true enemies, were spiritual. They were rebellious Elohim (residents of the spiritual realm) and demonic forces. They were “false gods.” Not “false” in the sense that they didn’t exist but “false” in the sense that they wanted to usurp the authority of the supreme god.

Jewish monotheism didn’t mean they denied the existence of other gods. It meant that they worshiped only their God, Yahweh. As Micah 4:5 puts it, “Though all the peoples walk each in the name of his god, as for us, we walk in the name of Yahweh Our God.”

### **Paul’s Monotheism**

Paula Frederickson, from the Hebrew University in Jerusalem, reminds us: “Modern scholars habitually describe Paul as a ‘monotheist’, and they are right to. But Paul is an ancient monotheist. This means that, while Paul’s allegiance is firmly fastened on the god of Israel as the highest and most powerful god, Paul is perfectly aware of other gods as well. Unlike Philo, Paul is not courteous toward or about these gods: in fact, he insults them and he wants pagans to have nothing to do with them. These gods represent Paul’s cosmic opposition, and he looks forward to the day of their defeat” (Judaizing the Nations: The Ritual Demands of Paul’s Gospel, p. 240).

That’s what 1 Corinthians 15:24-26 is about: Jesus abolishing the rule, power and authority that these false gods had over the other nations and opening the way for all people, Jew and Gentile alike, to serve the true and living God. Jesus came when He said He would, during the lifetime of the first century generation. He stormed the Gates of Hades and opened the way to heaven and He has freed all people from their enslavement to false gods, making Heaven a reality for Jew and Gentile alike forever.

### **All Enemies Defeated**

Jesus’ defeat of these rulers, authorities and powers has resulted in “visible change in the world.” When’s the last time you met a Baal-worshiper? Think about Paul in Acts 17 walking through the city of Athens and observing all the idols to the false gods that were everywhere. When’s the last time you visited a city like that?

These gods are ancient history – both literally and figuratively. Their reign has come to an “end.” He has abolished their rule, their power and their authority. His enemies have been made a footstool under His feet!

<https://burrosofberea.com/identifying-christs-enemies-in-1-corinthians-1524-26/>

**VIDEO:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jNwX4i9cbFs>

**2 Thessalonians 2:1** Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our being gathered together to him, we ask you, brothers,

**2 Thessalonians 2:2** not to be quickly shaken in mind or alarmed, either by a spirit or a spoken word, or a letter seeming to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.

In 2 Thessalonians 2, we are introduced to the man of lawlessness, also called the lawless one and the son of perdition. To many modern Christians, Paul is describing a modern figure, using modern technology, in order to unleash mayhem on the modern-day world. To those who strive to place a high priority on the original context of the passage and its historical setting, Paul is describing an ancient figure during ancient times who unleashed mayhem on the ancient world of first-century Israel.

The road that each approach takes diverges from the start, and never the two shall meet. The first approach has little if anything to do with the text itself or the time in which it was written, while the second approach has everything to do with both. Comparing and contrasting these two divergent views demonstrates the need to understand the Bible in the context of its own time, rather than ours.

## **The Day of the Lord**

The mystery of the lawless one (2 Thess. 2:7-8) comes to us amidst Paul's attempt to correct the mistaken notion that the Day of the Lord had already come (2 Thess. 2:2). In and of itself, this is evidence enough to dispel the prevailing notion that the Day of the Lord is a world-ending event. For example, according to Pastor Paul Begley, host of The Coming Apocalypse: "the earth will explode... the Bible predicts it"[2] In light of 2 Thessalonians 2:2, however, this doesn't make much sense at all.

If Jesus were coming back to obliterate the planet, how could anyone have possibly thought it had already happened? More to the point, answering the Thessalonians' misunderstanding would have been easy for Paul. The Thessalonians were still there, Paul himself was still there, and the planet hadn't blown up yet. In other words, Paul could have simply pointed out the obvious and called it a day.

<https://burrosofberea.com/unraveling-the-mystery-of-the-lawless-one-part-one/>

**2 Thessalonians 2:3** Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction,

Paul proceeds to delineate several things that must happen first – before the Day

of the Lord arrives. According to Paul, there would be an “apostasy” or “rebellion,” and then “the man of lawlessness” would be “revealed” (2 Thess. 2:3).

## **The Rebellion**

Regarding this rebellion, Paul says, “Let no one deceive you in any way. For that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first...” (2 Thess. 2:3a). The word for “rebellion” is apostasia, and it carries the ideas of:

- \* defiance
- \* rebellion
- \* abandonment
- \* a breach of faith or betrayal.[6]

The Zealot movement checks all four boxes with regard to the meaning of apostasia. The Zealots were defiant. They orchestrated a rebellion. They abandoned their own people. And like all first-century Jews who rejected their Messiah (i.e., Jesus), they breached the true faith of Yahweh and betrayed their own God. Every nuance of the word is captured in the Zealot uprising in first-century Israel.

## **The Son of Perdition**

Paul tells his readers that “the man of lawlessness will be revealed” in conjunction with this “rebellion” and, as noted above, refers to him as “the son of perdition” (2 Thess. 2:3b). Like Judas, the lawless one’s actions are “in accord with the activity of Satan” (2 Thess. 2:9). Satan would use the lawless one just as he had used Judas. Judas set the events of the crucifixion in motion. Once God allowed Satan to be released to jump start the war, the Zealots would likewise become his tool to set that in motion as well.

<https://burrosofberea.com/unraveling-the-mystery-of-the-lawless-one-part-one/>

**2 Thessalonians 2:4** who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God.

## **Displaying Himself as God**

Paul informs his readers that this lawless one “opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself as being God” (2 Thess. 2:4). Since some translations use the word “proclaiming” instead of “displaying,” many interpreters understand this to mean that “the man of lawlessness promotes himself in place of God Almighty as the central deity to be worshiped.”[7] As popular as this approach may be, however, the idea that the lawless one would make claims to deity isn’t really required by the text.

As Daniel E. Harden points out, "It wasn't necessary for the Man of Lawlessness to proclaim in words that he is God or a god. Nor is the word 'proclaim' actually in the verse. The word *apodeiknumi* is better understood in terms of display, exhibit, demonstrate. It is indicative of what his actions amount to, not his words. He doesn't need to openly proclaim himself as God to fulfill this verse. He only needs to go someplace that only God and/or God's representative is allowed to go. Actions speak louder than words. By merely sitting down in the temple of God, he demonstrates his intentions." [8]

Likewise, Fr. Stephen De Young observes: "In the ancient world, to sit when in someone's presence, rather than standing, was to treat that person as an equal or inferior. This is an idiomatic way of stating that he places himself as God's equal." [9]

With this in mind, the authorities in the temple were said to have "seated [10] themselves in the chair of Moses" (Matt. 23:2). One is immediately reminded of Exodus 4:16, where God tells Moses that he would be "as God" to Aaron. Prior to the Zealot rebellion, the rightful Jewish leaders held this seat of authority. "Those usurping the role of Moses," writes Kim Burgess, "would then be assuming this role of being 'as God'." [11] Rather than pointing to some futuristic incarnation of a false god, this points directly to first-century Israel and the Zealots' takeover of the temple. "The context returns things to the Jewish category," continues Burgess, "and therefore the apostate Judas figure in 2:3." [12]

<https://burrosofberea.com/unraveling-the-mystery-of-the-lawless-one-part-one/>

**2 Thessalonians 2:6** And you know what is restraining him now so that he may be revealed in his time.

Once the restrainer (the legitimate priesthood) was taken out of the way, the lawless Zealots would be revealed and the rebellion against Rome would begin. Amid all the action, many Jewish converts to Christianity would revert back to Judaism and renounce their belief in Jesus as the Messiah. These are the Antichrists of whom John spoke (1 John 2:18, 22; 4:3; and 2 John 1:7). [20]

<https://burrosofberea.com/the-rapture-its-no-secret-anymore-so-whos-going-to-buy-the-antichrists-lure/>

**2 Thessalonians 2:7** For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work. Only he who now restrains it will do so until he is out of the way.

The "mystery of lawlessness" was "already at work" when Paul wrote, but a "restrainer" was holding the "lawless one" back (2 Thess. 2:6-7). Once the "restrainer" was removed, the "lawless one" would be unleashed (2 Thess. 2:6).

### **The Mystery of Lawlessness Already at Work**

Paul says that the "mystery of lawlessness" was "already at work" (2 Thess. 2:7)

when he wrote the letter. Charlie Bing of Grace Life Ministries[13] claims that "Paul was looking to a future event that we now know was at least 19-hundred years from the time of Paul's writing." [14] A red flag should immediately go up in the reader's mind when he/she reads a statement like this. This is especially the case since Bing tries to tie the mystery of lawlessness to modern-day AI technology. To belabor the obvious, AI technology did not exist 1900 years ago. In its current form, it didn't even exist 19 years ago. To unravel the mystery of lawlessness, we must look to something that was happening in the Thessalonians' own day and age rather than ours.

As Gary DeMar writes, "The time texts, the present restraining, and the 'mystery of lawlessness already at work,' restricts the passage's time of fulfillment to the first century." [15] With this in mind, "the Zealot movement" began "gaining steam" when "Hezekiah the Zealot rose up in 47 BC." [16] This coincides nicely with 2 Thessalonians, written around 51 AD. [17] With the Zealot movement seemingly on the rise (wars and rumors of war, so to speak), it's feasible that the Thessalonians could have thought that everything was already being fulfilled. Nonetheless, the restrainer hadn't been taken out of the way yet. Paul was writing to tell them not to jump the gun, that it was far too early.

## **The Restrainer**

In verses 5-7, Paul says the restrainer who was curtailing the lawless one's ability to rise to power would do so only until he was taken out of the way" (2 Thess. 2:5-7). This naturally raises the question, "Who or what is the restrainer?"

## **The Restrainer as the Holy Spirit?**

For the Dispensationalist, the restrainer is, specifically, the Holy Spirit. This was the view of John Nelson Darby as well as John Walvoord. [18] When the Church is removed in the Rapture, the Holy Spirit's restraining power goes with it. This, however, creates a huge loose end that cannot be tied up. Even those of this persuasion recognize the glaring problem here. For example, Phillip J. Long writes, "...the Old Testament very clearly indicates that the Holy Spirit will be active in the tribulation (Joel 2, for example.) If he is removed at the beginning of the Tribulation, how can he be 'poured out' as Joel predicts?" [19]

Long's answer to this seeming dilemma amounts to somewhat of an equivocation: "Therefore it is best to conclude that the Restrainer [sic] power is God, through the Holy Spirit and the positive effects of the preached Gospel. The Spirit is active in the world as a preserving agent, a ministry that will end at the time of the Rapture, allowing the events of the tribulation to unfold." [20] It's unclear in what way this solves the problem of how the Holy Spirit can be both absent and active at the same time.

## **The Restrainer as the Legitimate Priesthood**

Adam Maarschalk offers several insightful observations on the historical situation at the time that point to the restrainer as "...collectively, the Jewish high priests who led the peace movement in Jerusalem." [21]

According to Maarschalk: "Josephus, in Wars of the Jews, wrote a great deal about how they were a thorn in the side of the Zealots, at times preventing the Zealots from fully doing as they pleased. When the Jewish-Roman War began in AD 66, this peace movement was led by Ananus ben Ananus and Jesus ben Gamaliel. Their long speeches against the Zealots can be seen in Wars 4.3.10 and Wars 4.4.3. Josephus said that Ananus 'preferred peace above all things,' was 'a shrewd man in speaking and persuading the people,' and 'had already gotten the mastery of those who opposed his designs or were for the war' (Wars 4.5.2)." [22]

Ananus and Jesus were both killed, along with the other priests, during the Zealot siege of the temple. [23] At that point, the restrainer was completely "taken out of the way." Their deaths marked a significant turning point for the fate of Jerusalem according to Josephus.

Josephus writes, "I should not mistake if I said that the death of Ananus was the beginning of the destruction of the city, and that from this very day may be dated the overthrow of her wall, and the ruin of her affairs, whereon they saw their high priest, and the procurer of their preservation, slain in the midst of their city... to say all in a word, if Ananus had survived they had certainly compounded matters... And the Jews had then put abundance of delays in the way of the Romans, if they had had such a general as he was" (Wars 4.5.2). [24]

In another place, Josephus says that Ananus "perhaps would have saved the city if he could but have escaped the hands of those that plotted against him. Those men who made the temple of God a stronghold for themselves..." [25] In the end, the city was not saved because the one who "perhaps" could have done it was taken out of the way.

None of this is to say that the legitimate priesthood itself wasn't corrupt. They certainly weren't friends to the believer as they were the very ones who delivered Jesus over to Pilate to be crucified (Matt. 27:21-22). Additionally, they were responsible for the continued persecution of His followers. Nonetheless, during the infighting within first-century Judaism, the rightful priesthood and lawful leadership were sharply at odds with the Zealots and their thirst for revolution. Once the official Jewish leadership was taken out of the way, there was no longer anything to stand in the Zealots' way.

<https://burrosofberea.com/unraveling-the-mystery-of-the-lawless-one-part-one/>

**2 Thessalonians 2:8** And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord Jesus will kill with the breath of his mouth and bring to nothing by the appearance of his coming.

**Isaiah 11:4** But with righteousness He shall judge the poor, And decide with equity for the meek of the earth; He shall strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, And with the breath of His lips He shall slay the wicked.

### **Slain With the Breath of His Mouth**

Paul says that the lawless one will be slain with the breath of the Lord's mouth at the appearance of His coming (2 Thess. 2:8). Anyone familiar with the Old Testament (which Paul would have expected his readers to be) will recognize this as poetic language for divine judgment. For instance, Isaiah says, "But with righteousness He will judge the poor, and decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth; And He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, And with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked" (Isa. 11:4). Taken literally, this language is borderline cartoonish. Taken for what it's meant to be, it's brilliant Biblical imagery.

A good example, demonstrating that this type of language is symbolic and metaphorical, can be found in 2 Samuel 22. In context, David is offering praise on "the day that the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies and from the hand of Saul" (2 Sam. 22:1). In conjunction with this deliverance, David describes the Lord as follows: "Smoke went up out of His nostrils, fire from His mouth devoured; coals were kindled by it. He bowed the heavens and came down, with thick darkness under His feet" (2 Sam. 22:9-10).

It's essential to understand that none of this literally happened, but God did in fact literally deliver David from the hand of his enemies. In the same way, the Lord would literally deal with the Zealots and all the apostate Jews who rejected the Messiah. In 2 Thessalonians 2:8, Paul is using vivid language like that of the Old Testament to express this. The man of lawlessness wouldn't literally be slain by God's breath any more than Saul was literally slain by fire from God's mouth. Another example would be Isaiah 11:4, "And He will strike the earth with the rod of His mouth, and with the breath of His lips He will slay the wicked." This is simply standard judgment language that is quite powerful when we allow Paul's words to be what they were meant to be. Slain With the Breath of His Mouth  
<https://burrosofberea.com/unraveling-the-mystery-of-the-lawless-one-part-two/>

**2 Thessalonians 2:9** The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders,  
**2 Thessalonians 2:10** and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved.

### **False Signs and Wonders**

Verses 9-10 say that the "lawless" one will use false signs and wonders to deceive

those who were perishing and did not receive the truth so as to be “saved.” This ties in perfectly with Jesus’ words in the Olivet Discourse. He speaks of “lawlessness” increasing and says that “the one who endures to the end” would “be saved” (Matt. 24:12-13). Then Jesus says, “therefore” (meaning: because of what I just told you), those in Judea were to “flee to the mountains” (Matt. 24:15) when they saw Jerusalem “surrounded by armies” (Lk. 21:20-21; Matt. 24:15-16). Jesus was adamant: those in the midst of the city needed to leave, and those outside the city needed to stay out (Lk. 21:21).

In stark contrast to this, the Zealots were rallying the people to stay and fight. In their insane delusion, they actually believed they could somehow defeat Rome. According to Josephus, there “was a great number of false prophets” who implored the people to “wait on deliverance from God” in order “to keep them from deserting” the city.”[2] These were the very “false prophets” whom Jesus said would “arise and mislead many” (Matt. 24:11).

According to Jesus, these false teachers would “perform signs and wonders, to lead astray, if possible, even the elect” (Mark 13:14-22). The situation is summed up well in a Ligonier Ministries’ post: “Jesus warned that once the Romans invaded the city, many false teachers would implore them not to flee to the mountains. Instead, these preachers of error would try to deceive Christ’s disciples, calling them to follow after other people who professed to be the Messiah.”[3] The Zealots portrayed themselves as the true liberators who would deliver them from Rome. They were wrong. Jesus was right. As history bears out, the city was decimated.

Josephus tells of a false prophet “who had made a public proclamation in the city...that God commanded them to get up upon the temple, and that there they should receive miraculous signs of their deliverance.”[4] That deliverance never came. The only ones who were delivered were the ones who heeded Jesus’ words and fled to the mountains. Despite all their “signs and wonders,” the Zealots could not withstand the Roman onslaught in the end.

Gary DeMar sums it up well, making the connection with Paul’s words in 2 Thessalonians: “Eschatological expectation intensified as Jerusalem’s war with Rome came to a head. Many believed that the Messiah would return to deliver them. False prophets took advantage of this spurious expectation and deceived many. God had sent them ‘a deluding influence so that they might believe what is false in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness’ (2 Thess. 2:11-12). This passage parallels 1 Kings 22:19-22 where Ahab is enticed to go up and fall at Ramoth-Gilead. In like manner, first-century Israel was enticed to go up and fight against the Romans and fall at Jerusalem.”[5]

<https://burrosofberea.com/unraveling-the-mystery-of-the-lawless-one-part-two/>

## **Parallels with Revelation 20**

The sequence of events in 2 Thessalonians 2 runs a close parallel to Revelation 20.[3] Paul and John both speak of a restraint and a release of evil connected with "deception." This three-fold theme of restraint, release, and deception is loud and clear in the words of both passages. In Revelation 20, the restraint, release, and deception are specifically linked to Satan's ability to gather the nations together for "the war" (Rev. 20:8). In God's sovereignty, Satan is not allowed to commence this war prematurely.

While the popular approach of our day views this war as the final war of mankind's history, this seems unlikely given the time of writing. With a major war looming on the horizon when John wrote, that being the Roman-Jewish War, it's difficult to imagine that his readers would have thought of any other war than the one they were about to witness, experience, and see with their own eyes during their own time. It's hard to believe that John was expecting them to imagine some other war thousands of years in the future. With the growing unrest among the Jews in Judea and Asia Minor, one wonders what possible relevance a far distant and unrelated conflict could have even had to the original audience.

With that said, the Roman-Jewish War was largely triggered by a Zealot-lead rebellion in Judea against Rome. The Zealots were kept at bay for the most part as long as the legitimate priesthood remained in power. Once the true priesthood was removed, all hell broke loose. Josephus refers to the Zealots as the "seditious" party who "excited the people to go to war,"[4] while "the high priests" were "part of the multitude that were desirous of peace." [5] Generally speaking, there were two competing factions trying to sway the populace in Jerusalem. One side was pushing to maintain peace with Rome while the other side was pushing for war.

Looping this in with 2 Thessalonians 2, the restrainer had to be taken out of the way before the lawless one was set free to cause total havoc. Given the historical context of the time, the lawful priest and/or priesthood looks to be a good candidate for the restrainer, while the man of lawlessness was most likely a Zealot leader and/or the Zealot movement itself.

This coincides with Revelation 20 in that the Zealots would have been the tool that Satan used to set the events in motion that would escalate the war. Paul tips his readers off to this by calling the man of lawlessness "the son of perdition" (2 Thess. 2:3) and noting that his "coming" is "by the activity of Satan" (2 Thess. 2:9). The only other time the term "the son of perdition" appears in Scripture is in conjunction with Judas (John 17:12), who was used by Satan. It's hard to avoid the conclusion that Paul and John were tracking on the same theme.

Revelation 20 and 2 Thessalonians 2 appear to fit together perfectly, and both are a perfect fit for the events leading up to and including the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. In other words, the rebellion in 2 Thessalonians 2 is

intrinsically connected to the war in Revelation 20.

<https://burrosofberea.com/unraveling-the-mystery-of-the-lawless-one-part-one/>

**2 Thessalonians 2:11** Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false,

**2 Thessalonians 2:12** in order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

## **A Deluding Influence**

The popular approach of our day completely removes Paul's words from their historical context and catapults them into the far-distant future. For today's pop-prophecy pundits, the "deluding influence" of 2 Thessalonian 2:11 has nothing to do with first-century Israel, the Romans, or the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70, and everything to do with the end of the world and modern technology.

Specifically, today's prophecy speculators attempt to link Paul's words, written in the first century, to twenty-first century artificial intelligence. For example, Paul Begley claims that "AI technology" is "becoming part of the biblical narrative" of "the last days"[6] Charlie Bing of Grace Life Ministries,[7] concurs: "AI has changed our world in the last few decades and it will have a huge impact on the future as we approach what Jesus called 'the end.'"[8]

Bing spends a considerable amount of time discussing the concept of the "metaverse,"[9] a term coined by Neal Stephenson in his 1992 novel, *Snow Crash*. An updated version of the "metaverse" would be the concept of a "virtual reality," popularized in the *Matrix* movies. "The fact that Facebook (Meta) and other tech giants are involved in developing and promoting the 'Metaverse,'" says Bing, "may propel its acceptance by billions of 'users' around the world." [10]

For Bing, the "lawless one" (whom he equates with the Antichrist) will use this "metaverse" to lie to the world about the Rapture, deceiving people into believing that it never took place. He writes, "The lie the 'lawless one' will tell, I believe, is how millions of people living on earth disappeared in the 'twinkling of an eye.' If billions of people live in or are influenced by a virtual, augmented 'Metaverse,' an imaginary computerized world, believing the lie of how those people disappeared would seem easier than we might imagine... What will happen is what God says in His Word. The 'lawless one' (Antichrist) will lie and the world will believe him." [11]

While this makes for an exciting story line on the big screen of our own day and age, one must ask himself/herself what possible relevance it would have had for the very people to whom Paul was writing in their day and age. Believers need to ditch the *Matrix* theology that undergirds this approach and take the red pill of biblical reality. This is a reality that recognizes the fact that Paul was writing to real people living almost two thousand years ago. As such, he was writing in real time about real events and circumstances that were pertinent to them and their

current situation. The imaginative scenarios created by Bing and others would be meaningless and pointless to the Thessalonian believers receiving his letter so long ago.

Ironically, the modern-day sensationalist approach to Bible prophecy has become its own “deluding influence” that “hinders” the true meaning of the text from being “revealed.” This approach acts as its own “restrainer,” which needs to be “removed” if we’re ever going to see the text for what it truly is.

## **The Text in Context**

Taking the text in context, the picture we get is not one of the modern world, modern technology or a soon to come modern war. It is a picture of a world that was on the cusp of a very different war – a now ancient war (from our vantage point) that would change redemptive history forever.

Once the Romans leveled the temple during the Roman-Jewish War, it would become evident to all that salvation was not to be found in the types and shadows of the Old Covenant system. The temple that housed that system would be reduced to rubble, and Old Covenant Judaism would be nothing more than debris left in the ruins. When that happened, the claims of Christ would be validated for all to see (Matt. 24:2, 34). For that to happen, however, certain events had to unfold first.

In Paul’s second letter to the Thessalonians, he was writing to remedy the Thessalonians’ misguided notions regarding the sequence of these events. Careful attention to what he was telling the Thessalonians, in the context of their own time, will remedy many mistaken notions in our own time.

## **Concluding Remarks and Further Resources**

Like so many other prophetic portions of Scripture, the mystery of the man of lawlessness remains a mystery for so many believers today. As such, these passages hold God’s people back from fulfilling their God-ordained purpose in this world. Most Christians today are waiting for certain events to transpire – events that in reality transpired thousands of years ago. Interpreting already-fulfilled prophecy as yet-unfulfilled continues to be the biggest stumbling block preventing us from actively making a difference in this world. Our passage here has been one of the more sizable of these stumbling blocks for too long now.

As one writer puts it, 2 Thessalonians 2 is “the weirdest piece of writing in all the epistles and has never been satisfactorily explained.”[12] In reality, it has been adequately explained in several works. The reader is encouraged to access these materials for more specific details regarding the circumstances and personages that coincide with what Paul is writing about in 2 Thessalonians 2. While details will differ on some minor points here and there, the overarching theme of past

fulfillment is common to all.

**Chapters 22-23 of Last Days Madness, by Gary DeMar.[13]**

**"II Thessalonians 2 and the Man of Lawlessness," by Adam Maarschalk. [14]**

**"Preterist Paper 20: Man of Sin (theory)," and "Preterist Paper 31: Man of Sin part 2 (Theory)," by Patricia Bailey. [15]**

**The Man of Sin of II Thessalonians 2, by Evangelist John L. Bray.[16]**

**"Abomination, Rebellion, and Lawlessness," "Who Was the Man of Lawlessness?" and "Outbreak of Rebellion – the Real History," by Edward E. Stevens.[17]**

**The following sermons, by Pastor David B. Curtis, are especially helpful:**

**THE REBELLION AND MAN OF LAWLESSNESS[18]**

**THE RESTRAINER[19]**

**SATAN AND THE MAN OF LAWLESSNESS[20]**

<https://burrosofberea.com/unraveling-the-mystery-of-the-lawless-one-part-two/>

**Hebrews 1:5** For to which of the angels did God ever say, "You are my Son, today I have begotten you"? Or again, "I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son"?

The NT usage of Psalm 2:7, "Thou art my Son, today I have begotten thee" (Heb. 1:5), equates this declaration to the time when Jesus was raised from the dead (Acts 13:33). And the context of Hebrews retains this usage.

As Jared M. Compton observes: in Hebrews 1:5-14, "the author explains why the son's resurrection makes him greater than angels. The sum: with his resurrection, the son has received the status that was reserved for David's true heir, Israel's long-awaited messiah, a status that far outstrips anything angels had ever received." Compton then cites numerous scholarly sources which concur with the idea that "the introductory formula in v. 6 refers to the son's exaltation and not his incarnation."

<https://burrosofberea.com/oikoumene-in-hebrews-16/>

**Hebrews 1:6** And again, when he brings the firstborn into the world, he says, "Let all God's angels worship him."

Oikouméne denotes the inhabited world and then comes into use for the Roman

empire. In Philo it has primarily a general rather than a political sense. It is fairly common in the NT. In Mt. 24:14 the use is general; the gospel is for all nations. In Lk. 2:1, however, the reference is more political. The inhabited world is the point in Lk. 4:5 (Mt. 4:8 has *kósmos*) and Lk. 21:26 (cf. Acts 11:28; Rev. 3:10). Acts 17:6 and 19:27 are in accord with current Greek usage. Paul uses the term only in quoting Ps. 19:4 (Rom. 10:18). Heb. 1:6 and 2:5, however, reflect Hellenistic usage. The NT never contests the Roman claim that equates the *oikouméne* with the empire. 1 Clement 60.1 perhaps includes the spiritual and angelic world in the concept. [O. MICHEL, V, 119-59]."

Understanding *oikouméne* in light of its common Hellenistic usage at the time, in Hebrews 1:6, makes perfect sense considering the royal flavor of the context. Commenting on the Writer to the Hebrews' intention in this regard with respect to this verse's surrounding context, Amy B. Peller writes: "He draws from a small group of texts in which God designates himself as the Father of the king (Pss. 2:7; 88.28 LXX; 109.3 LXX; 2 Sam. 7.14; 1 Chr. 17.13; 22.10; 28.6). He cites two of these and alludes to a third (Ps. 88.28 LXX) in the introduction to the quotation in Heb. 1.6...This verse is similar to the other quotations in that God designates the king as his child."

The verse speaks of bringing the first-born into the world, and it would be tempting to simply relegate the reference to the incarnation. Of course, this is not historically inaccurate. Jesus was in fact born into the Hellenistic world of the Roman Empire. However, the NT usage of Psalm 2:7, "Thou art my Son, today I have begotten thee" (Heb. 1:5), equates this declaration to the time when Jesus was raised from the dead (Acts 13:33). And the context of Hebrews retains this usage.

As Jared M. Compton observes: in Hebrews 1:5-14, "the author explains why the son's resurrection makes him greater than angels. The sum: with his resurrection, the son has received the status that was reserved for David's true heir, Israel's long-awaited messiah, a status that far outstrips anything angels had ever received." Compton then cites numerous scholarly sources which concur with the idea that "the introductory formula in v. 6 refers to the son's exaltation and not his incarnation."

Considering the thematic context of Hebrews 1:6, i.e., Christ's enthronement as king, the usage of *oikouméne*, rather than *kosmos* (as in Heb. 4:3; 9:26; 10:5, 11:7, 38), makes perfect sense. The writer chose his words carefully and for a specific purpose. He chose a word associated with the imperial empire to convey the regal and royal context of Jesus' exaltation to kingship. Upon His resurrection from the dead, He achieved the status of the king of God's new *oikouméne*. Hence even in Hebrews 1:6, *oikouméne* retains its normal meaning reflective of the time period in which the NT was written.

<https://burrosofberea.com/oikoumene-in-hebrews-16/>

**1 Peter 2:9** But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

According to 1 Peter 2:9, we are now that Holy Nation (Jews and Gentiles alike). And, the land we inherit isn't just the land of Canaan anymore. Holy Ground isn't restricted to the Land of Israel. God has dissolved those boundaries, reclaimed the disinherited nations, and defeated their gods. That's part of what's "new" about the "New Heavens and New Earth."

<https://burrosofberea.com/dirt-and-dominion/>

**2 Peter 3:8** But do not overlook this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.

### **Playing the 2 Peter 3 Card**

When faced with the time texts and the reality of the past fulfillment of much New Testament prophecy, futurists routinely flee to 2 Peter 3. While there are over 100 time statements in the New Testament anticipating the imminent realization of these prophecies, 2 Peter 3:8-9 is somehow the trump card with which these 100+ time indicators are all rendered null and void.

Some of these time indicators use terms such as "near," "shortly" and "quickly" to designate when the prophesied events would happen. Common sense would seem to dictate that such terminology is simply incompatible with a lapse of almost 2,000 years or more. This incompatibility only gets worse as the lapse increases and the New Testament prophecies supposedly continue to fail to materialize.

In response to this, futurists will often point out that Peter says "a thousand years is as one day" to the Lord (2 Peter 3:8). As the reasoning goes, something that seems like a long time to us (a thousand years) is actually a short period of time (one day) to God. For example, one person comments: "Read 2nd Peter 3:8. We see through a human perspective. God is not a human and is not subject to time in the same way as we humans are. From a heavenly perspective, it's been less than 2 days." [1]

The problem with this logic is that the first half of the verse is always overlooked. Not only is "a thousand years as one day" to the Lord, but it is equally true "that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years." In this case, something that seems like a short period of time to us (one day) is said to be a long period of time (a thousand years) to God, rather than vice versa.

If we plug this variable into the same equation, it hasn't "been less than 2 days" from "a heavenly perspective," it's been almost 730,000 (365 x 2000) years! In this case, Jesus' coming should have happened even sooner than we would expect and would be long past overdue. This is especially the case since He

Himself said it would happen before that generation passed away (Matt. 24:34) and before the last disciple died (Matt. 16:28). The first half of the verse doesn't work in the futurists' favor, and this probably accounts for why they routinely ignore it.

## **Can God Tell Time?**

In his excellent little booklet, *Can God Tell Time?*, Don K. Preston asks the question: "Can God communicate understandably with His creation, or does He speak in purposely ambiguous ways? Does the Lord hold out a carrot stick of imminent blessings to His hurting creation while knowing all the time He is not really going to bring the promises soon? Did God constantly threaten nations with imminent judgment, and not punish them for centuries? Where then is the reality of the threat to the wicked? Does God's transcendence over time prevent him from speaking to man in words that convey genuine nearness?"[2]

The reality is that while God is not bound by space, time or matter, He communicates to those of us who are on our own level. For example, with regard to the timing of the Jews' return from Babylon, God doesn't parse heavenly time vs. earthly time or divine time vs. human time. Jeremiah says:

"Then I spoke to the priests and to all this people, saying, 'Thus says the Lord: Do not listen to the words of your prophets who prophesy to you, saying, 'Behold, the vessels of the Lord's house will now shortly be brought again from Babylon'; for they are prophesying a lie to you (Jer. 27:16).

Why were the false prophets "prophesying a lie" when they said the vessels would "shortly" be brought back from Babylon? Because it wouldn't happen for another 70 years!

"For they prophesy falsely to you in My name; I have not sent them," declares the Lord. For thus says the Lord, 'When seventy years have been completed for Babylon, I will visit you and fulfill My good word to you, to bring you back to this place' (Jer. 29:9-10).

If the popular approach to 2 Peter 3:8 is correct, the false prophets in Jeremiah's day could have used the same reasoning and responded by saying, "Wait a minute, Jeremiah. We weren't 'lying' when we used the word 'shortly.' Don't you know that a thousand years is like a day to the Lord? This being the case, a mere seventy years is nothing to Him! We were speaking from a 'heavenly perspective,' not a human perspective." If this was really Peter's intent in the New Testament, wouldn't the same logic apply in Old Testament times as well? Did Jeremiah not get the memo that time works differently for God? Didn't he know the word "shortly" is essentially meaningless?

Additionally, if it was a "lie" to say something would happen "shortly," with regard

to a 70-year time period, how much more so would it be a "lie" for John in Revelation if almost 2,000 have passed and the events he predicted remain unfulfilled? The truth is that God can in fact tell time, and He can and does communicate with humans on a human level – as Jeremiah demonstrates. The fact that He himself is timeless (as Peter states) does not negate the fact that His time statements in the Bible are meant to be understood in real time, in human terms. The Scriptures cannot be broken, Peter and Jeremiah are not at odds with each other, and John was not "prophesying a lie" when he said the events would happen "shortly."

As Preston writes elsewhere: "Peter's purpose in 2 Peter 3:8 is not to imply God is not honest in his usage of chronological language. His only purpose is to reassure his readers that whether God promises something is imminent or whether He says it is in the misty future, He will keep His promises. God is faithful! He does not deceive His creation when He speaks to them. What He promises, He will perform, no matter how difficult the task, or the time involved to perform it." [3] As it is, however, many have a completely different view of what "Peter's purpose" was.

### **Does Peter Flip Flop?**

Conservative scholars give a date of AD 63-64 for 1 Peter [7] and AD 64-66 for 2 Peter. [8] At most, Peter's two letters were written 3 years apart and they may have been written within a year of each other. With this in mind, Peter's first letter contains intense expectations that are certainly no less as strong as the words of Jesus Himself in the Gospels.

Peter spoke of a "salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (I Pt. 1:6) He tells his readers that Jesus "has appeared in these last times for the sake of you." (I Pt. 1:20). According to Peter, Jesus was "ready to judge the living and the dead." (I Pt 4:5) and "the end of all things" was "at hand" (I Pt. 4:7). It was "time for judgment to begin with the household of God" (I Pt 4:17), and he spoke of "the glory" that was "about to be revealed." (I Pt. 5:1). By the time Peter wrote his first epistle, it had already been well over 30 years since Jesus uttered the words: "this generation will not pass away until all these things take place" (Matt. 24:34). At this point, what would have made Peter change his tune so quickly within 1 to 3 short years (the time between his two epistles)?

The idea of an almost bipolar change of mind on the part of the Apostle, from one inspired letter to the next, makes no sense at all. Additionally, in 2 Peter 3 itself (where this change of mind allegedly took place), Peter encourages His readers to be "waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God" (2 Pt. 3:12). The word for "waiting" is *prosdokao*, and it carries the idea of "to expect" or "anticipate." The word for "hastening" is *speudo*, and it carries the idea of "to be eager for the arrival of." If verse 8 truly is Peter's attempt to soften his readers' expectations of the Parousia, this would be even more extreme than changing his

position within two different letters. Here, within the space of 4 verses, Peter supposedly is telling his readers that the time before Christ's promised coming will drag on forever (2 Pt. 3:8) while at the same time telling them to expect it with eagerness (2 Pt. 3:12).

Peter is attempting to answer the mockers who were saying, "Where is the promise of His coming?" (2 Pt. 3:4). Supposedly, Peter's answer to these scoffers is to say that it could be delayed for a few thousand years. This would be counterproductive to Peter's case, to say the least.

As Peter Leithart remarks: "If that were the case, the false teachers' mockery of Jesus' promise would be justified; in that case, the mockers would be exactly right to question the 'promise of His coming' (3:4). Even if the false teachers were destroyed, they would eventually be proven right. Indefinite delay of the Parousia would be a feeble response to false teachers who are predicting that the Parousia will be delayed indefinitely!"[9]

Leithart's logic is razor-sharp, and it cuts to the heart of the matter. If the objection was that the Parousia had been delayed, how does arguing that the Parousia had been delayed answer the objection? How does agreeing with the protesters solve the problem? How does this make any sense? It doesn't, yet this is exactly what the popular approach insists that Peter is doing.

Supposedly, the Parousia was postponed until further notice because people just weren't repenting as they should have been, and this somehow justifies what ultimately amounts to Peter's nonresponse to the scoffers with whom he was taking issue.

<https://burrosofberea.com/playing-the-2-peter-3-card/>

**2 Peter 3:9** The Lord is not slow to fulfill his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance.

### **Lack of Repentance Justifies an Indefinite Delay?**

It's quite telling that Christopher M. Hays in fact fully concedes that Peter seems to "...appear to be making a somewhat flat-footed defense of God's tardiness." [10] But Hays says there is a very good reason for this "flat-footed defense" of the Lord's lethargy. "Peter explains that God has delayed the prophesied judgment for a very specific purpose," writes Hays, "to give people time to repent." [11] In fairness to Hays, this is undoubtedly what Peter is driving at, but Peter's rationale only makes sense within the context of a limited time period and not an extended interval encompassing all of human history.

In other words, God was allowing as many people as possible the time to repent within that generation. As Gary DeMar has commented: "they knew it would

happen in that generation,” but they didn’t know specifically “when in that generation it would happen.”[12] The judgment indeed took place as Jesus had predicted, but in His mercy God held off until the very end of the specified time period. That being said, if we extend this beyond the confines of that particular generation, it creates intractable problems.

Rachael Wrue demonstrates how Peter’s argument spirals out of control if he did not have a specific, time-limited judgment in mind. She writes, “Let’s think about what Peter says in verse 9. Is this a logical explanation for the reason God has not yet returned after 2,000 years? Over time, the population of the earth has increased, not decreased. If God were to come back today and wipe out all the unbelievers, that would be billions of people. Why didn’t He come back yesterday, or 500 years ago, or a thousand years ago when there were less people who would perish?”[13]

Wrue continues: “Also, most Christians would agree that once a person dies, they can no longer repent. How many unbelievers have died over the past 2,000 years? How many generations have come and gone? If we are going to use 2 Peter 3:9 as the reason Christ hasn’t returned yet, then we can continue to stretch this out forever. If Christ hasn’t returned yet because He wants ALL to come to repentance and none to perish, then He will never return!”[14]

Wrue’s comments are spot-on here. Every day, 385,000 new people are born into this world. That’s 130 million new people each year that God must wait for, to see if they “repent,” before He can send His Son back to this earth. The problem of the delay of the Parousia increases exponentially as time marches on.

Additionally, if in fact Jesus was supposed to return in that generation but didn’t because not enough people repented, where does that put us today? Technically speaking, we are nothing more than an afterthought in the mind of God. So much for being chosen in him before the foundation of the world (Eph. 1:4) – by rights, we should have never existed! And if only enough people had repented in the first century, we wouldn’t be here. While the arguments of Hays and others with regard to 2 Peter 3:8-9 are somehow meant to comfort believers with regard to the supposed problem of the delay of the Parousia, how is this in any way comforting? The attempted solution creates more problems than it supposedly solves, and those problems are very much uncomfortable.

### **A Local Judgment on a Specific Group**

To quote Wrue again: “2 Peter was written in or around AD 64. So by this time, the time was almost up for that generation. This is why the unbelievers were mocking and scoffing at the Christians. AD 64 is when the Neronian persecution of Christians was launched. And very shortly after that (AD 66) is when the Jewish revolt began, which led to the Jewish-Roman war, which resulted in the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in AD 70. The judgment of 2 Peter 3 was

the judgment of that wicked and adulterous generation that Christ spoke of in the Gospels. It was the judgment of the unbelieving Jews who crucified Christ and then persecuted and attempted to destroy the church.”[15]

“If 2 Peter 3 is about a worldwide judgment of all unbelievers on the planet,” concludes Wrue, “then how will God decide when to pull the plug? At any given time, there would be billions of people who would be destroyed. 2 Peter 3:9 only makes sense if it is a local judgment on a specific group of people who were living at a specific time.”[16]

## Conclusion

Only by understanding Peter’s words in light of their immediate context can his rebuttal make any real sense, and only then does it defuse the numerous difficulties created by ignoring it. If the passage is talking about a future, final coming of Christ at the end of history, Christ will never come, and history will never end. Every day just brings further delay as new people come into the world on whom God must wait to see if they repent. This does not answer the mockers in Peter’s letter in the least since admitting indefinite delay is no answer to the objection of indefinite delay. More to the point, the very idea of indefinite delay itself would in fact run contrary to the very expectations of Peter himself in his letters. While it is true that God is timeless, he nevertheless makes time proclamations to humans in terms in which they can understand and to which they can relate. 2 Peter 3:8-9 should not be used as a playing card that changes the meaning of “near” to “far,” of “shortly” to “lengthy,” or of “quickly” to “slowly.”  
<https://burrosofberea.com/playing-the-2-peter-3-card/>

**2 Peter 3:11** Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of people ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness,

**2 Peter 3:12** waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be set on fire and dissolved, and the heavenly bodies will melt as they burn!

Peter encourages His readers to be “waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God” (2 Pt. 3:12). The word for “waiting” is *prosdokao*, and it carries the idea of “to expect” or “anticipate.” The word for “hastening” is *speudo*, and it carries the idea of “to be eager for the arrival of.” If verse 8 truly is Peter’s attempt to soften his readers’ expectations of the Parousia, this would be even more extreme than changing his position within two different letters. Here, within the space of 4 verses, Peter supposedly is telling his readers that the time before Christ’s promised coming will drag on forever (2 Pt. 3:8) while at the same time telling them to expect it with eagerness (2 Pt. 3:12).

<https://burrosofberea.com/playing-the-2-peter-3-card/>

**1 John 2:18** Children, it is the last hour, and as you have heard that antichrist is

coming, so now many antichrists have come. Therefore we know that it is the last hour.

## **The End that was Coming**

To be sure, John was expecting an “end” when he spoke of the Antichrist, but it wasn’t the end of the world he had in mind. It was the end of the world as it was before Jesus came and changed everything. It was the end of the old order. It was the “end” that was to come before their own generation passed away (Matt. 24:3, 34). His death on the cross (AD 33) set the whole thing in motion, and His coming in judgment on Jerusalem (AD 70) was cleanup work—changing everything forever. John’s epistles were written in the time between these two events.

John and his readers were living in the middle of these two great epochs in redemptive history. John’s letters were composed in the early to mid-60s and were among the last New Testament books to be written.[17] He and his readers were less than a decade away from the grand finale. “Little children,” he tells them, “it is the last hour” (1 John 2:18). It was all about to go down within their own generation just as Jesus had predicted (Matt. 24:34), and the fact that “many Antichrists” had “arisen” was proof of this (1 John 2:18).

<https://burrosofberea.com/will-the-real-antichrist-please-stand-up/>

**1 John 2:19** They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have continued with us. But they went out, that it might become plain that they all are not of us.

The Antichrists whom John spoke of arose from within the Church itself (1 John 2:19), and it is almost universally recognized that the Johannine Community consisted of Jewish converts to Christianity. The Beast from the Sea (Rev. 13) and the Antichrist (1 John 2:18, 22; 4: 3; 2 John 7) emerge from two separate spheres, indicating that they are two separate and distinct personages in the New Testament apocalyptic scenario.

<https://burrosofberea.com/will-the-real-antichrist-please-stand-up/>

**1 John 2:22** Who is the liar but he who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the antichrist, he who denies the Father and the Son.

While speculation about the Antichrist is nothing new, current conjecture regarding who or what he might be is. In ages past, the Pope of Rome was the leading candidate for this diabolical deceiver of the end times. In fact, the original version of the Westminster Confession of Faith named names: “the Pope of Rome is the Antichrist, that man of sin and son of perdition that exalteth himself in the Church against Christ, and all that is called God.”[1] Today, very few would agree with this sentiment. This even includes the hyper-creedalists who elevate the Westminster Confession to the level of the Bible 2.0. Yesterday’s Antichrist is not

today's Antichrist, and neither is the Biblical Antichrist.

<https://burrosofberea.com/will-the-real-antichrist-please-stand-up/>

**2 John 1:7** For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not confess the coming of Jesus Christ in the flesh. Such a one is the deceiver and the antichrist.

## **Identifying the Antichrists of John's Day**

Since the primary identifying mark of an Antichrist was the denial that Jesus the Messiah had come in the flesh (2 John 7), it is common for interpreters to identify the Antichrist phenomenon with Gnosticism. While it is certainly applicable to Gnosticism in a secondary way, this isn't the most likely choice for what John actually had in mind when he penned his letters. As a full-blown system, Gnosticism didn't really hit the scene until much later, around 115 AD.[18] While this is, of course, much closer in time proximity than Charles III or the current Pope, it's still about a half century away from the time of John's writing.

Noting that the Gnostics came along far too late to fit the bill, Gary DeMar identifies the Antichrists as first-century Jews "who denied that Jesus Christ was the savior, the promised Messiah who had come in the flesh." [19] DeMar observes that these Jews would have specifically denied Jesus' claim that He and the Father were one (John 10:30; cf. 1 John 2:22). Accordingly, in his ground-breaking monograph, *They Went Out from Us: The Identity of the Opponents in First John*, Daniel Streett clearly and convincingly demonstrates that John's first-century Antichrists were former Jewish-Christians who had left the Christian community to return to the synagogue after renouncing their belief that Jesus is the Jewish Messiah.[20]

## **Moving Forward in Our Day**

Along with the rest of the dusty remnants of first-century Judaism, John's Antichrists are now nothing more than ghosts of the far-distant past. Yet these ghosts continue to haunt the pages of modern prophecy speculation nearly 2,000 years later. Their continued presence has hampered and hindered the Church from getting on with its God-ordained business for too long now. This is much to the delight of God's current-day enemies, who continue to push their agenda with little to no real resistance from His People. The evils that plague our present day have nothing to do with the Antichrists of the past, and Jesus isn't coming to rescue us from the Antichrist. He's expecting us to do our job and rescue the culture from these prevailing evils, which are very anti-Christian. We need to shake off the dust of the past, focus on the present, and look to the future.

Charles III might have been crowned king six months, six weeks, and six days after his mother passed away, but Jesus Christ was crowned the Ruler of the Kings of the Earth 2,000 years ago (Rev. 1:5). For the sake of our children, our

grandchildren, and all the generations to follow, let's get the memo out. Let's start echoing the Psalmist: "Now therefore, O kings, show discernment; Take warning O judges of the earth...Kiss the Son, lest He become angry, and you perish in the way" (Psalm 2:10, 12). Let's stop focusing on the Antichrist and start focusing on Jesus Christ.

<https://burrosofberea.com/will-the-real-antichrist-please-stand-up/>

**Jude 1:14** It was also about these that Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of his holy ones, **Jude 1:15** to execute judgment on all and to convict all the ungodly of all their deeds of ungodliness that they have committed in such an ungodly way, and of all the harsh things that ungodly sinners have spoken against him."

### **The Lord Comes with All His Holy Ones**

The conclusion of the Zechariah 14:5 says, "Then the Lord my God will come, and all the holy ones with him." This is similar to the language of Jude 14 and the Lord coming "with many thousands of His holy ones," which Jude makes applicable to his readers' own day and time. Jude's prophecy pertained to a judgment of "these men" (Jude 14) who had "crept in unaware" (Jude 4) among the assemblies of first-century believers (Jude 12). Likewise, Jesus speaks of His cloud-coming in judgment, accompanied by His angels (Matt. 24:30-31), before the first-century generation passed away (Matt. 24:34). Earlier, He had told His Disciples that He would come "in the glory of His Father with His angels" before they had all passed away (Matt. 16:27-28). Zechariah's words coincide with the language of Jesus' judgment-coming in the first century. Jesus came in judgment with His angels – with all His holy ones. There is no need to catapult the words of Zechariah, Jesus or Jude into the far-distant future.

<https://burrosofberea.com/zechariah-14-part-5-the-flight-to-the-mountains/>

**Revelation 1:1** The revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave him to show to his servants the things that must soon take place. He made it known by sending his angel to his servant John,

**Revelation 1:2** who bore witness to the word of God and to the testimony of Jesus Christ, even to all that he saw.

The Greek word being used here is *semaino*, and it carries the idea of indicating something by a "sign" or "signal." [20] As David Chilton commented, "Now St. John says that these things regarding the future were signified, or "sign-ified," to him by the angel. The use of this word tells us that the prophecy is not simply to be taken as 'history written in advance.' It is a book of signs, symbolic representations of the approaching events" and the symbols "are not to be understood in a literal manner." [21]

<https://burrosofberea.com/missing-the-metaphor-the-theology-of-drax-the->

[dispensationalist/](#)

**Revelation 1:3** Blessed is the one who reads aloud the words of this prophecy, and blessed are those who hear, and who keep what is written in it, for the time is near.

In the book of Revelation, John tells his readers that the time was “near” for the prophesied events to take place (Rev. 1:3; 22:10), and Jesus Himself declares that He would be coming “quickly” (Rev. 22:12). This echoes His words in the Olivet discourse where He says, “Truly (amen), I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place” (Matt. 24:34). Those who take these statements at face value believe that Jesus made good on his word, and His word finds fulfillment in the events leading up to and including the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. Many disagree with this approach, however, and there are old and new attempts to reject the reality of past fulfillment.

While previously popular approaches to New Testament prophecy tried to redefine the time texts in order to catapult the fulfillment of those prophecies into the far-distant future, a growing number of scholars in the academic community now openly concede that these passages must be taken at face value. For them, “near” really means “near,” “quickly” really means “quickly,” and “this generation” really means “this generation.” This is a breath of fresh air when compared to the earlier attempts to deny past fulfillment. Perhaps the newer approach is born out of the recognition that the older efforts are less than convincing?

### **The Time is Near (Rev. 1:3)**

For example, one writer of the former persuasion claims that all the phrase “the time is near” (Rev. 1:3) means is simply that: “The place in time is now, or here right now to read the words, to hear the message and to keep what is in it. This does not imply ‘soon’ is the time these events are going to happen as if they are some forty years into the future.”[1]

This approach basically has John writing to seven first-century churches, telling them to hurry up and read about things that have nothing whatsoever to do with them or their current situation. Regarding this interpretation, one wonders what the point in reading the words would have even been in the first place? Why would it have been so urgent and necessary for them to immediately know about things that aren’t even going to happen for another 2,000 years or more? And why would they even care?

Additionally, John does not say the time was “here” right “now,” as this writer states. John says the time was “near,” not “here.” This spawns another question: using this writer’s approach, why was the time to read the prophecy merely “near” when they received the letter rather than “here”? Why not just read it right away? Why wait? This makes no sense.

As an aside, who has ever said that the events were “going to happen... some forty years into the future” from the time that John wrote? Most everyone who believes in the past fulfillment of John’s prophecy argues that he wrote Revelation in the 60s, not the 30s. No one claims that the events were “forty years into the future” from the time John wrote the book of Revelation.

It’s best to just take John’s statement at face value. John wrote Revelation sometime in the 60s,[2] and the Roman-Jewish War broke out in AD 66–leading to Jerusalem’s destruction in AD 70. The time was “near.”

<https://burrosofberea.com/the-one-condition-that-makes-jesus-prophecy-unconditional/>

The Greek term for “read aloud” is anaginosko, and it also carries with it the idea of “to recognize,” and “to discern.”[22] In other words, John intends his audience to “recognize” these signs and symbols when they read them, and to “discern” what he’s trying to convey by their usage.[23]

It goes without saying that you can’t recognize something you’ve never seen before. With that said, John expects his readers to have seen all of this before – in the Old Testament. It’s been noted that “out of 404 verses in Revelation, 278 contain references or allusions, direct or indirect, to the Old Testament.”[24] These Old Testament allusions are the symbols on John’s map and, as David Chilton puts it, “The only way to understand St. John’s system of symbolism is to become familiar with the Bible itself.”[25]

As we navigate our way through the book of Revelation, the Old Testament should be our guide. Without it, we’ll never get to our destination, and we’ll end up in the wrong location. This is exactly what has happened to God’s people since the rise of Dispensationalism. In short, we’ve been given bad directions. Armageddon has supposedly been coming for decades, and yet here we still are. The rapture hasn’t happened, the planet hasn’t blown up, and as Ron Rhodes points out, the fish in the sea haven’t died. But the presence of fish in the ocean doesn’t mean that Revelation has yet to be set into motion, it just means that the prophecy isn’t about Jesus coming back to kill a bunch of fish.

<https://burrosofberea.com/missing-the-metaphor-the-theology-of-drax-the-dispensationalist/>

**Revelation 1:4** John to the seven churches that are in Asia: Grace to you and peace from him who is and who was and who is to come, and from the seven spirits who are before his throne,

### **Lack of Time and Information**

The earliest New Testament letters were composed in the fifties and the book of Revelation was complete in the mid to late sixties.[18] These were letters sent

exclusively to the first-century churches. There was no published New Testament out there yet, much less a plethora of scholars and theologians dissecting and analyzing it for 2000 years. There were no commentaries. There were no books about the end times based on the Apostle's writings, and there certainly wasn't a movie. In short, the New Testament writings were not public knowledge, and there wasn't enough time for God's enemies to decipher how it was all going to go down.

In hindsight, the script is now fairly easy to follow. The harlot (first-century Jerusalem) rode the back of the sea beast (first-century Rome). Early on in the New Testament narrative, Rome was acting as a kind of shield, protecting Jesus' original followers from their Jewish persecutors to a certain extent. For example, Paul could bet on appealing to Caesar for help (Acts 25:9-12; cf. 22:24-29). Once the Neronian persecution broke out, that bet was off. Nero hunted the Christians down, tortured them, and brutally murdered them. This lasted "42 months, from the middle of November 64 to the beginning of June 68." [19], coinciding with Revelation 13:5. The early Christians now faced persecution on both fronts – Apostate Israel and Rome.

In the midst of this, there was a Zealot uprising in Jerusalem in AD 66 which drove the Roman-Jewish War. By the time Nero died, Rome would turn its full attention to the Jews. By AD 70, the Romans would destroy Jerusalem. The sea beast (Rome) would turn on the Harlot (Jerusalem) and "make her desolate and naked" (Rev. 17:16).

The Zealot uprising that precipitated this sudden turn of events was telegraphed by Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2. Once the restrainer (the legitimate priesthood) was taken out of the way, the lawless Zealots would be revealed and the rebellion against Rome would begin. Amid all the action, many Jewish converts to Christianity would revert back to Judaism and renounce their belief in Jesus as the Messiah. These are the Antichrists of whom John spoke (1 John 2:18, 22; 4:3; and 2 John 1:7). [20] Early on, Simeon had told Mary that her Son was "appointed for the fall and rise of many in Israel" (Lk. 2:34), and many fell away. The book of Hebrews, most likely written between AD 60 and AD 65, [21] is devoted to curtailing this apostasy.

## **Time for a New Movie**

While many believe we are living in the last days, the last days are far behind us. Their last days are our past days. The New Testament writers produced the movie trailers and previews, predicting the events of those days with incredible accuracy. When the time came, all the actors fulfilled their roles flawlessly. Then, Josephus recorded it all and produced the documentary. The ending credits for that movie scrolled across the screen a long time ago.

Today, we still have a script to follow and a role to play in this world. We are

starring in the sequel, and the script is found in Revelation 21-22. We should be the light leading the nations into the holy city (Rev. 21:24), and the kings of the earth should be bringing the glory and honor of the nations into that city (Rev. 21:26). If the condition of the world is any indication, our performance has been less than stellar. We'd be getting very poor reviews on Rotten Tomatoes,[22] and God Himself is most likely not happy with our showing.

Ironically, cultural withdrawal was exactly what Dispensationalism's founder was shooting for when he wrote his script.[23] At first, his movie was not well received. For example, Charles Spurgeon gave the feature film two thumbs down. In reaction to Darby's unique take on the Bible, Spurgeon said, "We never know what we shall hear next, and perhaps it is a mercy that these absurdities are revealed one at a time, in order that we may be able to endure their stupidity without dying of amazement." [24]

Not unlike "It's a Wonderful Life" and all other sleeper films, the Dispensational film eventually became a huge hit later on. Today, it's still playing in Christian theaters everywhere, and its damaging effects have hit everywhere. Before we completely lose our country and our culture, let's put a new movie in.

<https://burrosofberea.com/the-rapture-its-no-secret-anymore-so-whos-going-to-buy-the-antichrists-lure/>

**Revelation 1:5** and from Jesus Christ the faithful witness, the firstborn of the dead, and the ruler of kings on earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood

**Revelation 1:6** and made us a kingdom, priests to his God and Father, to him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.

**Zechariah 14:9** And the LORD shall be King over all the earth. In that day it shall be "The LORD *is* one," And His name one.

## **King Over All the Earth**

Zechariah said that "the Lord will be King over all the earth" (Zech. 14:9a). These words are echoed in John's words when he says that "Jesus Christ" is "the firstborn of the dead" and "the ruler of the kings of the earth". As David Chilton wrote, "As the Firstborn, Christ possesses the crown rights of all creation: 'All authority in heaven and earth has been given to Me,' He claimed (Matt. 28:18). All nations have been granted to Him as His inheritance, and the kings of earth are under court order to submit to Him (Psalms 2:8-12)."[2] As New Covenant believers and His image bearers in the new creation, we are His representatives who are supposed to be issuing this "court order" to the world. We share the Gospel, we advance the kingdom, and we grow the city. The anticipation of Zechariah 14:9 finds its fulfillment in Revelation 1:5, and we should be getting the memo out: Jesus Christ is the King over all the earth.

<https://burrosofberea.com/zechariah-14-part-7-zechariah-149-11/>

**Revelation 1:9** I, John, your brother and partner in the tribulation and the kingdom and the patient endurance that are in Jesus, was on the island called Patmos on account of the word of God and the testimony of Jesus.

The Apostle John tells the first-century believers of Asia Minor that he was their “fellow partaker in the tribulation” (Rev. 1:9). John is not referring to tribulation in general but to THE Tribulation. The definite article is there in the Greek. As David Chilton comments, “St. John is thinking about a special period of hardship; not just tribulation in general, but the tribulation, the subject of much apostolic writing as the age of the Last Days progressed to its climax (1 Thess. 1:6; 3:4; 2 Thess. 1:4-10; 1 Tim. 4:1-3; 2 Tim. 3:1-12).”[3]

<https://burrosofberea.com/four-signs-that-a-bible-teacher-doesnt-understand-the-signs/>

**Revelation 2:20** But I have this against you, that you tolerate that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess and is teaching and seducing my servants to practice sexual immorality and to eat food sacrificed to idols.

John obviously didn’t mean that this was the same Jezebel whom we find in the Old Testament. It simply means that some of the Christians in John’s day were being led astray, in the same manner, that Jezebel had led God’s People astray in former times. John does the same thing with other Old Testament terms like Egypt (Rev. 11:8), Sodom (Rev. 11:8), and Babylon (Rev. 14:8; 16:19; 17:5; 18:2; 10, 21). He repurposes these images and applies them to the new situation that he’s writing about.

In other words, the situations are similar but not identical. He’s taking the core theme or idea behind the Old Testament situation and relating it to his contemporary situation. The usage of the Old Testament terminology adds an additional element to what he has to say to his readers to enhance his message.

<https://burrosofberea.com/gog-and-magog-part-10-johns-usage-of-the-phrase-in-revelation-20/>

**Revelation 3:11** I am coming soon. Hold fast what you have, so that no one may seize your crown.

### **Behold I Am Coming Quickly (Rev. 3:11, 22:7, 22:12)**

It’s most often argued that “quickly” is not a chronological indicator telling the reader WHEN He’ll return, but a qualitative indicator describing HOW He’ll return. [3] In other words, the events of the Lord’s Return will happen really fast—whenever they finally do begin to take place.

Amazingly, Acts 22:18 is often used as an example to justify this approach: “And I saw Him saying to me, ‘Make haste, and get out of Jerusalem quickly, because

they will not accept your testimony about Me.” In this passage, Jesus is telling Paul: “Get out of Jerusalem and get out soon!” He’s not telling him: “Go ahead and stay in Jerusalem as long as you want, just make sure you move really fast once you do finally decide to leave.” It’s fairly obvious that the urgency of the moment is what is at stake in this passage.

Moreover, if the interpretation is correct that Jesus’ “coming quickly” only refers to the HOW of the action, and not the WHEN of the action, what possible comfort would this have been for the suffering and persecuted Christians in the first century? In essence, John would be saying, “Don’t worry, relief is coming. It’s over 2,000 years away, but when it does finally come (long after you’re dead and gone), things will move really fast.” This is what he’s telling his original audience? Rather than comforting them, this does the opposite. It would be more of a mockery of their circumstances rather than a consolation in their time of suffering.

<https://burrosofberea.com/the-one-condition-that-makes-jesus-prophecy-unconditional/>

**Revelation 6:13** and the stars of the sky fell to the earth as the fig tree sheds its winter fruit when shaken by a gale.

**Isaiah 34:4** All the host of heaven shall rot away, and the skies roll up like a scroll. All their host shall fall, as leaves fall from the vine, like leaves falling from the fig tree.

Tying Isaiah 34:4 in with Revelation 6:13, Micheal Heiser puts it together for us:

“...because he’s drawing specifically on Isaiah 34:4, when you go to Revelation 6:13-14, he talks about the stars of heaven falling, he’s not talking about an asteroid catastrophe. We’re not talking about something NASA can defeat. Dispense with the uber-literalism. We’re talking about the judgment of cosmic powers of darkness along with suffering and apocalyptic violence on the earth. These two things go together, folks. This is the Deuteronomy 32 worldview. This is the Daniel 10 worldview. The powers on earth... Behind them are other supernatural powers that are using them, manipulating them, steering things to the ends to that they want. If in Revelation we’re describing the judgment of human powers that are persecuting believers, you would think—you would think—that John wouldn’t leave out the judgment of the fallen gods of the Old Testament—the corrupt sons of God (Psalm 82), the princes of the nations (Daniel 10).”[10]

<https://burrosofberea.com/theres-a-rusty-moon-rising/>

**Revelation 8:10** The third angel blew his trumpet, and a great star fell from heaven, blazing like a torch, and it fell on a third of the rivers and on the springs of water.

**Revelation 8:11** The name of the star is Wormwood. A third of the waters became wormwood, and many people died from the water, because it had been

made bitter.

We must go to other passages in Scripture to see where this “wormwood” imagery is used in conjunction with a “star,” to help us understand how the imagery is being used in Revelation. In the case of wormwood, John’s imagery is taken from Amos chapters 5 and 6.

### **Amos: Covenant Enforcer**

As a prophet of God, enforcing the terms of the covenant was Amos’s main job. [8] In his covenant lawsuit against ancient Israel, Amos charges the apostates of his time with turning “justice into wormwood” and casting “righteousness down to the earth” (Amos 5:7). The language is obviously metaphoric. Justice can’t literally be turned into wormwood and righteousness can’t literally be cast down to the earth.

These metaphors are repeated and strengthened in chapter 6: “You have turned justice into poison, and the fruit of righteousness into wormwood” (Amos 6:12).

And right there, we have yet another metaphor – “fruit.” Real fruit grows on trees. The phrase, “fruit of righteousness,” is a simile. The imagery is that of turning something pleasant and sweet (i.e., fruit) into something disgusting and bitter (i.e., wormwood). So, “wormwood” symbolizes something. Specifically, it symbolizes the bitter abandonment of justice and righteousness. This Old Testament usage of the imagery should inform our thinking when John uses that same imagery in Revelation.

But John says that wormwood is a “star” in Revelation 8:11. The next question we need to ask is if there is anything in the Old Testament that would inform us in this regard? There is, and it is likewise right there in the book of Amos. After denouncing apostate Israel for abandoning justice and righteousness (wormwood), Amos seems to make a somewhat unrelated statement. He speaks of the Lord as “He who made the Pleiades and Orion” (Amos 5:8). Of course, God made these celestial patterns in the sky, but what’s the connection between star constellations and wormwood? The answer to this is also found later in the chapter.

Amos tells the rebellious Israelites, “You pick up your images of Sikkuth (Molech), your king, and Kiyyun (Saturn), the images of your star gods which you have made for yourselves” (Amos 6:26). So, the ancient Israelites, who were turning justice and righteousness into wormwood, were doing so because they were worshipping false deities called “star gods.”

### **Following in Amos’s Footsteps**

Fast forward to the New Testament, and Stephen brings the covenant lawsuit

against the apostate Israelites of his own day. Following in Amos's footsteps, Stephen invokes Amos's words as he prosecutes his case: "You also took along the tabernacle of Molech, and the star of the god Rompha (Saturn), the images which you made to worship them, but I will deport you beyond Babylon" (Acts 7:43).

After recounting this and other apostacies, Stephen rests his case: "...you are doing just as your fathers did" (Acts 7:51). Like the apostates of previous generations, they too had become "betrayers and murders" by opposing "the Righteous One" (Acts 7:35). In other words, they weren't carrying around images of Molech and Saturn anymore, but by perverting justice and righteousness, they might as well have been. It was wormwood all over again!

By importing all this background information into Revelation 8:10-11, the meaning of the passage opens. The Jewish religious leaders of the first century perverted justice by crucifying a righteous man. They continued to do so through the persecution of His righteous followers. They had rejected righteousness and chosen their false and fallen gods. They walked in the footsteps of their unjust fathers, casting righteousness down to the ground (Amos 5:7). Stephen and John walked in the footsteps of Amos, bringing the hammer of justice down.

By rejecting Christ, perverting justice, and distorting righteousness, the Israelites of John's day were following in their ancestors' ways. They were following in the ways of those who followed false and fallen "star gods" – like Molech and Saturn. The imagery of the star falling in Revelation 8:10-11 speaks to the fallen state of those who denied their Messiah. The poisoned waters speak to their contaminated teachings, which only led their followers to death. The imagery of "wormwood" as a fallen "star" speaks to the place in Scripture where John wants his readers to go to understand that imagery – the book of Amos.

In short, the wormwood that poisoned the waters of Amos's day had resurfaced in Stephen's day. In Acts 7, Stephen reopens the case. The book of Revelation, in turn, closes that case and renders the verdict.

## **Recap and Reflection**

According to the Psalmist, the righteous are like trees planted by the water – yielding their fruit in due season (Ps. 1:3). As the religious leaders of the day, the Scribes and Pharisees should have been those trees. Instead, they "turned justice into poison and the fruit of righteousness into wormwood" (Amos 6:12). As such, their false doctrine became like bitter contamination infesting the water.

As history would have it, those who followed their teachings "died from the waters" which "they made bitter" (Rev. 8:11). Conversely, those who rejected the religious leaders' rejection of Christ, and recognized Him as the Messiah, found life by partaking of "the water of life" (Rev. 22:17).

In like manner as believers today, we must stay connected to Jesus, the water of life (Rev. 22:17). We must be that tree planted by the living water (Ps. 1:3) And we must avoid the “bitter” streams of corrupt doctrine which turn righteousness into wormwood (Amos 5:7; 6:12). We don’t want to be like the apostate Israelites of Amos’s day, or the religious leaders of John’s day. We want to be like Jesus’s original followers and choose living water over wormwood.

Interpretations of Revelation that rely on asteroids, government coverups, and bad dreams pollute the streams of our own time. If we believe the world is ending because an asteroid is going to hit the earth, we become complacent about the world and neglect our responsibility to care for the earth.

<https://burrosofberea.com/asteroids-dreams-and-wormwood-revelation-810-11/>

**Revelation 12:9** And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

John calls Satan “the great dragon” – using precisely the same title that is given to the Egyptian Pharaoh in the Septuagint version of Ezekiel 29:3. Earlier, in Revelation 12:3, John “colors” his language by adding that Satan is “the great RED dragon.” Egyptologists, such as Robert K. Ritner and Geraldine Pinch, have long noted the significance of the color red in Egyptian culture and mythology.

Pinch writes: “The color red was associated with chaos and evil. Doing ‘red things’ meant to do evil” and “the names and images of chaotic forces such as Seth or Apophis are often drawn in red, while the rest of the text is in black.” Seth and Apophis are both represented variously as a snake, a crocodile and a dragon.

Ritner notes that there is even ancient Egyptian artwork showing red snakes and serpents (symbols of chaos and evil) being pierced with black knives. Considering the negative connotations of the color “red” in the Egyptian mindset, it is ironically quite fitting then that Pharaoh and his armies should drown in a place called “the Red Sea.”

Putting all of this together, Stephen Hre Koi notes how obvious the connection would have been to John’s original audience. He writes:

“When John introduced the appearance of the Dragon in heaven, he significantly added the word ‘red’-it is the ‘great red Dragon.’ Because of the long tradition in the Jewish community, readers would immediately understand God’s impending overthrow of the Dragon as soon as John mentions the great red Dragon. This is a subtle way of using a symbol but clear enough for sensitive readers or listeners to understand. John is presenting images and symbols creating an ‘Exodus’ environment for the Asian Christians, similar to the time of Moses.”

This being said, it's rather obvious that John would expect his readers to import the information about "the dragon," from Revelation 12 where he first introduces the imagery, into his final usage of the term in Revelation 20. He's not rebooting the imagery everytime he mentions it.

<https://burrosofberea.com/revelation-20-and-the-new-exodus-part-1-the-dragon/>

**Revelation 13:1** And I saw a beast rising out of the sea, with ten horns and seven heads, with ten diadems on its horns and blasphemous names on its heads.

### **Leviathan and Behemoth**

In Revelation 13, John speaks of one beast coming from the sea and the other coming from the land (Rev. 13:1, 11). In stark contrast to us today, this language would have been all too familiar to John's target audience. As Adela Collins says, "Rev. 13:1 and 11 are alluding to Leviathan and Behemoth," a "fairly standard motif" that was "widespread" in the "apocalyptic literature" of the time.[14] John's first-century readers would have gotten it right away. As Joseph Poon writes, "The allusion to Leviathan and Behemoth is explicit in Rev. 13, as in this chapter the beast coming up from the sea and the beast coming up from the land are clearly stated." [15]

In his excellent little booklet, *Leviathan and Behemoth: Giant Chaos Monsters in the Bible*, Brian Godawa surveys the usage of this imagery across the board in the ancient world and characterizes the two beasts as "ancient mythological memes and motifs" [16] that symbolized chaos and disorder. The Old Testament is replete with examples of Leviathan and Behemoth imagery being used in conjunction with oppressive foreign rulers and Israel's own apostate religious leaders (e.g., Ps. 74:12-19; Isa. 51:9; Jer. 51:34; Ezek. 29:3). [17]

<https://burrosofberea.com/biblical-imagery-vs-modern-imagination-capturing-the-image-of-the-beast/>

### **The Antichrist is not the Beast**

Aside from the obvious nonsense of equating King Charles with a Biblical figure spoken of 2,000 years before Charles existed, the real underlying error is that of equating the Antichrist with the Beast (666) of Revelation 13 in the first place. In an article on Christianity.com entitled "What Does the Bible Say About the Antichrist?", Clarence L. Haynes Jr. informs the reader that the Bible "refers to the person of the Antichrist in Revelation 13. Revelation 13:1-4 describes the Antichrist as the beast that comes out of the sea." [9] He encourages the reader to "read Revelation 13:1-10 for full details on the Antichrist." [10]

This is just inaccurate. There is no mention of the Antichrist in Revelation 13. While Revelation 13 does speak of "the beast that comes out of the sea," it simply does not use the word "Antichrist." Within the pages of Scripture itself, John is

the Biblical writer who coined the phrase "Antichrist"[11] (1 John 2:18, 22; 4: 3; 2 John 7), and the term is exclusive to him. If John had intended to say "Antichrist" in Revelation 13, he was quite capable of doing so. Yet, he didn't.

## **The Origins of the Antichrist and the Beast**

Even the respective origins of the Antichrist and the Beast should tip the reader off to the fact that the two figures cannot be conflated. As noted, the first beast of Revelation 13 "comes out of the sea." Haynes himself correctly states, "The sea represents a place of evil, wickedness, chaos, and resisting God. It also represents the Gentiles." [12] The Antichrists whom John spoke of arose from within the Church itself (1 John 2:19), and it is almost universally recognized that the Johannine Community consisted of Jewish converts to Christianity. The Beast from the Sea (Rev. 13) and the Antichrist (1 John 2:18, 22; 4: 3; 2 John 7) emerge from two separate spheres, indicating that they are two separate and distinct personages in the New Testament apocalyptic scenario.

<https://burrosofberea.com/will-the-real-antichrist-please-stand-up/>

**Revelation 13:2** And the beast that I saw was like a leopard; its feet were like a bear's, and its mouth was like a lion's mouth. And to it the dragon gave his power and his throne and great authority.

## **Ancient Leviathan & Behemoth Texts**

Three of these texts, from the Second Temple Period, are shown here. The common theme? Leviathan dwells in the "abyss of the ocean," and Behemoth dwells on the desert dry land. According to DDD, "Revelation 13 is blatantly informed by the Leviathan-Behemoth tradition. In this periscope two kindred beasts rise up in united opposition to the righteous; the one beast 'from the sea' (13:1) and 'another beast which rose out of the earth' (13: 11)" (P. 166).

## **The Dragon Standing on the Sea Shore**

I love the way Rebekah Yi Lui puts it: "The imagery of beasts in Revelation 13 draws upon a range of mythical Jewish and Gentile traditions" regarding "the Leviathan-Behemoth legend" (p. 93). After recounting Satan's failure in chapter 12 to destroy the women and her child, John then "describes (him) as standing on the Seashore...anxiously expecting his allies to come to his aid: the beasts from the sea and the land" (p. 95).

JBL Scholar, Steven J. Friesen, notes that while "commentators are nearly unanimous that Rev 13 deals with Roman imperial power and with the worship of the Roman emperors" (p. 303), "the primary structure for the narrative in Rev 13 comes from the mythic pattern of Leviathan and Behemoth. Leviathan and Behemoth are two primordial monsters known from several Jewish texts. The oldest of these is Job 40-41, where they are cited as two of Gods most powerful

creations" (Journal of Biblical Literature, MYTH AND SYMBOLIC RESISTANCE IN REVELATION 13, p. 304).

Scholar Andrew Angel, in his excellent book *Chaos and the Son of Man*, concurs. While the "beast from the sea represents Rome" (p. 146), and the beast from the land represents a local authority demanding emperor worship (p. 147), "Revelation 13 is a creative reworking of the Leviathan and Behemoth myth...to describe the contemporary persecution of the church under the power of Rome and local authorities..." (p. 148).

Even Amillennialist, G.K. Beale, is forced to concede that "The description of the two beasts in chapter 13 is based in part on Job chapters 40-41...Commentators cite the Job passages," continues Beale, "but rarely discuss them or develop their relationship with Revelation. These two Beasts are echoed throughout Revelation 13..." (NIGTC: The Book of Revelation, p. 682).

Beale rightly understands the two beasts in Job chapters 40-41 as..."two demonic beings" (p. 682, n. 177).

"On the assumption that the beginning of history must be recapitulated at the end of history," says Beale, "Judaism crystalized the implicit expectation of Job... these two beasts were symbolic of the powers of evil and were to be destroyed at the final judgment" (p. 682).

Beale's comment about the "beginning of history" being "recapitulated" at the "end of history" is quite instructive. As a Preterist, I would qualify this by simply pointing out that we're not talking the "end" of world "history," but the end of Old Covenant "history."

No Jew, living in the Second Temple Period, would have read about a seven-headed-beast rising from the sea or the abyss, and NOT have immediately thought of Leviathan. In fact, the same can be said of Gentiles in that era.

According to Friesen, "the Leviathan tradition" is "one of the great mythic patterns shared by Yahwism and the surrounding religious traditions," and is a common theme in the "late Hellenistic and early Roman period," as well (pp. 306-307).

### **Tell Asmar Cylinder Seal**

This common theme, of a seven-headed-beast, is clearly seen on what is known as the "Tell Asmar Cylinder Seal" – which dates "to the end of the third millennium BC" (William D. Barker, *Isaiah's Kingship Polemic*, p. 130). According to scholar William D. Barker, this "may be the oldest attested representation of the creature we know as the biblical Leviathan" (p. 139).

Barker notes that "every culture in the ancient near east used the Leviathan motif," but "there were many differences in the application of it in both form and function" (p. 168). In some cultures, it was simply "a seven-headed-beast" (p. 135), while in others it was a seven-headed-dragon or serpent...most notably the Ugaritic and Hebrew literature.

### **Godawa Comparison of Text**

This can be seen in a comparison of various Bible passages with different Ugaritic texts. These Bible passages would include Habakkuk 3, Isaiah 27, and Psalm 74. In Isaiah, Leviathan is called "the fleeing serpent" and the "twisted serpent" and Psalm 74 mentions Yahweh crushing the multiple heads of Leviathan. Brian Godawa notes that the Hebrew words in these texts are "etymologically equivalent" to the Ugaritic words describing the same creature in the texts to the left on the slide (Sea Dragon of Chaos, pp. 5-6).

### **Richard Averbeck Comparison of Texts**

This is no exaggeration, Richard Averbeck notes that the correspondence between the Hebrew texts and the Ugaritic texts are simply "indisputable" (pp. 338-339), and it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that Isaiah 27:1 is a "free quotation of the myth of Baal's battle with the sea monster."

This doesn't mean that the Biblical writers plagiarized the Baal Cycle, it means... very simply: No, it's not Baal who defeats Chaos...it's Yahweh! This is a polemic, not a plagiarization.

Until the discovery of the Ugaritic texts in 1928, it was literally impossible for Biblical commentators to know this stuff. That's why it's so important to keep up with modern scholarship.

As Michael Heiser says, with regard to the Ugaritic texts: "You might be thinking that all you really need to know about the religion of the Israelites is in the Bible. You'd only be partially correct in that thought. We are centuries removed from the world of the Bible, and a lot of material in the Bible is pretty obtuse to those of us in the 21st century. Those who wrote the Bible weren't writing for a technological society, and so words, phrases, descriptions, and concepts that were completely familiar to an Israelite are lost on us."

<https://www.logos.com/ugaritic>

Today, we think it's the opposite. We think that the Bible's describing things that are "completely familiar" to us but not to its original readers. We think the Bible's describing cobra helicopters and nuclear weapons. But, those ignorant and ancient people just didn't know how to describe these things.

What an arrogant, pretentious attitude we modern people have! It is us... we are

the ones who are ignorant: Ignorant of the symbols, motifs and concepts of the Ancient World. It is our job to go back and rediscover these concepts that would have been “completely familiar” to ancient people, and have become “lost” to us.

One of those concepts that would have been “completely familiar” to an Israelite, or any ancient person for that matter, is the concept of the Chaos Monster, the seven headed beast, the Hebrew Leviathan or Ugaritic Lotan.

## **The Sumerian Shell Plaque**

Revelation 13:1-2 seems to be a composite description of the seven-headed-beast; using the traditions of the various cultures in the Ancient Near East.

As Adela Yarbo Collins says, in her dissertation, *THE COMBAT MYTH IN THE BOOK OF REVELATION*, John’s description is a “fusion of diverse traditions” that do not seem possible to interpret “strictly within” an Israelite/Jewish framework alone. She argues “rather that the author was deliberately choosing to be international by composing his narrative with elements taken from a variety of cultural contexts” (p. 187).

In his book, *Isaiah’s Kingship Polemic*, Daniel Barker states that the chaos motif in some ancient cultures was that of a “seven-headed-lion” (pp. 136-137). John describes the beast in terms of a leopard, a bear, a lion and the familiar Hebrew and Ugaritic “dragon.”

Another ancient artifact, depicting the seven-headed-beast, known as the Sumerian Shell Plaque, shows it with a spotted body, which...I would suggest, is reminiscent of a leopard. Notice as well, the fatal wound to one of its heads. I think it’s a distinct possibility that this imagery is what may be ungirding Revelation 13:3 – “And I saw one of its heads as if it had been slain, and his fatal head wound was healed.”

## **Chaos Monster in Various Cultures/Religions**

So what does all this mean, and how does it help us in understanding the Book of Revelation?

For the ancient peoples, Leviathan symbolized the chaotic forces of darkness that had to be subdued and conquered before order and purpose could be brought to the world. In the creation accounts of ancient cultures, order was brought to the world through the slaying of sea dragon (who represented chaos) by that culture’s god or deity. In Babylonian literature, it’s Marduk vs. Tiamat. In the Ugaritic Literature, it’s Baal vs. Lotan or Yamm. In ancient Egypt, the battle was fought every night as Ra defeated Apophis every morning when the sun came up. Brian Godawa notes that “the Sumerians had three stories where the gods... destroy sea monsters in their pursuit of establishing order.”

In a recent episode of the Naked Bible Podcast, episode 225, Michael Heiser talks about how Leviathan was a "very well-known symbol for chaos" in the ancient world. "Everyone in the ancient world knows this stuff," says Heiser. He explains that, "if we were Canaanites, we'd talk about Lotan, and Baal is the one who defeats Lotan. If you were Babylonian, you would say the great chaos monster was Tiamat (the Babylonian equivalent of Leviathan), that's who Marduk defeats," and it's Marduk who "brings order to the world" (Transcript, p. 9).

Every culture wanted to claim that it was their god who defeated, and/or defeats, the Chaos Monster. In Job 41:8, God addresses this. God asks Job to "remember the battle." What battle? The battle at the beginning of creation that all the ancient cultures were familiar with.

Yahweh says that He, and He alone, is the one who defeats Leviathan (vv. 9ff). Verse 25 says that, when Leviathan "raises himself up, the mighty fear." The word translated "mighty" is "EL," the ancient word for "god" or "goddess." Yahweh is saying that, contrary to the claims of the other cultures, their gods not only didn't defeat Leviathan...their gods are actually afraid of him!

## **The Exodus Event**

Just as Yahweh defeated Leviathan at the beginning of creation, so too He defeats Leviathan at the Exodus event, which is described as a new creation. This is brought out clearly in Psalm 74 and Isaiah 51. Isaiah 51:9-10 says: "Was it not You who cut Rahab in pieces (Rahab is another Hebrew name for Leviathan), Was it not you who pierced the dragon? Was it not You who dried up the sea, the waters of the great deep; Who made the depths of the sea a pathway for the redeemed to cross over?"

Verses 15-16 go on to say: "For I am the Lord your God, who stirs up the sea and its waves roar (the Lord of hosts is His name). I have put My words in your mouth and have covered you with the shadow of My hand, to establish the heavens, to found the earth, and to say to Zion, 'You are My people.'"

The great puritan theologian, John Owen, noted that the Exodus event, and the establishment of the Covenant with Israel, is described in this passage in terms of a creation of the heavens and earth.

If the establishment of the Old Covenant is described in these terms, it is no surprise then that the calling out of God's New Covenant People would be accompanied by a defeat of the Chaos beast (Rev 19) and followed by the creation of a New Heaven and New Earth (Rev 21-22).

The Old Testament, in fact, looked forward to this third and final defeat of Chaos in, what is known as, "Isaiah's Little Apocalypse."

"In that day the Lord will punish Leviathan the fleeing serpent, With His fierce and great and mighty sword, Even Leviathan the twisted serpent; And He will kill the dragon who lives in the sea" (Isaiah 27:1 NASB).

If Isaiah's "Little Apocalypse" previewed Leviathan being vanquished once and for all, where do we find this final victory over chaos being referred to in John's "Big Apocalypse" (so to speak)? I would suggest Revelation 19:20, where the seven-headed-beast is thrown alive into the lake of fire.

And, Again, Revelation 13:10, speaking of the Sea Beast, says: "If anyone is destined for captivity, to captivity he goes; if anyone kills with the sword, with the sword he must be killed." In Isaiah 27:1, Leviathan is pierced with Yahweh's fierce, great and mighty sword. Revelation 19:15 speaks of the "sharp sword" that comes from Yeshua's mouth.

## **Captivity**

Interestingly, I would note that the only other place in the New Testament where this exact word for "captivity" (aichmalosia) is used is Ephesians 4:8 where Jesus conquers the demonic spirits associated with the land of Bashan and takes them captive (Michael Heiser, *The Unseen Realm*, 291-295; *Reversing Hermon*, 96-99). Thus, the word is previously associated with the captivity of supernatural or divine beings. I would suggest that it is being used in the same way here. Yahweh is once again taking Leviathan into captivity; this time permanently... in the Lake of Fire.

## **The Image of the Beast**

In "THE BACKGROUNDS AND MEANING OF THE IMAGE OF THE BEAST," Rebekah Yi Liu makes the interesting observation: "The Bible starts and ends with the making of an image.

The first mention of making an image is found in Gen 1: the making of human beings in God's image. The language of Revelation 13 alludes to the Genesis story of the creation of human beings. Verbally, the language of Revelation 13 parallels the language of creation in Genesis 1-2. The same nouns occur in both passages, i.e., sea (Gen 1:10, Rev 13:1), land (Gen 1:10, Rev 13:11), beasts (Gen 1: 24, Rev 13:1, 11), image (Gen 1: 26, 27, Rev 13:14)."

Drawing on the Septuagint, she notes that "the verbs used for the making of the image are the same" (p. 97).

In Genesis, God "makes" man in his own "image" (Gen. 1:26) and "breathes" life into his nostrils (Gen. 2:7). In Revelation 13, an "image" is "made" of the Sea Beast, and life is "breathed" into it (Rev. 13:14-15). This represents "a reversal of the creation account" (Yi Liu, p. 98).

Verse 15 talks about The False Prophet causing people to worship the image of the Beast. Steven Friesen notes: "Sacrificial activity for the emperors took place in a myriad of contexts. Emperors were worshipped in their own temples, at temples of other gods, in theaters, in gymnasiums, in stoas... in judicial settings, in private homes and elsewhere. Imperial cults," says Friesen, "were everywhere" (Satan's Throne, p. 363).

Just as man was made to be God's image-bearer, by subduing the earth and bringing order to God's Creation, Nero became the image-bearer of Leviathan (God's age-old enemy) and attempted to bring chaos to God's newly created order – the New Covenant Church.

## **Closing Remarks**

The role of Nero Ceaser in the Book of Revelation is blatantly obvious. As Adela Collins notes, Revelation chapters 13 and 17 "express" a "clear and intense interest in the figure of Nero" Caesar (p. 188).

Another thing that is blatantly obvious is the Leviathan imagery that undergirds Revelation's portrayal of the Beast. When these two factors are taken together, Nero's death, prior to AD 70, is irrelevant to the overall picture John is painting. Nero Ceaser was merely the temporal manifestation of something that pre... and postdates his time on the throne.

Nero died in AD 68, but the chaotic forces of darkness continued to wage their war for two more years. They failed.

While the temple lay in ruins, and the city of Jerusalem in rubble, the heavenly temple and city, that we are all a part of today, rose from the ashes.

And, the chaotic powers of darkness, that attempted to halt Yahweh's plans to bring all peoples into the new city and the new temple, are forever consigned to the Lake of Fire... prepared for the Devil and his angels.

<https://burrosofberea.com/identifying-the-sea-beast-of-revelation/>

**Revelation 13:5** And the beast was given a mouth uttering haughty and blasphemous words, and it was allowed to exercise authority for forty-two months.

I think most people are familiar with the atrocities committed under Nero. He fed Christians to the lions and burned them at the stake; the original "Roman Candles," as Chilton says.

According to Church Tradition, both the Apostle Peter and the Apostle Paul died at

the hands of Nero. And, as a matter of historical record, Nero's persecution of the Church, his "war with the Holy Ones" to "overcome them," lasted exactly 42 months; from the middle of November AD 64 to the beginning of June AD 68.

<https://burrosofberea.com/identifying-the-sea-beast-of-revelation/>

Nero hunted the Christians down, tortured them, and brutally murdered them. This lasted "42 months, from the middle of November 64 to the beginning of June 68." [19], coinciding with Revelation 13:5. The early Christians now faced persecution on both fronts – Apostate Israel and Rome.

In the midst of this, there was a Zealot uprising in Jerusalem in AD 66 which drove the Roman-Jewish War. By the time Nero died, Rome would turn its full attention to the Jews. By AD 70, the Romans would destroy Jerusalem. The sea beast (Rome) would turn on the Harlot (Jerusalem) and "make her desolate and naked" (Rev. 17:16).

<https://burrosofberea.com/the-rapture-its-no-secret-anymore-so-whos-going-to-buy-the-antichrists-lure/>

**Revelation 13:10** If anyone is to be taken captive, to captivity he goes; if anyone is to be slain with the sword, with the sword must he be slain. Here is a call for the endurance and faith of the saints.

Interestingly, I would note that the only other place in the New Testament where this exact word for "captivity" (aichmalosia) is used is Ephesians 4:8...where Jesus conquers the demonic spirits associated with the land of Bashan and takes them captive (Michael Heiser, The Unseen Realm, 291-295; Reversing Hermon, 96-99). Thus, the word is previously associated with the captivity of supernatural or divine beings. I would suggest that it is being used in the same way here. Yahweh is once again taking Leviathan into captivity; this time permanently...in the Lake of Fire.

<https://burrosofberea.com/identifying-the-sea-beast-of-revelation/>

**Revelation 13:11** Then I saw another beast rising out of the earth. It had two horns like a lamb and it spoke like a dragon.

The idea of two Beasts, one associated with the sea and the other associated with the land, as Revelation 13 describes, was a well-known and common motif in the ancient world. The names of these beasts were, Leviathan and Behemoth, respectively.

This is **precisely why** David Chilton titled the section of his commentary, dealing with Revelation 13, "LEVIATHAN AND BEHEMOTH." David Chilton was way ahead of his time! More and more scholars are beginning to make the connection between Revelation 13 and the ancient Leviathan and Behemoth texts.

<https://burrosofberea.com/identifying-the-sea-beast-of-revelation/>

## **Chaos in the First Century**

The implications for John's usage of the familiar imagery are crystal clear when understood in light of the historical context of Revelation. As renowned biblical scholar Andrew Angel points out in his monograph *Chaos and the Son of Man*: "the beast from the sea represents Rome," and "the beast from the land represents a local authority" demanding emperor worship.[18] According to Angel, "Revelation 13 is a creative reworking of the Leviathan and Behemoth myth... to describe the contemporary persecution of the church under the power of Rome and local authorities." [19]

In Revelation 13:11, the worship of the first beast (Rome) is demanded by the Second Beast (the local authority), and Revelation 13:15 speaks of people being forced to worship the image of the first beast. This precisely fits the historical setting in which Revelation was written. As Steven Friesen notes, "Sacrificial activity for the emperors took place in a myriad of contexts. Emperors were worshipped in their own temples, at temples of other gods, in theaters, in gymnasiums, in stoas... in judicial settings, in private homes and elsewhere. Imperial cults," says Friesen, "were everywhere." [20]

With this in mind, the second beast would be first-century Israel, which made its allegiance clear by rejecting their own Messiah and declaring, "We have no king but Caesar" (John 19:15; cf. John 11:45-50). Noting the "cozy relationship with Rome," Doug Wilson points out that "the land," from which the second beast comes, is "best understood" as "the land of Israel." [21] "Putting all this together," says Wilson, "I take the land beast as representing the priesthood of apostate Israel, with the high priest as the likely representative." [22]

Accordingly, "apostate Judaism became completely subservient to the Roman State," and "the Jewish synagogues enforced submission to the emperor. Similarly, they organized economic boycotts against those who refused to submit to Caesar as Lord, with the leaders of the synagogues 'forbidding all dealings with the excommunicate' and going so far as to put them to death." [23]

## **Biblical Imagery from Genesis to Revelation and Back**

This was the situation in the first century at the time that the book of Revelation was written. The imagery of the Sea Beast and the Land Beast was meant to convey the chaos and disorder unleashed upon believers at the time by the unholy alliance between a pagan empire and an apostate people. The source of the imagery for these two beasts is found in the pages of Scripture itself and in the history of the time, not in modern technology or the latest sci fi movies of our day. If this is the case with the imagery John employs to describe the beasts themselves, it is also the case with the imagery behind the "image of the beast" as well. John wants his readers to use Scripture as their guide to understanding

what he is saying, and it stretches all the way back to the book of Genesis.

In the beginning God brought order out of chaos, and Adam and Eve were to be His image bearers, spreading Godly order to creation by taking dominion over it. Conversely, the beast is the image of chaos trying to assert itself over and against the new order being brought about by the New Adam (Jesus).[24]

Verbally, the language of Revelation 13 tracks precisely with the language of the creation account in Genesis 1-2.[25] The same nouns occur in both passages, i.e., "sea" (Gen. 1:10; Rev. 13:1), "land" (Gen. 1:10; Rev. 13:11), "beasts" (Gen. 1: 24; Rev. 13:1, 11), and "image" (Gen. 1: 26, 27; Rev. 13:14). Additionally, the verbs used for the making of the image are also the same. In Genesis, God "makes" man in his own "image" (Gen. 1:26) and "breathes" life into his nostrils (Gen. 2:7). In Revelation 13, an "image" is "made" of the Sea Beast, and life is "breathed" into it (Rev. 13:14-15). This represents an attempted reversal of the creation account. It was an effort to return to chaos and usurp the rights of the newly crowned Ruler of the Kings of the Earth (Rev. 1:5). Just as Adam and Eve were to be the image bears of Godly order, Nero/Rome had become the image bearer of chaos and destruction. Craig Koester sums it up well: "When the finishing touches were put onto the image of the beast, Nero sat for the portrait." [26]

## Conclusion

From Genesis to Revelation, and from Revelation back to Genesis, Scripture interprets Scripture. Scripture should not be interpreted in light of modern-day headlines, technological advances, or even great sci-fi movies. While today's prophecy pundits are waiting for Skynet to become self-aware and fulfill Revelation 13:15, yesterday's prophecy pundits were actually closer to the truth in waiting for a statue to be built. Their error was in the "waiting" part. The statues that embodied the image of the beast were in the streets and coliseums of Rome 2,000 years ago. Both the beast and its image are in the far, distant past. As we look to our own future, we should put the past in the past and focus on the "image" that we've been called to be in this world – His image. In doing so, we need to work to make this world into the image He wants it to be. It's an image of a world where God's will is done on earth as it is in heaven (Matt. 6:10). As we move forward, let's discard Dispensationalism's doomsday "image," the apocalyptic scenarios that have hampered and hindered us in this regard for well over a century now.

<https://burrosofberea.com/biblical-imagery-vs-modern-imagination-capturing-the-image-of-the-beast/>

**Revelation 13:14** and by the signs that it is allowed to work in the presence of the beast it deceives those who dwell on earth, telling them to make an image for the beast that was wounded by the sword and yet lived.

## The Image of the Beast

In "THE BACKGROUNDS AND MEANING OF THE IMAGE OF THE BEAST," Rebekah Yi Liu makes the interesting observation: "The Bible starts and ends with the making of an image."

The first mention of making an image is found in Gen 1: the making of human beings in God's image. The language of Revelation 13 alludes to the Genesis story of the creation of human beings. Verbally, the language of Revelation 13 parallels the language of creation in Genesis 1-2. The same nouns occur in both passages, i.e., sea (Gen 1:10, Rev 13:1), land (Gen 1:10, Rev 13:11), beasts (Gen 1: 24, Rev 13:1, 11), image (Gen 1: 26, 27, Rev 13:14)."

Drawing on the Septuagint, she notes that "the verbs used for the making of the image are the same" (p. 97).

In Genesis, God "makes" man in his own "image" (Gen. 1:26) and "breathes" life into his nostrils (Gen. 2:7). In Revelation 13, an "image" is "made" of the Sea Beast, and life is "breathed" into it (Rev. 13:14-15). This represents "a reversal of the creation account" (Yi Liu, p. 98).

Verse 15 talks about The False Prophet causing people to worship the image of the Beast. Steven Friesen notes: "Sacrificial activity for the emperors took place in a myriad of contexts. Emperors were worshipped in their own temples, at temples of other gods, in theaters, in gymnasiums, in stoas...in judicial settings, in private homes and elsewhere. Imperial cults," says Friesen, "were everywhere" (Satan's Throne, p. 363).

Just as man was made to be God's image-bearer, by subduing the earth and bringing order to God's Creation, Nero became the image-bearer of Leviathan (God's age-old enemy) and attempted to bring chaos to God's newly created order – the New covenant Church.

<https://burrosofberea.com/identifying-the-sea-beast-of-revelation/>

**Revelation 13:15** And it was allowed to give breath to the image of the beast, so that the image of the beast might even speak and might cause those who would not worship the image of the beast to be slain.

The key to understanding the "image" of the beast is understanding the Biblical "imagery" that John is using to begin with.

As David Chilton stated, the symbols in the book of Revelation weren't "written in some sort of code" that was meant to be "unintelligible" to the original audience, [12] only to be deciphered centuries later. "The only way to understand St. John's system of symbolism," writes Chilton, "is to become familiar with the Bible itself. [13] In other words, John was expecting his readers to use scripture in order to

understand the meaning behind his symbolism.

<https://burrosofberea.com/biblical-imagery-vs-modern-imagination-capturing-the-image-of-the-beast/>

**Revelation 13:16** Also it causes all, both small and great, both rich and poor, both free and slave, to be marked on the right hand or the forehead,

**Revelation 13:17** so that no one can buy or sell unless he has the mark, that is, the name of the beast or the number of its name.

Is the mark of the beast a tattoo on the forehead and/or a barcode imprinted on the right hand (1970's version), or is it the COVID vaccine and/or a microchip embedded under the skin (today's version)? The word translated "mark" is *charagma*, and it refers to "a mark that is engraved, etched, branded, cut, imprinted, mark, stamp." [1] So it seems like John actually saw a branding type of mark in the vision.

But if that's what he saw, then that's not what it really was. Throughout the vision, John is not viewing the actual events or realities themselves – as if he's watching divine news footage played out in advance. He's seeing images and symbols that represent those events and realities. In other words, the thing he sees is not the thing that it represents.

For example, churches are not literally lampstands (Rev. 1:12, 20). Jesus was not literally a lion or a lamb (Rev. 5:5). The seven spirits of God are not literally seven horns and seven eyes (Rev. 5:6). Our prayers are not literally golden bowls of incense (Rev. 5:8). And the beast itself was not literally a seven-headed sea monster rising up from the depths like Godzilla (Rev. 13:1). Everything John sees is a symbol that represents something else. While the symbol is meant to say something about the referent, the symbol is not literally the referent, or vice versa.

Thus, an engraved imprint on the hand or forehead is a symbol that's meant to signify a deeper concept. Just like everything else in John's vision, it's an image meant to telegraph a richer idea. As Ken Gentry puts it: "This is dramatic imagery, not literal reality." [2] And it's not terribly difficult to figure out what that imagery represents. As Gary DeMar points out: "Every Jew would have understood what a mark on the hand and forehead meant." [3]

"And it shall serve as a sign to you on your hand, and as a reminder on your forehead, that the law of the LORD may be in your mouth; for with a powerful hand the LORD brought you out of Egypt" (Ex. 13:9).

"Hear, O Israel! The LORD is our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. These words, which I am commanding you today, shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your sons and shall talk of them when you sit in your house

and when you walk by the way and when you lie down and when you rise up. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand and they shall be as frontals on your forehead. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates” (Deut. 6:4-8).

David Chilton put it well: the mark of the beast represents a “Satanic parody” of “wholehearted obedience to God’s Law in thought and deed (Deut. 6:6-8).”[4] The mark of the beast, in essence, is a reversal of the requirement that God’s Law alone govern our thoughts and actions.

The first-century Christians were faced with the reality that they could not serve two masters. It’s the same reality that many who had gone before had faced. It is a choice between following the commands and precepts of the Lord, or following a foreign set of commands and precepts contrary to the Lord’s. Thus, John specifically contrasts receiving the mark of the beast with keeping the commandments of God:

“And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; they have no rest day and night, those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name. Here is the perseverance of the saints who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus” (Rev. 14:11-12).

Does this mean the passage has no application today? Far from it. While the book of Revelation was fulfilled in the past, its principles are still applicable in the present. God’s Word is not dead and stagnant. It’s “living and active” (Heb. 4:12). And if we want to actively live out the implications of Revelation 13:16 in our own lives, we can do so by whole-heartedly remaining faithful to Christ’s commands when our culture is pressuring us to do otherwise. There’s no need to look for tattoos, barcodes, vaccines or even microchips.

<https://burrosofberea.com/missing-the-mark-of-the-beast/>

**Revelation 13:18** This calls for wisdom: let the one who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man, and his number is 666.

In the ancient world, letters served as both letters of the alphabet and numerals in the numbering system. Thus, anyone’s name could be calculated by simply adding up the numerical value of its letters, and there are many examples of this in antiquity. John’s cryptogram, however, was not quite as easy as his readers might at first think. Hence it required “wisdom” and “understanding.” The calculation had to be made in Hebrew, and not Greek. This way, Greek-speaking Roman officials and informants couldn’t easily decode the fact that he was speaking about the Emperor: Nero Ceaser.

<https://burrosofberea.com/identifying-the-sea-beast-of-revelation/>

In the world of modern internet buzz, it seems the head of the Church of Rome

has been tossed aside in favor of the head of the Church of England[2] as the number one contender for the position of the Antichrist. The Daily Star reports that "Charles III was crowned six months, six weeks, and six days after the funeral of his mother, Queen Elizabeth II – 666." [3] But this is just the tip of the iceberg. The speculation regarding Charles started long before he was crowned king.

## **Hebrew Gematria and Old Computers**

In a Media Monarchy article, entitled "Prince Charles of Wales Equals 666," [4] we are told: "Prince Charles of Wales in actual Hebrew is pronounced 'Nasich Charles Mem Wales'. The Hebrew pronunciation itself equals 666 in Gematria. Is it coincidence that Prince Charles official title 'Prince Charles of Wales' equates to 666 in its English form and corresponding Hebrew and Greek forms. And then even when translated form [sic] English into Hebrew and then compared to Gematria it still equals 666. The statistical odds are astronomical making this absolutely impossible and a complete modern miracle." [5] If this is the case, the bar has surely been lowered for what passes as a "miracle" in modern times.

Monte Judah, of Lamb and Lion Ministries, claims to have made this miracle discovery decades ago – making the positive identification as far back as 1981. [6] According to Judah, he and a friend wrote a computer program using Hebrew Gematria to decipher the meaning of 666. He claims "this gematria program is used throughout the world," and he and his friend "simply adapted that system to the English alphabet." He then says he "used that program to punch in all world leaders' names." According to Judah: "In 1981, the one name that kicked up equaling 666 was Prince Charles of Wales." While the word Antichrist only appears in four verses in the entire Bible (confined to the epistles of John), Judah claims "there are 40 different prophecies" that "are all about the Antichrist," and "Prince Charles matches them." Since making the discovery in 1981, Judah says he's "watched this with great interest over the years."

To be precise, he's been watching this "with great interest" for over 42 years now, and one wonders what computer program Judah could have possibly been using in 1981. The "all new Commodore 64" [7] wasn't even introduced until 1982. [8] Nonetheless, the irony here is fitting. The interpretive methods of today's prophecy pundits are to Biblical exegesis what the Commodore 64 is to modern technology. In other words, their approach is inadequate and irrelevant to what the Bible is actually saying.

## **The Antichrist is not the Beast**

Aside from the obvious nonsense of equating King Charles with a Biblical figure spoken of 2,000 years before Charles existed, the real underlying error is that of equating the Antichrist with the Beast (666) of Revelation 13 in the first place. In an article on Christianity.com entitled "What Does the Bible Say About the

Antichrist?", Clarence L. Haynes Jr. informs the reader that the Bible "refers to the person of the Antichrist in Revelation 13. Revelation 13:1-4 describes the Antichrist as the beast that comes out of the sea." [9] He encourages the reader to "read Revelation 13:1-10 for full details on the Antichrist." [10]

This is just inaccurate. There is no mention of the Antichrist in Revelation 13. While Revelation 13 does speak of "the beast that comes out of the sea," it simply does not use the word "Antichrist." Within the pages of Scripture itself, John is the Biblical writer who coined the phrase "Antichrist" [11] (1 John 2:18, 22; 4:3; 2 John 7), and the term is exclusive to him. If John had intended to say "Antichrist" in Revelation 13, he was quite capable of doing so. Yet, he didn't. <https://burrosofberea.com/will-the-real-antichrist-please-stand-up/>

**Revelation 16:3** The second angel poured out his bowl into the sea, and it became like the blood of a corpse, and every living thing died that was in the sea.

Drax the Destroyer is a great character in the Marvel Universe, and Drax the Dispensationalist would make a great character in the Dispensational Universe. For example, in classic Drax-style, Ron Rhodes argues that "key events described in the book of Revelation simply did not occur in A.D. 70." [14] Among these "key events," Rhodes points out that not "'every living creature in the sea died,' as predicted in Revelation 16:3." [15] This is one of those passages that the Dispensationalist loves to point to and exclaim, "THAT... didn't happen in AD 70!" [16]

To fit Revelation 16:3 into AD 70, Rhodes contends that one "must resort to an allegorical interpretation" to explain this verse since it "did not happen literally." [17] Just like Drax, the metaphor goes right over Rhodes' head. Drax would miss John's intended meaning by missing where John intends us to go to discover that meaning. Of course, Drax would have an excuse. He's a Guardian of the Galaxy, not a theologian. Theologians, on the other hand, really have no excuse. Their job is to be guardians of sound, Biblical theology. That's what they get paid for. This being the case, the imagery of fish dying in the sea (Rev. 16:3) should sound familiar to them.

## **The Old Testament: It's Where to Go to Get Directions**

The truth is that the Dispensationalists must resort to extreme literalism because the Old Testament gets left behind when they come to the book of Revelation. Without the Old Testament as a guide, one reads the book of Revelation blindly. In the end, the real victims are the people in the pews who end up next to their leaders in the Dispensational ditch.

It goes without saying that you can't recognize something you've never seen before. With that said, John expects his readers to have seen all of this before – in the Old Testament. It's been noted that "out of 404 verses in Revelation, 278

contain references or allusions, direct or indirect, to the Old Testament.”[24] These Old Testament allusions are the symbols on John’s map and, as David Chilton puts it, “The only way to understand St. John’s system of symbolism is to become familiar with the Bible itself.”[25]

As we navigate our way through the book of Revelation, the Old Testament should be our guide. Without it, we’ll never get to our destination, and we’ll end up in the wrong location. This is exactly what has happened to God’s people since the rise of Dispensationalism. In short, we’ve been given bad directions. Armageddon has supposedly been coming for decades, and yet here we still are. The rapture hasn’t happened, the planet hasn’t blown up, and as Ron Rhodes points out, the fish in the sea haven’t died. But the presence of fish in the ocean doesn’t mean that Revelation has yet to be set into motion, it just means that the prophecy isn’t about Jesus coming back to kill a bunch of fish.

Just like every Old Testament prophecy that’s been fulfilled, fulfilled New Testament prophecies have ongoing applications to believers of every generation. On the other hand, if the book of Revelation is about the final generation of human history, then it has been irrelevant to every generation for almost 2000 years now. If Dispensationalism is true, then Revelation will only have meaning for those alive when the fish in the sea finally die.

### **Making Sure We Don’t Miss the Meaning**

Taking John’s prophecy out of its historical setting, and teleporting it thousands of years into the future, strips the prophecy of its original meaning and robs it of its far-reaching application. It becomes nothing more than a play book for the end of the world, as God’s people look for the world to end. Every decade becomes a countdown to Armageddon, and every decade becomes a restart for the countdown. People spend their entire lives waiting for events that never happen. To be more specific, they spend their entire lives waiting for events that already happened – almost 2000 years ago. This is like waiting to see who wins the first Superbowl. Such a statement is incoherent since that game was played a long time ago.

The Dispensational efforts to deny that the game has already been played are equally incoherent. The book of Revelation isn’t about fish literally dying in the sea, or even a literal seven-headed beast coming up from the sea – just like Godzilla (Rev. 13:1). Dispensationalism’s operating hermeneutic seems to be: Scripture is to be interpreted in light of the newest movies and the latest headlines. With that in mind, perhaps they should rewatch Guardians of the Galaxy and learn a lesson from Drax the Destroyer. The Biblical metaphors are going right over their head every time the text is read.

<https://burrosofberea.com/missing-the-metaphor-the-theology-of-drax-the-dispensationalist/>

**Revelation 17:8** The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to rise from the bottomless pit and go to destruction. And the dwellers on earth whose names have not been written in the book of life from the foundation of the world will marvel to see the beast, because it was and is not and is to come.

**(YLT) Revelation 17:8** 'The beast that thou didst see: it was, and it is not; and it is about to come up out of the abyss, and to go away to destruction, and wonder shall those dwelling upon the earth, whose names have not been written upon the scroll of the life from the foundation of the world, beholding the beast that was, and is not, although it is. **(Young's Literal Translation)**

### **Was, Is Not, and About to Come**

The very language of Revelation 17:8 is indicative of this. "The beast that you saw was, and is not, and is about to come up out of the abyss..." "Was" indicates something old, something ancient, something from the past.

"Is not" indicates that this ancient entity was not yet on the scene when John saw the vision. Interestingly, as we noted earlier, the sixth head of the Beast the sixth king (Nero) was on the scene when John saw the vision. This would suggest that this ancient enemy had not yet begun to use Nero for its own purposes yet. The angel tells John, the Beast "is not," but the sixth head of the Beast now "is." The conclusion of the sixth ruler -Nero- "about to" be used by an ancient beastly power...seems inescapable.

Just a Quick Side-Bar: that very language, "about to come up out of the abyss," is so important. That's a form of the Greek word *MELLO*. That word pops up everywhere when it comes to eschatological passages in the New Testament. You can't escape it. You can't get around it. The events that we associate with the "end times" were "about to" occur in the first century. The appearance of the Beast is no exception. This eschatological chaos monster would not wait for some 2,000+ years to immerge from the abyss. He, or it, was "about to" rise, from the spiritual chasm known as "the abyss," in the first century.

And, the Beast's very origin itself points to something supernatural; something that transcends merely Nero or the Roman Empire. "The Abyss" is a place of imprisonment for divine beings. It is where the demons begged Jesus not to send them in Luke 8:31. It's associated with the realm of the dead in Romans 10:7. It's where the demons, described as "locusts," are released from in Revelation chapter nine. This strongly suggests a supernatural origin for, and identification of, the Sea Beast.

### **A Common Theme in the Ancient World**

But, can we get more specific? Does the Bible give us any clues as to exact identity of this ancient enemy? Yes, it does...and John's readers would have

recognized it instantly. And, if you've ever read David's Chilton's commentary on Revelation, you'd recognize it instantly as well. The idea of two Beasts, one associated with the sea and the other associated with the land, as Revelation 13 describes, was a well-known and common motif in the ancient world. The names of these beasts were, Leviathan and Behemoth, respectively.

This is precisely why David Chilton titled the section of his commentary, dealing with Revelation 13, "LEVIATHAN AND BEHEMOTH." David Chilton was way ahead of his time! More and more scholars are beginning to make the connection between Revelation 13 and the ancient Leviathan and Behemoth texts.

### **See Comments on Revelation 13:2**

<https://burrosofberea.com/identifying-the-sea-beast-of-revelation/>

**Revelation 17:9** This calls for a mind with wisdom: the seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman is seated;

**Revelation 17:10** they are also seven kings, five of whom have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come, and when he does come he must remain only a little while.

John is told that the seven heads of the Sea Beast are "seven kings; five have fallen, one is, the other has not yet come; and when he comes, he must remain a little while." The first five Caesars were Julius, Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, and Claudius. Nero, the sixth Ceaser was on the throne as John was writing the Book and seeing the vision. The seventh on the list, Galba, had not yet come. When he did, he only remined "a little while;" his reign only lasted six months.

<https://burrosofberea.com/identifying-the-sea-beast-of-revelation/>

**Revelation 17:16** And the ten horns that you saw, they and the beast will hate the prostitute. They will make her desolate and naked, and devour her flesh and burn her up with fire,

**Revelation 17:17** for God has put it into their hearts to carry out his purpose by being of one mind and handing over their royal power to the beast, until the words of God are fulfilled.

By the time Nero died, Rome would turn its full attention to the Jews. By AD 70, the Romans would destroy Jerusalem. The sea beast (Rome) would turn on the Harlot (Jerusalem) and "make her desolate and naked" (Rev. 17:16).

The Zealot uprising that precipitated this sudden turn of events was telegraphed by Paul in 2 Thessalonians 2. Once the restrainer (the legitimate priesthood) was taken out of the way, the lawless Zealots would be revealed and the rebellion against Rome would begin. Amid all the action, many Jewish converts to Christianity would revert back to Judaism and renounce their belief in Jesus as

the Messiah. These are the Antichrists of whom John spoke (1 John 2:18, 22; 4:3; and 2 John 1:7).[20]

<https://burrosofberea.com/the-rapture-its-no-secret-anymore-so-whos-going-to-buy-the-antichrists-lure/>

**Revelation 19:20** And the beast was captured, and with it the false prophet who in its presence had done the signs by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped its image. These two were thrown alive into the lake of fire that burns with sulfur.

**Revelation 19:21** And the rest were slain by the sword that came from the mouth of him who was sitting on the horse, and all the birds were gorged with their flesh.

Revelation 19:20 presents us with a conundrum of sorts, a “catch 22” for the Preterist. In the context of the passage, the heavens open and Jesus comes on a white horse accompanied by Heavenly armies in the sky (vv. 11-14). We understand this as a reference to Jesus’ coming in judgment in AD 70. Verse 20 states: “And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image; these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone.”

Here’s the monkey wrench: If Nero is to be identified with the Beast, and Nero died in AD 68, how is it that the Beast is “seized” in AD 70, and “thrown alive” into the Lake of Fire at that time?

Critics of the Preterist viewpoint waste no time in pointing out the apparent discrepancy. In an article entitled, “Preterism Examined & Refuted,” Charles Campbell uses this apparent inconsistency like a rhetorical weapon. His argument is succinct, to the point, and razor sharp:

“Nero committed suicide two years before preterists say Jesus came back. Preterists believe Jesus’ prophecy about coming back in Matthew 24 was fulfilled in A.D. 70. But Nero committed suicide in June of 68, two years before A.D. 70!”

Likewise, Michael Heiser wonders why “Nero gets mentioned so often...Nero is completely ruled out,” according to Heiser. The Beast’s demise comes “by the hand of Jesus when Jesus returns. That didn’t happen with Nero. It doesn’t describe Nero’s demise by any stretch. So, for the life of me,” continues Heiser, “I don’t know why people are still clinging to Nero ...”

So, the very thing we use to clinch the pre-AD 70 date of Revelation, the death of Nero in 68, becomes the means by which futurists discount any identification of Nero with the Beast of Revelation at all. Both sides use the date of Nero’s death, in AD 68, to support their position.

How do we approach this? If the opening three points (the 42-Month War with the Holy Ones, the Number of the Beast, and the Identity of the 6th King) all point to Nero Caesar, Does Revelation 19:20 harmonize with our previous conclusions?

### **Generic vs. Specific Identity of the Beast**

One way to approach this would be to distinguish between the Generic Identity of the Beast (the Roman Empire as a whole), and the Specific Identity of the Beast (Nero, or whichever Emperor was on the throne at any given time). This way, Nero's death in AD 68 would no longer be an issue. The Roman Empire itself was obviously still around two years later.

The main problem with this is rather obvious: The Romans came out of the Jewish War relatively unscathed. They were the conquerors, not the conquered.

Some argue that the beginnings of the downfall of the Roman Empire can be traced to the Roman-Jewish War but, to place the ultimate fulfillment of any portion of the Book hundreds of years in the future, really goes against the Prophecy's repeated claim that the prophesied events therein were to "shortly come to pass" (e.g., Rev. 1:1). Terms such as "shortly," "quickly," "near," "at hand," etc., clearly indicate that the prophesied events were looming on the horizon and imminent when the Book was written.

To say the passage speaks of the "eventual downfall of the Roman Empire" just doesn't seem plausible.

### **Jewish Religious Zealots**

Another approach, and this is gaining traction on Preterist websites, is to abandon the position that either Nero or Rome are the referent of the Beast Imagery at all. Instead, the increasingly popular idea is "the Beast" imagery refers to "first century Jewish religious zealots" who persecuted Christians and wanted to overthrow Rome.

The main problem with this is, once again, rather obvious: if we take Nero out of the equation and plug something else into that variable, the answer it yields negates the very reason we're looking for an AD 70 fulfillment in the first place! In other words, it's precisely because of Nero's identification as the Beast that we can date the book as pre-AD 70.

Basically, no one is going to look at the three points I opened with (the 42-Month War with the Holy Ones, the Number of the Beast, and the Identity of the Sixth King) and think: "Wow, this is speaking of first century Jewish religious zealots! This is so obvious!"

There is simply no compelling reason to make that connection. One would only make such a connection if the early date for Revelation is already presupposed. But by eliminating Nero as "the Beast," our Preterist Brothers who take this approach are now assuming what they are not able to prove. You simply can't make the case for the early date without Nero. In short, this approach is self-defeating.

If we take Nero off the table, yes we still have the temporal expectation of the author (terms like "shortly," "quickly," "soon," "near," "at hand," etc.). But if we can't establish the latest possible date for the Book's composition to be AD 68 (Nero's death), perhaps John and his readers were looking for events to take place "soon" in the time of Domitian Ceaser? Late-date approaches to Revelation are going to try and argue for increased persecution and emperor worship under Domitian Ceaser in the 90's.

Although I would note that anyone who attempts to make this case is really 30 years behind modern scholarship.

## **Game Changer**

A "game changer" is defined "an event, idea, or procedure that effects a significant shift in the current manner of doing or thinking about something."

Leonard Thompson's 1990 book, *The Book of Revelation: Apocalypse and Empire*, is a GAME CHANGER.

According to Steven Friesen, in the JOURNAL FOR THE STUDY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT:

"There was a time when most interpreters were satisfied to describe the social setting of Revelation as a crisis of persecution under the emperor Domitian, who claimed divine authority and required humans to worship him. Since the publication of Leonard Thompson's book in 1990, however, it has been mostly clear that there was no crisis under Domitian, and that imperial cults were not particularly exaggerated during his reign" ("Satan's Throne," p. 351).

What's important to note is that, both Thompson and Friesen are advocates of the late date. They believe that Revelation was written in the 90's during Domitian's reign. But, they're honest enough to admit that there simply was no crisis under Domitian. They are doing the work of true scholars: Reporting the data as it truly is.

Interestingly, in a 1991 critical review of Thompson's book, Ken Strand of Andrews University, basically concedes Thompson's point that Domitian did not order the persecution of Christians, but dismisses by saying: "At this early time, Roman persecution of Christians was not normally by imperial decision...but was

rather a local matter.” But, then Strand notes that the sole exception was Nero! To echo Gentry again, the Book of Revelation keeps taking us back to Nero’s palace.

More recently, Mark Wilson, of the BIBLICAL ARCHEOLOGICAL SOCIETY, notes that, even though decades have now passed since Thompson’s pivotal book officially pronounced the Domitian persecution theory dead, and most scholars “no longer accept the idea” of Christian persecution under Domitian, nevertheless “such claims continue to circulate in articles, books and sermons.”

“This shows how long it takes to repudiate ‘alternative facts’ that have circulated for over 1,500 years in Christendom.” Wilson concludes by saying: “The ‘fake news’ that Domitian instigated a severe persecution of Christians, and that his claim to be ‘Master and God’ provoked this persecution, needs to be removed from our ‘facts’ about the early church.”

Domitian is simply NOT a viable alternative to Nero as the persecuting power in the Book of Revelation. Anyone who says otherwise is, as Mark Wilson says, buying into “fake news” with regard to Church History.

But, this brings us back to the question then: How do we reconcile Nero’s death, in AD 68, with the Beast’s final demise in AD 70? To try and remove Nero as the referent of the Beast imagery, and replace it with something else like first century Jewish religious zealots, really isn’t a viable option...in my opinion.

## **An Extended Judgment**

Another approach is to see the entire Jewish War, AD 66-70, as part of Christ’s “Judgment-Coming.” Ken Gentry takes this approach, and notes that “the ‘day of the Lord,’ is not one particular day...rather it involves an extended period of judgment (e.g., Joel 3:1, 9–14; Amos 5:18–20).” In other words, it was not a “one-and-done deal... the whole Jewish War with Rome is his judgment, and therefore...his judgment-coming. And like all wars, the Jewish War did not happen in a moment... Nero’s death occurs in the context of the three and one-half year-long Jewish War (Rev. 11:2), after he had initiated it.”

This approach is plausible; especially if you look at the usage of the word “Parousia” in normal, everyday language...where it’s not referring to some eschatological event. It certainly doesn’t carry the idea of a brief appearance. For example, Paul speaks of his own “Parousia” to the Philippians (Phil. 1:26, 2:12). We would assume that Paul actually spent some time in Philippi. The usage, in this context, implies an arrival and extended stay; followed by Paul’s eventual departure.

N.T. Wright points out that the very word, Parousia, was a common word in Greco-Roman culture for “an emperor or dignitary making a state visit to a city province” (The Resurrection of the Son of God, p. 217). The operative word being here is “visit.” The visiting dignitary didn’t simply show up and immediately leave.

There would be an extended period of visitation.

This whole idea of Christ's Parousia, as an extended event, would seem to be supported by Josephus' famous statement about heavenly armies, on chariots in the sky, surrounding the city of Jerusalem. As Preterists we're quick to use this passage in response to people who say there were no "heavenly anomalies," or "cosmic disturbances," associated with the Jewish War. What we sometimes neglect to say, however, is that this miraculous event occurred in AD 66 (the beginning of the war), and not AD 70 (the end of the war).

The bottom line: If the heavenly armies were seen at the beginning of the Jewish War, it is possible to view that entire span of judgment-events as Christ's "Parousia." His "royal visit," so to speak.

My only problem with it would be that, in Matthew 24:29-30, the "coming (erchomai) of the Son of Man" takes place "after the Tribulation of those days," and doesn't seem to be equated with the entire period described as "the Tribulation."

It would seem that the actual "judgment-coming" of Christ is part of the larger, over-all Parousia Event. "But immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. And then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and (then) they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky with power and great glory" (Matthew 24:29-30). Most Preterists would define "the Tribulation" as the period of time beginning with the Neronian Persecution and extending to the Jewish-Roman War, since Christ's "coming" happens after the tribulation, it cannot be the tribulation.

So, where does this leave us?

The evidence definitely points in the direction of Nero Caesar, rather than "first century Jewish religious zealots," as the Beast. But, Nero died two years prior to Christ's "coming" in AD 70.

While it is true that the Beast imagery would extend beyond, specifically, Nero himself and would surely encompass the entire Roman Empire in General, the Roman Empire definitely did not fall in AD 70. Like any war, there were certainly casualties on both sides...no doubt. But, like any war, the casualties on the part of the victor cannot in any way be considered a "defeat." The Romans were victorious in AD 70.

Additionally, as many of our critics point out, Revelation 13:10 states, specifically regarding the Beast: "If anyone is destined for captivity, to captivity he goes; if anyone kills with the sword, with the sword he must be killed." While it is true

that Nero died at the hand of his own sword, the Romans were NOT taken captive in AD 70...by any stretch of the imagination. To borrow Heiser's language, this simply does not describe "Nero's demise," or first century Rome, in any way whatsoever.

And, the idea of Christ's Coming as an "extended judgment," covering the entire period of the Tribulation, doesn't seem to fit the clear statement in Matthew 24 to indicate that Christ's "coming" takes place after the Tribulation and is not to be equated with the tribulation.

If we continue to see "the Beast" as defined in terms of Nero, and/or the Roman empire alone, we are clearly at an impasse when it comes to the Beast's final demise and destruction. While "the Beast" definitely manifested itself in terms of Nero and the first century Roman Empire, I would suggest its ultimate identity was something much more ancient: an evil enemy of Yahweh whose origins stretch back eons before the first century.

### **See Comments on Revelation 17:8.**

If Isaiah's "Little Apocalypse" previewed Leviathan being vanquished once and for all, where do we find this final victory over chaos being referred to in John's "Big Apocalypse" (so to speak)? I would suggest Revelation 19:20, where the seven-headed-beast is thrown alive into the lake of fire.

And, Again, Revelation 13:10, speaking of the Sea Beast, says: "If anyone is destined for captivity, to captivity he goes; if anyone kills with the sword, with the sword he must be killed." In Isaiah 27:1, Leviathan is pierced with Yahweh's fierce, great and mighty sword. Revelation 19:15 speaks of the "sharp sword" that comes from Yeshua's mouth.

<https://burrosofberea.com/identifying-the-sea-beast-of-revelation/>

**Revelation 20:1** Then I saw an angel coming down from heaven, holding in his hand the key to the bottomless pit and a great chain.

**Revelation 20:2** And he seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years,

**Revelation 20:3** and threw him into the pit, and shut it and sealed it over him, so that he might not deceive the nations any longer, until the thousand years were ended. After that he must be released for a little while.

The word "dragon" is used 13 times in the New Testament, with all the usages occurring exclusively, by John, in the book of Revelation. By the time we get to chapter 20, John has already introduced the dragon imagery back in Chapter 12 and used it extensively.

As G.K Beale says: Revelation 12 is a "replay of the Exodus pattern." David S.

Gifford puts it this way: "Revelation 12 is primarily understood through the exodus motif." So, John introduces the dragon in a context that is clearly embedded with Exodus imagery.

In Revelation 12:9, John calls Satan "the great dragon" – using precisely the same title that is given to the Egyptian Pharaoh in the Septuagint version of Ezekiel 29:3. Earlier, in Revelation 12:3, John "colors" his language by adding that Satan is "the great RED dragon."

Consequently, when John uses the word "dragon" to describe Satan in chapter 20, he's expecting lights to go off in his readers' heads – lights that will illuminate the fact that he has a New Exodus in mind. He does this by drawing their thoughts back to Egypt, back to Pharaoh and back to the First Exodus.

**See Comments on Revelation 12:9.**

<https://burrosofberea.com/revelation-20-and-the-new-exodus-part-1-the-dragon/>

**Revelation 20:8** and will come out to deceive the nations that are at the four corners of the earth, Gog and Magog, to gather them for battle; their number is like the sand of the sea.

John picks up on the Gog & Magog theme in the book of Revelation. As Mike Sullivan says, "John is using the symbolism of a past battle of Gog and Magog within Israel's history to depict a future (but "shortly," "at hand," "soon," and "about to be") persecution and battle for John and his contemporaries to experience and relate to." [1]

John does this several other times in Revelation, as well. He takes the reader's mind back to a particular Old Testament time, place, or event in order to recall the circumstances and themes surrounding those times, places, or events. For example, the Church at Thyatira is told:

"But I have this against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and leads My bond-servants astray so that they commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols" (Rev. 2:20).

John obviously didn't mean that this was the same Jezebel whom we find in the Old Testament. It simply means that some of the Christians in John's day were being led astray, in the same manner, that Jezebel had led God's People astray in former times. John does the same thing with other Old Testament terms like Egypt (Rev. 11:8), Sodom (Rev. 11:8), and Babylon (Rev. 14:8; 16:19; 17:5; 18:2; 10, 21). He repurposes these images and applies them to the new situation that he's writing about.

In other words, the situations are similar but not identical. He's taking the core theme or idea behind the Old Testament situation and relating it to his

contemporary situation. The usage of the Old Testament terminology adds an additional element to what he has to say to his readers to enhance his message. And his message wouldn't be quite complete without it. So, the Gog and Magog motif serves to enhance and complete his message in Revelation 20.

Accordingly, one scholar says, "the crucial question" regarding John's reuse of the phrase "Gog and Magog" in Revelation 20 is: "What would have been lost to John, to his original readers, and to us if this apposition had not been included?"[2] In other words, what difference would it make if you took those three words, "Gog and Magog," out of the text of Revelation 20? Why, specifically, is this phrase there? What additional element does it add to what John is communicating that wouldn't have been there otherwise?

In light of what was going on in the first century at the time, the additional element is crystal clear: it's the plot twist. When we understand that Ezekiel 38-39 is fulfilled in the Book of Esther, and Revelation 20 is fulfilled in AD 70, it all comes together and makes perfect sense.

What's going on in the book of Esther? The enemy of God's People (Haman and his cohorts) is in league with the political power of the day (Persia). Haman conspires with the Persian king to exterminate the Jews. In the end, it backfires, and Persia turns on Haman. The deceiver is deceived. The executioner is executed. And God's People are victorious.

What's going on in the book of Revelation? What's going on in the first century? What were his readers experiencing?

The enemy of God's People (apostate Judaism) is in league with the political power of the day (Rome). The Jews and the Romans conspire together to exterminate the Christians. When John wrote, the Neronian persecution was in full swing, and the Christians were being wiped out. But what happens in the end? The beast (Rome) turns on the harlot (Jerusalem), and the True Israel of God (Jews and Gentiles alike who put their faith in Jesus Christ) is revealed.

Believers were being hunted down, persecuted, and killed. When John uses the phrase "Gog and Magog," he lets his readers know that the tables are about to turn – just like they did in Esther's day. And just like Mordecai's three words, "I'm a Jew," were loaded with meaning. John's three words, "Gog and Magog," are loaded with meaning as well.

But this is only the case when we understand Ezekiel's Gog and Magog prophecy in light of its historical fulfillment in the book of Esther. Otherwise, those three words have no meaning. But with the backdrop of the battle in Esther, those three words have all the meaning in the world.

And just because Ezekiel's prophecy was fulfilled in the past, as well as John's,

doesn't mean their words have no meaning for us today. God's Word is not dead and stagnant; it's living and active (Heb. 4:12). It comes to life and speaks to every generation and every new situation. Just like Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego stood their ground in the fields of Babylon and Mordecai in the streets of Persia and the first-century believers in the colosseums of Rome, we are called to stand for the Lord today – against all opposition.

Paul says: "having done everything to stand firm... stand firm" (Eph. 6:12-13). We take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ and destroy every argument and lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God (2 Cor. 10:5). That's another way of saying: we apply the Bible to every area of life. Like those who went before, we turn our backs on the gods of men. We don't bow down to them, and we don't bow to their idols. When the Lord's people are faithful to Him, the Lord is faithful to His People. We need to stand for our God and the truth of His word, against all opposition, just like those who went before.

<https://burrosofberea.com/gog-and-magog-part-10-johns-usage-of-the-phrase-in-revelation-20/>

## **Parallels with Revelation 20**

The sequence of events in 2 Thessalonians 2 runs a close parallel to Revelation 20.[3] Paul and John both speak of a restraint and a release of evil connected with "deception." This three-fold theme of restraint, release, and deception is loud and clear in the words of both passages. In Revelation 20, the restraint, release, and deception are specifically linked to Satan's ability to gather the nations together for "the war" (Rev. 20:8). In God's sovereignty, Satan is not allowed to commence this war prematurely.

While the popular approach of our day views this war as the final war of mankind's history, this seems unlikely given the time of writing. With a major war looming on the horizon when John wrote, that being the Roman-Jewish War, it's difficult to imagine that his readers would have thought of any other war than the one they were about to witness, experience, and see with their own eyes during their own time. It's hard to believe that John was expecting them to imagine some other war thousands of years in the future. With the growing unrest among the Jews in Judea and Asia Minor, one wonders what possible relevance a far distant and unrelated conflict could have even had to the original audience.

With that said, the Roman-Jewish War was largely triggered by a Zealot-lead rebellion in Judea against Rome. The Zealots were kept at bay for the most part as long as the legitimate priesthood remained in power. Once the true priesthood was removed, all hell broke loose. Josephus refers to the Zealots as the "seditious" party who "excited the people to go to war,"[4] while "the high priests" were "part of the multitude that were desirous of peace." [5] Generally speaking, there were two competing factions trying to sway the populace in Jerusalem. One side was pushing to maintain peace with Rome while the other side was pushing

for war.

Looping this in with 2 Thessalonians 2, the restrainer had to be taken out of the way before the lawless one was set free to cause total havoc. Given the historical context of the time, the lawful priest and/or priesthood looks to be a good candidate for the restrainer, while the man of lawlessness was most likely a Zealot leader and/or the Zealot movement itself.

This coincides with Revelation 20 in that the Zealots would have been the tool that Satan used to set the events in motion that would escalate the war. Paul tips his readers off to this by calling the man of lawlessness “the son of perdition” (2 Thess. 2:3) and noting that his “coming” is “by the activity of Satan” (2 Thess. 2:9). The only other time the term “the son of perdition” appears in Scripture is in conjunction with Judas (John 17:12), who was used by Satan. It’s hard to avoid the conclusion that Paul and John were tracking on the same theme.

Revelation 20 and 2 Thessalonians 2 appear to fit together perfectly, and both are a perfect fit for the events leading up to and including the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. In other words, the rebellion in 2 Thessalonians 2 is intrinsically connected to the war in Revelation 20.

<https://burrosofberea.com/unraveling-the-mystery-of-the-lawless-one-part-one/>

**Revelation 21:1** Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more.

**Revelation 21:2** And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

Old earthly Jerusalem was merely a shadow or symbol of the new and heavenly Jerusalem. With that said, the New Jerusalem isn’t a literal city with geographical boundaries and physical walls; rather, the New Jerusalem is very much defined in terms of its citizenry – of its people.

This is most clearly seen by the dimensions of the city given in the book of Revelation. In John’s vision, the city is measured, and its length, height and width are all equal: 12,000 stadia (Rev. 21:15-16). This converts to 1500 miles long by 1500 miles wide by 1500 miles high.[26]

Its longitude and latitude equal the approximate size of the Roman Empire in the first century,[27] the area that the Gospel had already reached by the time John penned the book of Revelation (cf. Rom. 10:18; 16:25-26; Col. 1:5-6; 23). In other words, there were now born-again believers throughout the entire Roman empire by this point in time. Consequently, the golden city had already expanded that far. John’s messaging is clear: where God’s People are, God’s City is.

As Robert H. Gundry explains, in Revelation 21, John transforms “Jerusalem into a symbol of the saints themselves... John is not describing the eternal dwelling place of the saints; he is describing them, and them alone.”[28] Ken Gentry puts

it this way: “The new Jerusalem is a symbol of the redeemed people of God in whom God dwells (Rev 21:3), much like the ‘temple’ in Paul’s writing often represents the people of God and not a physical building (1 Cor 3:16–17; 6:19; 2 Cor 6:16; Eph 2:21).”[29]

The New Testament’s progressive revelation concerning the New Jerusalem as God’s People is epiphanic in unveiling the connection between John 7:37-38 and Zechariah 14:8. Zechariah’s living waters flowing from Jerusalem find their fulfillment in Jesus’ living waters flowing from His people, who comprise the New Jerusalem.

<https://burrosofberea.com/zechariah-14-part-6-zechariah-146-8/>

**Revelation 21:3** And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, “Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God.

This is the reality of the relationship that we have with the Lord in the New Covenant – He pitches His tent and tabernacles among us. The Old Testament feast was merely a type or shadow of that reality. Jesus is the embodiment of all that the Feast of Tabernacles signified and symbolized.

<https://burrosofberea.com/zechariah-14-part-9-zechariah-1416-19/>

This is the reality of the relationship that we have with the Lord in the New Covenant – He pitches His tent and tabernacles among us. The Old Testament feast was merely a type or shadow of that reality. Jesus is the embodiment of all that the Feast of Tabernacles signified and symbolized.

<https://burrosofberea.com/zechariah-14-part-9-zechariah-1416-19/>

**Revelation 21:24** By its light will the nations walk, and the kings of the earth will bring their glory into it,

**Revelation 21:25** and its gates will never be shut by day—and there will be no night there.

We (Christians) should be the light leading the nations into the holy city (Rev. 21:24), and the kings of the earth should be bringing the glory and honor of the nations into that city (Rev. 21:26). If the condition of the world is any indication, our performance has been less than stellar. We’d be getting very poor reviews on Rotten Tomatoes,[22] and God Himself is most likely not happy with our showing.

Ironically, cultural withdrawal was exactly what Dispensationalism’s founder was shooting for when he wrote his script.[23] At first, his movie was not well received. For example, Charles Spurgeon gave the feature film two thumbs down. In reaction to Darby’s unique take on the Bible, Spurgeon said, “We never know

what we shall hear next, and perhaps it is a mercy that these absurdities are revealed one at a time, in order that we may be able to endure their stupidity without dying of amazement.”[24]

Not unlike “It’s a Wonderful Life” and all other sleeper films, the Dispensational film eventually became a huge hit later on. Today, it’s still playing in Christian theaters everywhere, and its damaging effects have hit everywhere. Before we completely lose our country and our culture, let’s put a new movie in.

<https://burrosofberea.com/the-rapture-its-no-secret-anymore-so-whos-going-to-buy-the-antichrists-lure/>

**Revelation 22:3** No longer will there be anything accursed, but the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and his servants will worship him.

The word translated “accursed” is katanáthema, and it refers to a thing “which is devoted or given over to a deity, accursed thing,” according to BDAG.[19] According to Thayer, it is “specifically, an offering resulting from a vow, which after being consecrated to a god was hung upon the walls or columns of the temple, or put in some other conspicuous place.”[20] It is a form of the same Greek word used to translate the Hebrew cherem in the Septuagint version of Zechariah 14:11.[21]

**Septuagint: Zechariah 14:11** they shall dwell in the city; and there shall be no more any curse, and Jerusalem shall dwell securely.

**See Comments on Zechariah 14:11.**

Thus, John and Zechariah are both tracking on the same idea. The meaning is not the reverse or removal of the Genesis curses, but the removal of anything that is “accursed” in the life of a true believer. As members of the New Covenant community, we don’t worship false gods anymore, nor do we make a false god out of anything in our life. For us, every aspect of our lives and all that we do is sacred, holy, and devoted to the Lord. The people of the New Jerusalem “dwell securely” by removing everything “devoted to destruction,” to not incur God’s anger and to ensure God’s blessing.

<https://burrosofberea.com/zechariah-14-part-7-zechariah-149-11/>

**Revelation 22:7** “And behold, I am coming soon. Blessed is the one who keeps the words of the prophecy of this book.”

**See Comments on Revelation 3:11.**

**Revelation 22:12** “Behold, I am coming soon, bringing my recompense with me, to repay each one for what he has done.

**See Comments on Revelation 3:11.**

**For More Full Preterist Resources GO TO:**

**<https://nobinger.com/joomla/index.php/preterist-resources>**