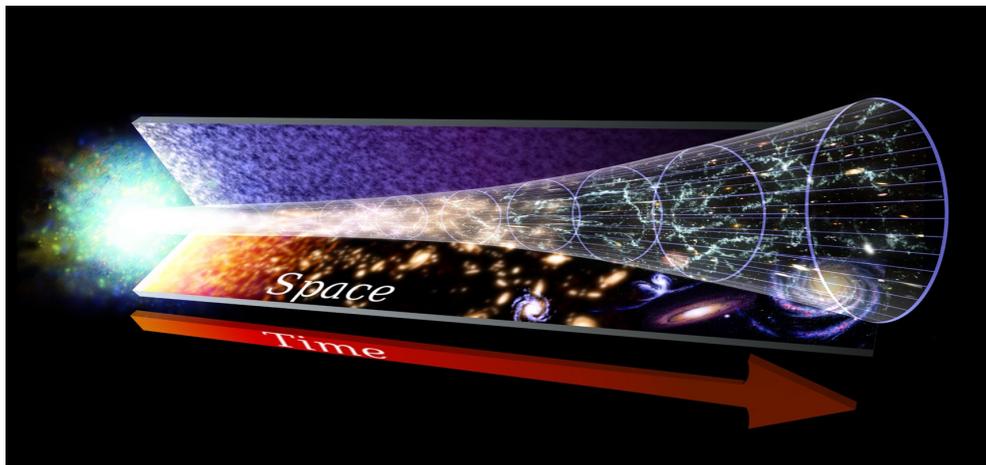


## “THE GREAT JEWISH REVIVAL TO COME” (Zechariah 12:1-14)

The Lord predicted in Zechariah 11 that Israel would apostatize and reject their Messiah in the most insulting manner. Instead they embraced the false shepherd of the Antichrist. But the story, thankfully, doesn't end there. The darkness of the tragedy gives way to the glorious dawn of the revival in Zechariah 12. Israel will return to the true Good Shepherd. Every true Christian, whether Jew or Gentile, should be thrilled when they read this final section. These last three chapters can be called “The Little Apocalypse of Zechariah.” We need to keep reminding ourselves that the prophet's name Zechariah means “Jehovah remembers” a name which serves as a constant reminder to the Jews scattered for over 1900 years around the world that God will never abandon His covenant promises to Israel. John MacArthur explains the general outline of this last section of the book,

“The actual events which are presented here include the world confederacy against Jerusalem, the victory of God's people empowered of the Lord, the conviction of Israel nationally by the Spirit of God, the presentation of Christ as their rejected Messiah, the national day of atonement, the cleansing of the hearts of the nation, the purging of the land of idolatry and false prophets, parenthetically the crucifixion of Messiah, the time of Jacob's trouble, the partial success of the nations invading Palestine, the appearance of the Messiah for His people, their rescue, His coming with His saints, the changed and renovated Holy Land, the establishment of the Messianic kingdom, the punishment of the nations for their feudal assault on Israel, the celebration of the kingdom feast, the Feast of Tabernacles, the complete restoration of the people of God to a holy nation, et cetera. Now that's a lot of prophetic theme for one little section 12 to 14. But it's all here, touched on. A very, very expressive and vital area of prophecy.”



*The burden of the word of the LORD for Israel, saith the LORD, which stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him. (v1)*

The Lord makes clear the promises to Israel in this chapter comes with the authority of Almighty God, “*The burden of the word of the LORD for Israel, saith the LORD.*” For if God didn't make this clear, we might be tempted to look at the last two millennia of Jewish history and conclude that there is no hope for the Jewish people. This “*burden*” indicates that this is a message from God

that is weighted with important words for Israel. It is not a burden to be simply transferred to the NT Church. God is very specific that this is “*for Israel.*” Furthermore, these are not simply hopeful assertions by Zechariah. But rather the language of this chapter reveal that God is intimately and personally involved in the events detailed here. For instance, in verse 2, “*Behold, I will make.*” Verse 3, “*In that day will I make.*” Verse 4, “*I will smite ...and I will open.*” Verse 6, “*In that day will I make.*” This is God not only prophesising the future but promising to direct the future. It doesn’t depend on men or weapons of men. God leaves no doubt that He is in complete control and fully able to complete what He begins. The Jewish people are reminded that this is the God who did the marvellous miracles of creation of the massive solar system and the amazing detail of nature and mankind, “*which stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him.*” God made it all, God sustains and controls it all, and God will end it all.

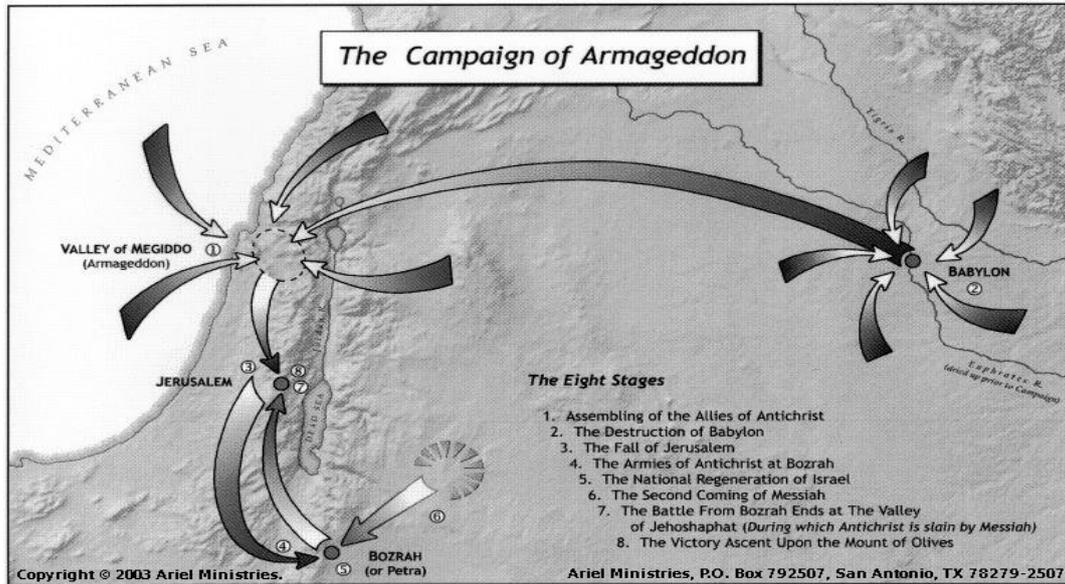
The prophet Zechariah declares here that God is the One, “*which stretcheth forth the heavens.*” This would suggest that the universe has actually increased in size since its creation (and is perhaps still expanding it). For centuries, atheists had clung to the idea that the universe was eternal and unchanging. But in 1916, Albert Einstein’s mathematical *Theory of General Relativity* predicted an expanding universe from a single point beginning to all time, all space and all matter. Before that, nothing existed and the laws of physics break down. In 1927 astronomer Edwin Hubble was the first to actually observe the expansion of the universe through his 100-inch telescope at Mount Wilson Astronomy. The majority of observational evidence subsequently has validated Einstein’s model that the universe is expanding and that it expanded from a single point. At this beginning point of the universe it should be noted that it did not emerge from existing material but “nothing.” Before this point there was no space, time or matter – all of these came into existence at one moment in time just like the Bible described. The fact that the universe is expanding is evidence of a moment of beginning. Because if you rewind the universe in time, we come to the first cause of the space-time continuum. Some scientists label this moment of beginning the “Big Bang.” But the Bible reveals simply, “God Spoke.” This remarkable Biblical confirmation of the expansion of the universe can also be accounted in Isaiah 45:12, 48:12, 51:13; Jeremiah 10:12, 51:15; Job 9:8, 37:18; Psalms 18:9, 104:2, 144:5, and 2 Samuel 22:10.

*Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem. And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it. (v2-3)*

The expression “*the siege*” leaps out at you in this section. For it indicates a moment in time when the Jews are surrounded by their enemies in the Holy City. ***When is this?*** There was a siege of Jerusalem by the Romans in AD 70 and centuries later by others like the Crusaders and Saladin but none fit the context here for none were global conflicts. We can only conclude that “*the siege*” referred to here is the great Battle of Armageddon (cf. Joel 3:9-16; Rev. 16:16-21) that is future to us when there is a confederacy of the Gentile nations against Israel, “*all the people of the earth be gathered together against it.*” This is World War III and will be the ultimate war of all ages.

This apocalyptic battle is no mere local conflict. “Armageddon” or “Har-Magedon” is a Hebrew word meaning “Mount Megiddo.” MacArthur notes, “Since there is no specific mountain by that name, and *Har* can refer to hill country, it is probably a reference to the hill

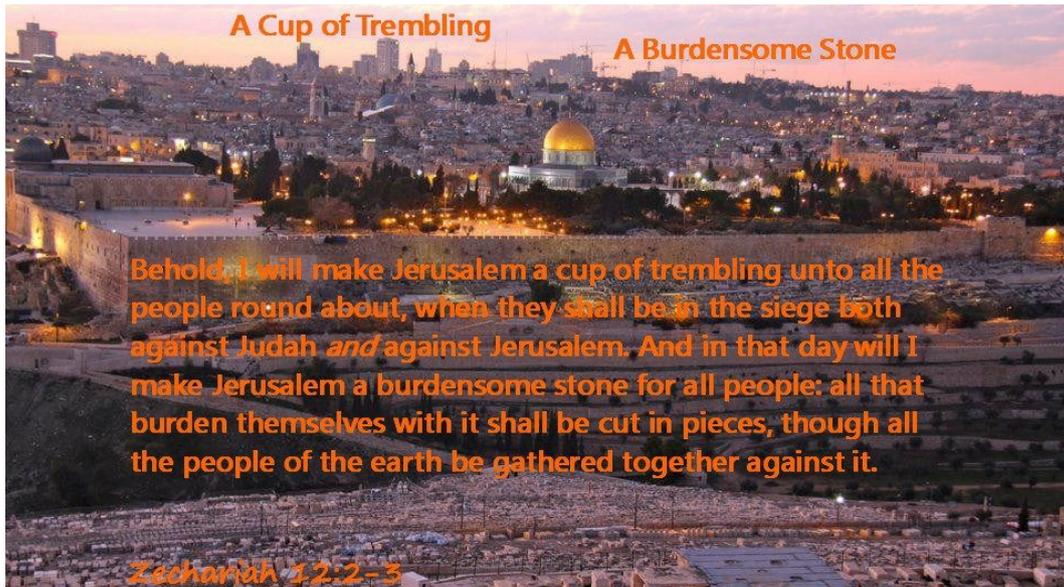
country surrounding the Plain of Megiddo, some sixty miles north of Jerusalem.” When the Antichrist and his Gentile armies move south against Jerusalem, they will initially inflict great harm. For although the Jewish people will fight heroically, Jerusalem will eventually fall, “*For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city.*” (Zech. 14:2). It is no wonder Jeremiah called it, “*Jacob’s trouble.*” (Jer. 30:7)



Jerusalem has been “*a cup of trembling unto all the people round about*” and “*a burdensome stone for all people*” for centuries. This has greatly increased in the last 75 years. Since it was founded in 1948, the United Nations has devoted one third of its deliberations to this nation that has only one thousandth of the world’s population. It is the most condemned nation at the UN. In 2018 alone, the UN issued 27 condemnations and 21 of them were against Israel. Many attempts have been made to solve the “Jewish problem” and bring peace to the Middle East but all have failed. And all will ultimately fail. But Zechariah 12 reveals that the Jewish problem will truly consume the world at the end of time. The cancer of anti-Semitism that has plagued the world for millennia will be consummated at this terrible onslaught. They will discover when they march against Israel to lay siege to Jerusalem that they can’t handle the problem. For it will become “*a cup of trembling unto all the people round about.*” Constable points out that this cup (or large bowl),

“The Lord would make Jerusalem like a cup of strong wine to the nations; when they tried to consume Jerusalem (a metonymy for all Israel), it would cause them to reel. Jerusalem had previously drunk the cup of the Lord’s wrath (Isa. 51:17, 22; Jer. 25:15–17, 28), but now it was the nations’ turn to drink it.”

The consequences will be far reaching for these Gentile nations. The second metaphor used makes clear it will inflict great self-harm, “*And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces.*” Just like a man trying to lift a weight that is too great for him ends up with injury from the strain, like a hernia, so the Gentile nations will find themselves reeling in panic and confusion and torn apart.



*In that day, saith the LORD, I will smite every horse with astonishment, and his rider with madness: and I will open mine eyes upon the house of Judah, and will smite every horse of the people with blindness. (v4)*

In the crucible of affliction in the Great Tribulation Period, the way of defeat for Israel's enemies is detailed. It may appear that the devil and the Antichrist are in control at this point in history but the Bible emphasizes that God is the One leading them into this fatal trap, "And He gathered them together into a place called in the Hebrew tongue Armageddon." (Rev. 16:16) God brings these evil forces to this point in order to judge them, "In that day, saith the LORD, I will smite every horse with astonishment, and his rider with madness: and I will open mine eyes upon the house of Judah, and will smite every horse of the people with blindness." The Lord promises that He personally will deliver this blow, "I will smite." This divine intervention and deliverance is reminiscent of God's sovereign action to destroy Sennacherib's army when it besieged Jerusalem in 701 BC (2 Kings 19:32-36). John MacArthur explains,

"Horses were the symbol of strength. They were the symbol of power. They were a symbol of a formidable army. And in that day, He says, "I will smite every horse with terror." Now this probably means confusion. In other words, the horses are just going to go off in all kinds of directions. And down in verse 4 at the bottom it says He'll smite every horse of the people with blindness. Now if you believe that the battle of Armageddon will have literal horses, then the literal horses will be smitten with blindness and confusion. If you believe this is talking about military tanks and weaponry and so forth then that will all fall into confusion and they won't know where they're going. Whichever. But it also adds, "And the riders with madness." This simply means panic, a wild and helpless kind of panic in the Hebrew. So here come all these great armies of the world and all of a sudden all of their weaponry and all of their instruments and all of their vehicles and all of the people who're running the thing go into total confusion, blindness, and panic. By the way, interesting note, in studying this I discovered that these things described in verse 4 are the very calamities that befell Israel in Deuteronomy 28:28. The very thing that happened to Israel in her unbelief is going to come to happen

to those Gentile nations at Armageddon. So terror, confusion, seize the ranks of the worlds' armies.”

*And the governors of Judah shall say in their heart, The inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be my strength in the LORD of hosts their God. In that day will I make the governors of Judah like an hearth of fire among the wood, and like a torch of fire in a sheaf; and they shall devour all the people round about, on the right hand and on the left: and Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place, even in Jerusalem. The LORD also shall save the tents of Judah first, that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem do not magnify themselves against Judah. In that day shall the LORD defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the LORD before them. And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. (v5-9)*

One with God is always a majority. It always has and it always will, “If God be for us, who can be against us?” (Romans 8:31) The Battle of Armageddon will be over in a twinkling of an eye. At this point in their history Israel is going through its greatest chastisement and its greatest revival. The leaders of Israel will be astonished at the miraculous defeat of their formidable enemies and marvel at the deliverance of the Jews, “And the governors of Judah shall say in their heart, The inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be my strength in the LORD of hosts their God.” They will be able to sing, “The LORD is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me?.....It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man.” (Psalm 118, 6, 8) God promises to make these leaders like blazing firepots to “burn up” the enemy armies of the nations, “In that day will I make the governors of Judah like an hearth of fire among the wood, and like a torch of fire in a sheaf; and they shall devour all the people round about, on the right hand and on the left.” The Jewish people will be supernaturally empowered by God to defend the city. Those who have cursed Israel are now truly cursed.

In the midst of this great conflagration, God will ensure that the Holy City is preserved, “and Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place, even in Jerusalem.” God says He has chosen Jerusalem as the place where He has put His name forever (2 Chron. 6:6; Ps 46:4; 48:1-8). The order of this deliverance is significant to humble the proud heart of any Jew in their military prowess. For God declares that the outlying tents of the exposed countryside areas rather than the fortified city of Jerusalem will lead the way in this battle, “The LORD also shall save the tents of Judah first, that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem do not magnify themselves against Judah.” MacArthur explains,

“In other words, if Jerusalem won this big victory to start with, if all the military geniuses and all the hotshots in Jerusalem won, they’d say, “Well, it was us.” And so just to make sure they don’t mistake it being human and know it’s God, the great victory comes first to all the little folks out in the countryside who win the war, who knock off the big Gentile armies. And then Jerusalem’s got nothing to boast about. Because by the time it comes to them, all they can say is, “It’s got to be God. It sure isn’t us.” It wasn’t them.....This is a time of repentance. This is a time of bending the back and bowing the knee and laying prostrate before God. God wants no human glory, no human magnification, and so just to make sure it won’t happen He starts by giving the victory first to the little folks in the countryside. The defenseless land is delivered first. The well defended capital last in order that Jerusalem not think it was by her military might and be lifted up with pride. So God defends the defenseless and then Jerusalem.”

The Jews will boast in the Lord rather than in the Israeli Defence Forces. Doubtless, these amazing events leads the Jews to the act of national repentance next. Their darkened veil that has been over their eyes for centuries is now being lifted. Steve Cole points out,

“There is another lesson here: The safest place for any of God’s people is in the center of His will and purpose. When Zechariah wrote, many Jews were still in Babylon. Perhaps they thought, “It’s just not safe to move back to Jerusalem. There is no army there and no wall around the city. The place is surrounded by hostile neighbors. I’ll just stay here in Babylon.” But Zechariah is showing them that even if all the hostile nations in the world are lined up against Jerusalem, it is the safest place in the world to be, because Almighty God has promised to destroy the nations that come against Jerusalem. This doesn’t mean that we should throw caution to the wind, or that there are not times when God’s servants should flee for their lives.”

*And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn. In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon. And the land shall mourn, every family apart; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart; The family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart; the family of Shimei apart, and their wives apart; All the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart. (v10-14)*

After God has taken the Jews through the horrors of the Great Tribulation Period, which culminates in the physical deliverance at Armageddon, there is then a spiritual deliverance. Cole puts it well, “God’s reason for delivering His chosen people physically (12:2-9) is so that later He can save them spiritually (12:10-14).”



When God brings the Jews to the end of self-confidence and self-righteousness, then this broken people can be restored. For it is only when they hit rock bottom that they will look to the Saviour and cry for forgiveness and deliverance, “*And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.*” The order here is not insignificant. It must be a sovereign move first by God, “*And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of*

*grace and of supplications*” before there is a change of heart in repentance by the Jewish people, “*and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him.*” We must not put the cart before the horse and miss the cause by focusing simply on the effect. Salvation is always of the Lord. Cole explains,

“God does not say, “I would like to save My people someday, but they must exercise their free will in order for the process to happen.” Nor is this prophecy based only on God’s foreknowledge of what will happen, but rather on His mighty power that causes it to happen. In other words, God isn’t looking down through the centuries here and exclaiming, “Finally, after all these years, I can see that the Jews will soften their own hearts by their own free will and trust in Me! I’ve always wanted them to do this, but I couldn’t do anything about it because of the sovereignty of human free will. I’m so glad that they finally decided to follow Jesus!” That is how many evangelicals view salvation in our day, but it is definitely not what the Bible teaches. It shows that salvation is of the Lord, from start to finish. While we must trust in Jesus Christ and repent of our sins, neither saving faith nor repentance originates in the fallen human heart. They are God’s gift, so that none can boast (Eph. 2:8-9; Acts 5:31; 11:18).”

The Lord repeatedly promised to pour out His Spirit on the Israelites in the future. The dry bones would live again. It would bring spiritual refreshment and new life (cf. Isa 44:3-5; 32:15; Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:26-27; 37:7-10; Joel 2:28-29).

So, after the exultation of an unlikely victory, there comes a time of brokenness and weeping when the Jews confess their national sin, the rejection and crucifixion of Messiah Jesus, “*and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him*” (cf. Jer. 3:11-18; Hos. 5:15). This is because the Jewish people recognise that they have been delivered by the Messiah who they’ve turned their back on for centuries, bearing the self-same wounds they inflicted then. This is the fulfilment of the promise that Paul wrote in his epistle, “*And so all Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Sion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob: For this is my covenant unto them, when I shall take away their sins*” (Rom. 11:26-27) This verse 10 is one of the clearest verses in the Old Testament that there will be two comings of the Messiah. Despite the attempts by rabbinical writers to avoid the reality, only the Lord Jesus Christ fits into the description given here for the “*Me*” and “*Him*” both refer to the same person. Jesus Christ was rejected, pierced and will finally be embraced by faith. Steve Cole explains,

“There is no way to explain it apart from the incarnation, death, and resurrection of one who is both God and man. The speaker throughout this passage has been God, who now says, “They will look on Me whom they have pierced.” “Pierce” is consistently used of someone being run through by a sword or spear (Num. 25:8; Judges 9:54; 1 Sam. 31:4). No one can pierce God, unless God first takes on human flesh. And the Jewish nation cannot someday look on this one whom they pierced unless He is then living, having been raised from the dead. When the soldier thrust his sword through Jesus’ side as He hung on the cross, he inadvertently fulfilled this prophecy in remarkable detail (John 19:36-37)!”

Lewis Johnson also explains how an alternative explanation or translation of this verse is illogical and unworkable,

“I have a commentary on the Old Testament written by some Jewish scholars...I notice the explanation that they gave of the 10th verse of the 12th chapter. It was something like this: They shall look unto me, because **THEY, the nations**, have thrust Him through. They shall look unto me because they the nations have pierced him through. And I looked in my Hebrew text to discover how this rendering of the text was possible. It is impossible. Will you look at the text carefully, it says, “**And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem**”. There (“HOUSE OF DAVID...INHABITANTS OF JERUSALEM”) is the “**THEY**” of the text, not the nations. The **nations** have been mentioned in the 9th verse. But since that mention, there has only been the mention of the Jews in verse 10! And so surely the normal interpretation of the 10th verse is, “**And they**”, that is, **the inhabitants of Jerusalem**, about whom I’ve just been speaking. “They shall look upon Me whom they have pierced”, the “**THEY**” must refer to the inhabitants of Jerusalem.”

This mourning will be a national one and an individual one. The national one is compared to the great corporate outpouring of grief over King Josiah’s death (cf. 2 Kings 23:29; 2 Chronicles 35:20-25), “*In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon.*” But the repentance will be the hearts of every individual, “*And the land shall mourn, every family apart.*” Spurgeon writing on 19 June 1864, a century before the establishment of the modern State of Israel in 1948, commented,

“We know of a surety, because God has said it, that the Jews will be restored to their own land, and that they shall inherit the goodly country which the Lord has given unto their fathers by a covenant of salt for ever; but, better still, they shall be converted to the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, and shall see in him the house of David restored to the throne of Israel.”

Zechariah is not only the longest of the books of the twelve Minor Prophets and it is second only to Isaiah in its number of messianic passages. It points us clearly to Jesus Christ as the righteous Branch (Zech 3:8); the King-Priest (Zech 6:13); the good shepherd who is sold for thirty pieces of silver (Zech 11:4-13); the pierced One (Zech 12:10); and the coming King (Zech 14). This remarkable prophecy of a national revival was given 2,500 years before it will take place. A better day and world is coming.

*Ev’ry eye shall now behold Him,  
Robed in splendor’s majesty;  
Those who set at naught and sold Him,  
Pierced and nailed Him to the tree,  
Deeply wailing, deeply wailing,  
Shall the true Messiah see.*