

Biblical Passages That Refer to God's Fulfilling the Abrahamic Covenant And a Brief Explanation of Each One

by
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Part 5

Daniel-Malachi

THE GREATNESS OF ISRAEL AND THE ETERNAL BLESSING OF ABRAHAM AND OTHERS IN THE WORLD ARE FOUND IN GOD'S PROMISE TO DAVID OF AN ETERNAL KING WHO WILL RULE OVER THE GREAT NATION OF THE JEWS IN THE PRESENT REALM AND PROVIDE ETERNAL FORGIVENESS OF SINS THROUGH HIS SUFFERING TO ALL THOSE WHO BELIEVE IN HIM

- Zechariah 8:3** "Thus says Yahweh, 'I will return to Zion
and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem.
Then Jerusalem will be called the City of Truth,
and the mountain of Yahweh of hosts will be called the Holy Mountain.'
8:4 "Thus says Yahweh of hosts, 'Old men and old women will again sit
in the streets of Jerusalem, each man with his staff in his hand because of age.
8:5 'And the streets of the city will be filled with boys and girls playing in its streets.'

Daniel

See my separate documents of translations and notes of the book of Daniel.

Hosea 1:1-2:1

- 1:1** The word of Yahweh which came to Hosea the son of Beeri, during the days of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz and Hezekiah, kings of Judah, and during the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash, king of Israel.
1:2 When Yahweh first spoke through Hosea, Yahweh said to Hosea, "Go, take to yourself a wife of prostitution and have children of prostitution; for the land commits flagrant prostitution, forsaking Yahweh."
1:3 So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son.
1:4 And Yahweh said to him, "Name him Jezreel; for yet a little while, and I will punish the house of Jehu for the bloodshed of Jezreel, and I will put an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel.
1:5 "On that day I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel."
1:6 Then she conceived again and gave birth to a daughter. And Yahweh said to him, "Name her Lo-ruhamah, for I will no longer have compassion on the house of Israel, that I would ever forgive them.
1:7 "But I will have compassion on the house of Judah and deliver them by Yahweh their God, and will not deliver them by bow, sword, battle, horses or horsemen."
1:8 When she had weaned Lo-ruhamah, she conceived and gave birth to a son.
1:9 And Yahweh said, "Name him Lo-ammee, for you are not My people and I am not your God."
1:10 Yet the number of the sons of Israel
Will be like the sand of the sea,
Which cannot be measured or numbered;
And in the place
Where it is said to them,
"You are not My people,"
It will be said to them,

“You are the sons of the living God.”

- 1:11 And the sons of Judah and the sons of Israel will be gathered together,
And they will appoint for themselves one leader,
And they will go up from the land,
For great will be the day of Jezreel.
- 2:1 Say to your brothers, “Ammee,” and to your sisters, “Ruhamah.”

Hosea was a prophet to the northern Kingdom of Israel from 753 to 715 B.C., about the same time as the prophet Isaiah. Verse 1 tells us that he spoke on behalf of God during the reigns of Uzziah, Jotham, Ahaz, and Hezekiah, who were kings of the southern Kingdom of Judah from 792 to 687 B.C. and during the reign of Jeroboam (actually Jeroboam II), who was king of the northern kingdom from 793 to 753 B.C. Thus, Hosea is being brief in his listing of the northern kings, because there were six others who ruled after Jeroboam II until the fall of the Kingdom of Israel at the hands of the Assyrians in 722 B.C. In addition, he does not mention the actual destruction of this northern kingdom to whom he is addressing God’s messages.

Verses 2-3 tell us an unusual fact about Hosea,

- 1:2 When Yahweh first spoke through Hosea, Yahweh said to Hosea, “Go, take to yourself a wife of prostitution and have children of prostitution; for the land commits flagrant prostitution, forsaking Yahweh.”
- 1:3 So he went and took Gomer the daughter of Diblaim, and she conceived and bore him a son.

This is a well-known distinction between Hosea and the other prophets of the Old Testament. God commands him to marry a prostitute and have children by her, so that their children can be said to be “children of prostitution.” Why does God do this? Because of how the Jews of the northern kingdom are behaving and so that Hosea and his family become an object lesson to them. God says in v.2 that “the land commits flagrant prostitution, forsaking Yahweh.” Here the word “land” is a metonymy, where the ground on which the Jews are living is used to represent the people themselves and their immoral behavior. And this is most likely because the land of Israel goes hand in glove with the Jews, because God has given them the land through the Abrahamic Covenant of Genesis 12-22 and required through the Mosaic Covenant that they live obediently on it. Therefore, the land is to be kept sacred by the Jews by means of their obedience to God. If they choose to worship false gods and commit acts of immorality on it, then they are using the land inappropriately and in an immoral way, thus prostituting themselves and the land.

We notice, therefore, that God is making a strong connection between the Jews and the land. Plus, we can infer that this connection persists throughout the rest of their history. It means that the Jews only have the right to the land, so that only they can render the land good and right by their obedience to God. Therefore, not only does no other ethnic group have the right to live on the land, but also, if the Jews do not live on it appropriately by obeying the Mosaic Covenant with circumcised hearts (and eventually believing in Jesus as their Messiah after his first appearance), then they pollute the land. Thus, as the prophets keep declaring over and over and in accordance with the curses of Deuteronomy 28, God may very well drive the Jews off their land until another time when He is ready to fulfill His promise to Abraham and make them the most powerful nation in history. We learn from the prophets that this will be when God brings His chosen people back into the land and their Messiah appears, who both destroys their enemies and rules over them during the remaining time of the present realm. Consequently, the land of Israel is sacred because of God’s promise to the Jews, and the Jews are sacred because of His promise regarding the land.

In v. 3, Hosea submits to God’s command and marries the prostitute Gomer, who is “the daughter of Diblaim.” And then she gives birth to a son. Verses 4-5 give us further details about this son,

- 1:4 And Yahweh said to him, “Name him Jezreel; for yet a little while, and I will punish the house of Jehu for the bloodshed of Jezreel, and I will put an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel.

1:5 “On that day I will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel.”

God instructs Hosea and Gomer to name their son Jezreel, or *yizr^e ‘e’l* (יִזְרְעֵאל) as it would be transliterated from the Hebrew. His name means “May God make fertile,” which seems unusual in the light of what God goes on to explain in vs. 4-5, that He will “punish the house of Jehu for the bloodshed of Jezreel.” However, God is referring to a story in 2 Kings 9:1-10:31 involving King Jehu in the city of Jezreel. A previous king of the northern kingdom, Ahab, and his wife, Jezebel, had ruled from 874-853 B.C. But both of them were extremely evil, especially Jezebel. Later, God commands Jehu, the king of Israel from 841-814 B.C., to destroy all the male descendants of Ahab as punishment for his and his wife’s evil deeds.

Jehu follows God’s orders, but unfortunately he goes beyond what God has said and kills many more people who were simply associated with Ahab but not members of his family. Indeed, these other dead include Ahaziah, the king of the southern Kingdom of Judah. And the place where Jehu overreacts to God’s instructions is the city of Jezreel in northern Israel and southeast of the Sea of Galilee. Consequently, even though God commends Jehu in 2 Kings 10:31 for putting an end to Ahab’s bloodline, He says through Hosea that He will punish him for going beyond the proper boundaries of justice which God had stipulated. We are not told exactly how God carries out His threat in Hosea 1:4 against Jehu, but only that He will “punish the house of Jehu for the bloodshed of [in] Jezreel.”

God also declares in the same verse that He “will put an end to the kingdom of the house of Israel.” It may appear as though the only reason for this is because of Jehu’s overreaction to God’s instructions, but all the rest of the prophetic passages indicate it is ultimately because of the northern kingdom’s lengthy history of worshiping pagan gods and rejecting Yahweh’s commandments, which of course includes Jehu’s disobedience. As we have seen already in the previous prophets, Isaiah through Ezekiel, in 722 B.C. the Assyrians conquered the Kingdom of Israel and took its survivors into exile.

This will be the “day” of v. 5 when God “will break the bow of Israel in the valley of Jezreel.” He will destroy the northern kingdom’s army so that the rest of the people are defenseless in the midst of the Assyrian invasion. The “valley of Jezreel” is located north of the city by the same name. It is also east of the Esdraelon Valley and shares a portion of it. Both valleys have seen major battles down through history, and the northern kingdom’s final demise will include a key battle when Tiglath-pileser III, king of Assyria, defeats their army in 733 B.C., eleven years before the complete fall of the Kingdom of Israel.

Next, we learn in vs. 6-7 that Hosea and Gomer’s family keeps growing,

1:6 Then she conceived again and gave birth to a daughter. And Yahweh said to him, “Name her Lo-ruhamah, for I will no longer have compassion on the house of Israel, that I would ever forgive them.

1:7 “But I will have compassion on the house of Judah and deliver them by Yahweh their God, and will not deliver them by bow, sword, battle, horses or horsemen.”

This second child is a daughter, and, in v. 6, God instructs Hosea to name her Lo-ruhamah, or, as it is properly transliterated from the Hebrew, *lo’ ruhamah* (לֹא רַחֲמָה), so that the first *h* is guttural. The word *lo’* means “not,” and the next word *ruhamah* means “to find mercy and compassion.” And God explains why He wants this daughter to be named “Not having found mercy and compassion.” It is because He “will no longer have compassion on the house of Israel, that [He] would ever forgive them.” God has lost patience with the Jews of the northern kingdom, so that He soon is going to bring about their end at the hands of the Assyrians. But God does not mean all the twelve tribes when He speaks of “the house of Israel,” for He comments in v. 7, “I will have compassion on the house of Judah and deliver them by Yahweh their God.”

He additionally says of Judah that He “will not deliver them by bow, sword, battle, horses or horsemen.” Even though the northern kingdom will have to fight for their survival and yet still lose the war, God will save the southern kingdom from the Assyrians without their having to use any military means. As the story goes in 2 Kings 18-19, Sennacherib, king of Assyria, lays siege to Jerusalem, but one night an angel of Yahweh strikes 185,000 soldiers in the camp, and they die. Afterwards, Sennacherib retreats with the rest of his army and returns home to Nineveh, where he soon dies. In this way, God delivers the Kingdom of Judah without “bow, sword, battle, horses or horsemen” from those who had recently destroyed the Kingdom of Israel.

Then, in vs. 8-9, another child for Hosea and Gomer comes into the world,

1:8 When she had weaned Lo-ruhamah, she conceived and gave birth to a son.

1:9 And Yahweh said, “Name him Lo-ammee, for you are not My people and I am not your God.”

As with the first two children, God commands Hosea to name this second son. And the name is Lo-ammee (*lo’ ammee*), meaning “not My people.” And God states that the reason for this name is because “you,” i.e., the Jews of the northern Kingdom of Israel, are not behaving as He has commanded them according to the Mosaic Covenant. As a result, it is as though they are not His people. Instead, they are just like all the other peoples of the Ancient Near East, ignoring and rejecting Him while worshipping pagan gods.

And God also declares, “and I am not your God.” This is to say that the flip side of the coin is that He is certainly not being treated as the God of Israel who has chosen these people to be the center of His attention throughout all human history. To be the people of God is to know that God has chosen them and to respond to Him with worship, love, and obedience to His commandments. And to be the God of a people is for Him to care for, love, and instruct them in order to fulfill His promises for them. Therefore, because of God’s faithfulness, His *hesed*, God will never abandon the Jews completely even though it is about to look as though He does when He destroys the northern Kingdom of Israel at the hands of the Assyrians in 722 B.C. and the southern Kingdom of Judah by means of the Babylonians in 586 B.C. In fact, this is what He assures the Jews in the next three verse,

1:10 Yet the number of the sons of Israel

Will be like the sand of the sea,

Which cannot be measured or numbered;

And in the place

Where it is said to them,

“You are not My people,”

It will be said to them,

“You are the sons of the living God.”

1:11 And the sons of Judah and the sons of Israel will be gathered together,

And they will appoint for themselves one leader,

And they will go up from the land,

For great will be the day of Jezreel.

2:1 Say to your brothers, “Ammee,” and to your sisters, “Ruhamah.”

The Jews of the northern kingdom may have abandoned God, but His promise to Abraham to make them a “great nation” is still intact. Therefore, as He says in v. 10, “the number of the sons of Israel will be like the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered.” God indicated the same thing to Abraham in Genesis 22:17,

Genesis 22:17 Indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your descendants as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore. And your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies.

Thus, approximately 1300 years later, God repeats this promise to the northern Kingdom of Israel through the prophet Hosea. And as in Genesis 22, He is referring to the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20 when Jesus returns and which will continue for generation after generation on this present earth until there have been a vast multitude of Jews who have lived under his rule and authority.

God further describes this group of Jews in v. 12, “And in the place where it is said to them, ‘You are not My people,’ it will be said to them, ‘You are the sons of the living God.’” The “place” is the land of Israel, from which both the northern kingdom and the southern kingdom are about to be dispersed. God is saying to especially the Jews of the land of the northern kingdom, “You are not My people,” which is because of their consistent disobedience to the Mosaic Covenant. Yet, He is claiming that their future is bright so that a time is coming, the age of the millennial kingdom, when “it will be said of them [on the land of Israel], ‘You are the sons of the living God.’” The promise is that God will change the hearts of all living Jews, they will live on the land of Israel, and they will appropriately obey Him and the Mosaic Covenant with authentic belief in Jesus as their Messiah.

Thus, as v. 11 indicates, God will gather the descendants of both the southern Kingdom of Judah and the northern Kingdom of Israel back into “the place,” i.e., the land of Israel which He promised them through Abraham. And they will live “together” and never again be divided from one another, nor in conflict with each other as they were for approximately two hundred years from the end of Solomon’s reign to the destruction of the northern Kingdom of Israel. The Jews will be firmly united under the rule of Jesus their Messiah and king, and they will all worship and obey him. In other words, there will be no denominations or separate groups of Jews according to their religious beliefs and interpretations of the Bible. They will have only one belief as taught primarily by Jesus (and also by His followers who have been either resurrected from the dead or lifted from the earth (cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Revelation 20:6)). In this regard, God also says in 11 that “they will appoint for themselves one leader.” While it will be true that, in their hearts and minds, the Jews will appoint Jesus as their leader, it is implied that ultimately God is the one who appoints Jesus as their king.

The Jews whom God gathers back into Israel will also “go up from the land,” by which I think He means that, for the three prescribed feasts, they will make the trip to Jerusalem from wherever they live on the land of Israel and affirm their allegiance to Yahweh and His Messiah. And just as there have been great battles in the valley of Jezreel, including the one to which God refers in 1:5 when Tiglath-pileser defeats the northern kingdom’s army in 733 B.C., there will be another one of the same magnitude and importance on the “day” that Jesus returns and destroys the armies of Gog and Magog as described in Ezekiel 38-39. This will basically be payback to the Gentiles for their opposition to and persecution of the Jews down through history.

And God ends this message in 2:1 by commanding all the Jews, and most likely those of the future millennial kingdom, to say to one another, “Ammee” (*‘ammee*), i.e., “My people,” and “Ruhamah” (*ruhamah*), i.e., “Compassion found,” because this will definitely be the case for the entire nation of Israel when He fulfills His promise to Abraham of Genesis 12-22 to make them the most powerful nation in history under the authority of Jesus of Nazareth as their Messiah, priest, and king. By inwardly changing their hearts through His Holy Spirit, the Jews will finally and authentically become the people of God as God commanded them in Deuteronomy 10 when He wanted them to circumcise their hearts. And they will all have found compassion and forgiveness from God as a result of Jesus’ advocacy and their genuine belief in him.

Hosea 2:14-23

2:14 “Therefore, behold, I will allure her,
Bring her into the wilderness
And speak kindly to her.

2:15 “Then I will give her her vineyards from there,
And the valley of Achor as a door of hope.

- And she will sing there as in the days of her youth,
As in the day when she came up from the land of Egypt.
- 2:16 "It will come about in that day (בַּיּוֹם־הַהוּא)," declares Yahweh,
"That you will call Me Ishi
And will no longer call Me Baali.
- 2:17 "For I will remove the names of the Baals from her mouth,
So that they will be mentioned by their names no more.
- 2:18 "In that day (בַּיּוֹם־הַהוּא) I will also make a covenant for them
With the beasts of the field,
The birds of the sky
And the creeping things of the ground.
And I will abolish the bow, the sword and war from the land,
And will make them lie down in safety.
- 2:19 "I will betroth you to Me forever (לְעוֹלָם);
Yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and in justice,
In lovingkindness and in compassion,
- 2:20 And I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness.
Then you will know Yahweh.
- 2:21 "It will come about in that day (בַּיּוֹם־הַהוּא) that I will respond," declares Yahweh.
"I will respond to the heavens, and they will respond to the earth,
- 2:22 And the land will respond to the grain, to the new wine and to the oil,
And they will respond to Jezreel.
- 2:23 "I will sow her for Myself in the land (בְּאֶרֶץ־יָדָי).
I will also have compassion on her who had not obtained compassion,
And I will say to those who were not My people,
'You are My people!'
And they will say, 'You are my God!'"
- 3:1 Then Yahweh said to me, "Go again, love a woman who is loved by her husband, yet an adulteress, even as Yahweh loves the sons of Israel, though they turn to other gods and love raisin cakes."
- 3:2 So I bought her for myself for fifteen shekels of silver and a homer and a half of barley.
- 3:3 Then I said to her, "You shall stay with me for many days (יָמִים רַבִּים). You shall not play the harlot, nor shall you have a man; so I will also be toward you."
- 3:4 For the sons of Israel will remain for many days (יָמִים רַבִּים) without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred pillar and without ephod or household idols.
- 3:5 Afterward (אַחֲרַיִךְ) the sons of Israel will return and seek Yahweh their God and David their king; and they will come trembling to Yahweh and to His goodness in the last days (בְּאַחֲרֵית הַיָּמִים).

In vs. 2-13 of Hosea 2, God likens the northern Kingdom of Israel to the prophet's wife, Gomer, who had gone back to her ways of prostitution after marrying Hosea. And it seems that Hosea had given her up as his wife and let her pursue her old practices uncontested. The people of Israel have done the same in that they have abandoned their husband, Yahweh, and gone after other men, the pagan gods of the peoples surrounding them in the Ancient Near East. As a result, God warns the Jews that He is about to destroy their kingdom, which will occur in its finality in 722 B.C. at the hands of the Assyrian army.

Nevertheless, starting in v. 14, God changes His tone towards them,

- 2:14 "Therefore, behold, I will allure her,
Bring her into the wilderness
And speak kindly to her.

Just as God led the Israelites out of Egypt and into the wilderness of the Sinai desert, where He cared for them and prepared them to enter into the land of Canaan and take it over, He will disperse

the people of the northern Kingdom of Israel into the “wilderness” of foreign countries. Yet, in these countries, He will once again “speak kindly” to them and attract them to Him in His own supernatural ways. The inference which we can draw from what He is saying is that He will remain faithful to His chosen people even though they will continue to be unfaithful to Him in the foreign lands. Literally God says that He will speak “to their heart.” He will appeal to them and change their hearts so that they believe and obey Him with authentic inwardness. Nevertheless, we also know that eventually He will regather them in the land of Israel when He restores the fullness of the Kingdom of Israel.

In v. 15, God continues His description of the future blessings He has in store for His people once He has spoken so kindly to their heart,

2:15 “Then I will give her her vineyards from there,
And the valley of Achor as a door of hope.
And she will sing there as in the days of her youth,
As in the day when she came up from the land of Egypt.

It will be “from there,” which is to say from the foreign lands where the Jews were dispersed and have been living, that God “will give [them their] vineyards,” which He ripped away from them when the Assyrians invaded and either stole or destroyed the grapes. He will also make “the valley of Achor as a door of hope,” whereas in Joshua’s day it had been a place of punishment for certain Jews. This story is in Joshua 7. The Israelites are in the process of conquering the land of Canaan after journeying for forty years through the Sinai desert, and a man by the name of Achan, along with his family, take some of the things which God has strictly forbidden His people to keep as they come into possession of the Canaanites homes and belongings. God’s punishment of Achan and his family for their disobedience is described in Joshua 7:24-26

Joshua 7:24 Then Joshua and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, the silver, the mantle, the bar of gold, his sons, his daughters, his oxen, his donkeys, his sheep, his tent and all that belonged to him; and they brought them up to the valley of Achor.
7:25 Joshua said, “Why have you troubled us? Yahweh will trouble you this day.” And all Israel stoned them with stones; and they burned them with fire after they had stoned them with stones.
7:26 They raised over him a great heap of stones that stands to this day, and Yahweh turned from the fierceness of His anger. Therefore the name of that place has been called the valley of Achor to this day.

The name of the valley and place of Achan’s punishment, Achor, comes from the same Hebrew root as trouble, *‘akar* (אָכַר), when Joshua says to Achan in v. 25, “Why have you troubled us?” Clearly, God is not to be ignored when He issues His commandments and instructions to people. And Achan and his family pay the price for doing so, because they have “troubled” the rest of the nation of Israel. In the first part of Joshua 7, they had fought against the city of Ai, but, unbeknownst to the Israelite, God had lifted His protection from them as a result of Achan’s sin. As a result, they lost the battle, but then God punished Achan and his family.

However, when God restores the Jews to the land of Israel and blesses them according to His promise to Abraham to make his descendants a “great nation,” He will reverse the effects of His punishment of Achan in the valley of Achor, the valley of trouble, and make the same place “a door of hope.” No longer will the people need to fear God’s wrath and punishment on their land, because they will all be inwardly changed and authentic believers who are obeying God from a new and fundamental desire to do so. Instead of stoning their fellow Jews to death in the valley, Israel will “sing” praises to God “there” as they did when they first entered the land of Canaan to conquer it and make it their own after their escape from slavery in Egypt, which is to say “as in the day when [they] came up from the land of Egypt.”

God goes on in vs. 16-17,

- 2:16 “It will come about in that day (בַּיּוֹם־הַהוּא),” declares Yahweh,
 “That you will call Me Ishi
 And will no longer call Me Baali.
 2:17 “For I will remove the names of the Baals from her mouth,
 So that they will be mentioned by their names no more.

“Ishi” (אִשִּׁי) (*'eeshee*) means “My husband,” while “Baali” (בַּעֲלִי) (*ba'lee*) means “My master.” The backstory here is that there was a pagan god of the Canaanites by the name of Baal (בַּעַל) (*ba'al*), whose name means “lord” or “master” and whom the people of the northern Kingdom of Israel were worshiping instead of Yahweh. It was in this sense that they were called their “God” by the name “Baal,” because they were not really worshiping the correct and true God. Instead of Yahweh being their Lord and Master, Baal was. But when God fulfills His promise to Abraham and gathers the people back into the land of Israel for the last time, He “will remove the names of the Baals from [their] mouths,” so that they call upon Him and no other gods. The “names” of false gods will never be spoken among the Jews again. They will worship and obey Yahweh alone.

In addition, God says in v. 18,

- 2:18 “In that day (בַּיּוֹם־הַהוּא) I will also make a covenant for them
 With the beasts of the field,
 The birds of the sky
 And the creeping things of the ground.
 And I will abolish the bow, the sword and war from the land,
 And will make them lie down in safety.

This is the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31:31-34 worded in a different way. Not only will the human beings on the land of Israel experience God’s blessings through the change in their hearts by the Spirit of God and the forgiveness of their sins through their crucified Messiah, so that they experience permanent peace and safety during the millennial kingdom, but also will the animals, birds, and other living creatures of the land not have to fear being captured, killed, and mistreated by foreign armies. In other words, the effects of the New Covenant will extend to the land and its non-human inhabitants, because the land and all its inhabitants, the Jews and other creatures, are so intimately connected to God.

And, according to vs. 19-20, the Jewish people will have a new relationship with God,

- 2:19 “I will betroth you to Me forever (לְעוֹלָם);
 Yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and in justice,
 In lovingkindness and in compassion,
 2:20 And I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness.
 Then you will know Yahweh.

God is saying that, unlike Gomer who married Hosea but was unfaithful to him, the people of Israel will “marry” God “forever,” which is into perpetuity according to the Hebrew phrase *le'olam* (לְעוֹלָם), or “into the age” (εις τὸν αἰῶνα) in the Greek Septuagint. The Jews will never reject God again, because He will marry them to Him “in righteousness and in justice, in lovingkindness and in compassion.” All these words refer to a permanent and enduring standing before God which His chosen people will achieve through God’s actions of the Messiah whereby they obtain justification and forgiveness by means of God’s *hesed* and *ruhamah*, His loyal faithfulness and compassion, things they lost to a degree when God used the Assyrians to destroy the northern Kingdom of Israel. Fortunately, the Jews never lose God’s loyal faithfulness and mercy completely. If they did, it would mean the end of God because He would be breaking His promise, which is obviously theologically impossible.

God also says in v. 20 that He will cause the people of Israel to marry Him “in faithfulness,” meaning in the midst of the truth of all that God has said He will do on behalf of His chosen people, the Jews. As a consequence, all the Jews “will know Yahweh.” There will not be an unbelieving heart on the land and in the nation, because every sinner will have become a Christian, and every sinner will be authentically obeying the Mosaic Covenant, submitting to Jesus as their king, and worshiping Yahweh as He had instructed them even fifteen hundred years before Jesus.

Thus, I think that we can connect these words to Revelation 19:5-10,

- Revelation 19:5** And a voice came from the throne, saying, “Give praise to our God, all you His bond-servants, you who fear Him, the small and the great.”
- 19:6** Then I heard something like the voice of a great multitude and like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, saying, “Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns.
- 19:7** “Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready.”
- 19:8** It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.
- 19:9** Then he said to me, “Write, ‘Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.’” And he said to me, “These are true words of God.”
- 19:10** Then I fell at his feet to worship him. But he said to me, “Do not do that; I am a fellow servant of yours and your brethren who hold the testimony of Jesus; worship God. For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”

Throughout this examination of the Abrahamic Covenant, I have alluded to my understanding that the book of Revelation is focusing on God’s final discipline of the nation of Israel as well as His fulfilling His promise to Abraham to make them a “great nation.” Chapters 4-18 mainly describe the first issue, His discipline, while chapters 19-22 are visions of the second, which refer to Jesus’ return and establishing the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20 on the present earth followed by God’s creating “a new heaven and a new earth” of Revelation 21-22. In the passage above from Revelation 19, I suggest that the “bride” of the “Lamb” is all the living Jews who survive God’s final discipline immediately before Jesus’ return but have not yet become complete believers in God. (Otherwise, they would be lifted from the earth and transformed into morally perfect and eternal human beings according to 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.) It will be during Jesus’ return that this remnant of the people of Israel will finally become in their entirety believers in Jesus, who will provide them with eternal forgiveness as the “great nation” of the promise of Genesis 12:2. Then, those who are “invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb” will be both Jews and Gentiles who were authentic believers in God in Old Testament times and believers in Jesus in New Testament times.

In Hosea 2:21-22, God continues with His description of Israel’s blessings,

- 2:21** “It will come about in that day (בְּיָמֵי-הַהוֹיָא) that I will respond,” declares Yahweh.
“I will respond to the heavens, and they will respond to the earth,
- 2:22** And the earth will respond to the grain, to the new wine and to the oil,
And they will respond to Jezreel.

Like other uses of the phrase “in that day going all the way back to Isaiah 2, it refers here to the Great and Terrible Day of the Lord, when Jesus returns, God finishes His discipline of the Jews, and He restores the Kingdom of Israel. This will be when God marries the Jews forever, and He “will respond to the heavens, and they will respond to the earth.” Most specifically, the “earth” means the land of Israel, which “will respond to the grain, to the new wine and to the oil.”

In addition, this multitude of earthly commodities “will respond to Jezreel.” But who or what is “Jezreel?” In chapter 1 of Hosea, we saw that God commanded the prophet to name his first son Jezreel, which means “May God be fertile.” In this context, I suggest that it refers to the people of

Israel, the Jews, who, many years before Jesus' return, went through Jehu's overreaction to God's instructions in the city of Jezreel, who endured destruction and defeat in the valley of Jezreel at the hands of the Assyrians, and who will experience a complete reversal of these negative events when God restores them to their land and makes them a "great nation" according to His Abrahamic promise. The appropriateness of this name is found also in its meaning that alludes to fertility and abundance. "Jezreel" therefore becomes a metaphorical term for both disaster and blessing for the Jews in the sovereign plans and purposes of God.

But what does it mean for the God to respond to the heavens, and the heavens to respond to the earth, and earth to respond to the agricultural abundance of the land of Israel, and for these to respond to the people of Israel? I think that it means that the creation will be in complete concert with God. Every part of the creation that is necessary for the survival of human beings on this earth will finally be functioning in harmony with one another, so that God will provide everything which His chosen people need while living on their land. He will shower His blessings on the Jews and their land. It will be as though there are a "new heavens and a new earth" as we saw God say in Isaiah 65:17 & 66:22. The abundance of food and anything else that the Jews need to live comfortably and safely on their land during the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20 will make it seem as though God has brought about a new creation. But this will still not be the eternal creation of Revelation 21-22, which will come afterwards.

In addition to the reversal of fortune with respect to the valley of Jezreel, there will be another reversal as God states in v. 23,

2:23 "I will sow her for Myself in the land (יִסְדֵּךְ)."

I will also have compassion on her who had not obtained compassion,
And I will say to those who were not My people,
'You are My people!'
And they will say, 'You are my God!'"

God "will sow" the people of Israel for Himself in and on their land. And we can imagine that, if God sows something, it will germinate, grow, and bear a plethora of fruit, which is what the phrase "great nation" means with respect to Abraham's descendants in Genesis 12:2. The Jews will multiply and never have to fear either God's earthly judgment and/or attack and destruction at the hands of their enemies who have surrounded them throughout their history. Plus, this will all come about because God reverses what He meant by naming two of Hosea's children "Not My people" and "Not found compassion." Finally, the entirety of the Jewish people will experience God's eternal compassion and mercy. Only a relative few of them have done so up until this point God's story. Also, God will "say to those who were not My people, 'You are My people!'" Again, every living Jew will be a bona fide member of God's people by virtue of their having changed hearts according to the inward work of the Spirit of God. And every Jew will join in saying with all their fellow Jews, "You are my God!" In other words, all the Jews will genuinely believe, obey, and worship God as they have been required from the moment God chose them and then shaped them into the twelve tribes when He brought them out of Egypt and gave them the Mosaic Covenant.

God ends this passage in chapter 3, verses 1-5,

3:1 Then Yahweh said to me, "Go again, love a woman who is loved by her husband, yet an adulteress, even as Yahweh loves the sons of Israel, though they turn to other gods and love raisin cakes."

3:2 So I bought her for myself for fifteen shekels of silver and a homer and a half of barley.

3:3 Then I said to her, "You shall stay with me for many days (יָמֵי רַבִּים). You shall not play the harlot, nor shall you have a man; so I will also be toward you."

3:4 For the sons of Israel will remain for many days (יָמֵי רַבִּים) without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred pillar and without ephod or household idols.

3:5 Afterward (אַחֲרַיִךְ) the sons of Israel will return and seek Yahweh their God and David their king; and they will come trembling to Yahweh and to His goodness in the last days (בְּאַחֲרֵי יְמֵי הַיָּמִים).

The first part of Hosea 2 above indicates that the prophet's wife, Gomer, unfortunately returned to her business of prostitution, just like the people of Israel who have repeatedly gone after false gods, even choosing the godless condition of atheism. In v. 1 of chapter 3, God is saying to Hosea, "Go again" and love your wife who has abandoned you to her immoral craft, "even as Yahweh loves the sons of Israel" over and over "though they turn to other gods" and offer sacrifices to them. So the prophet obeys God and buys her from another man who has made a large payment to her to be his permanent mistress. Hosea has to spend "fifteen shekels of silver and a homer and a half of barley" to redeem her from this man and take her back as his rightful wife.

Then he says to her in v. 3 that she must stay with him "for many days" (*yameem rabeem* (יָמֵי רַבִּים) in Hebrew; *haymeras pollas* (ἡμέρας πολλάς) in the Greek Septuagint). During this time, he requires that she will not engage in her prostitution ways. Instead, Hosea will be her only "man" and will himself remain faithful to her. Likewise, God indicates in v. 4 that "the sons of Israel will remain for many days [the same phrase as in v. 3] without a king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred pillar and without ephod and household idols." I think that He is saying that they will not be in a situation *on the land of Israel* where they will be able to continue their pagan idolatry. It seems that He is referring to their being driven off the land during the Assyrian invasion of the 8th century B.C., so that, when they are in exile, they will actually not worship false gods. But they also will not necessarily worship God. They will be in a kind of limbo, waiting for the time when God will gather them back into the land and change their hearts so that they believe in Him authentically.

It is to this latter condition which God refers in v. 5, that "afterward the sons of Israel will return and seek Yahweh their God and David their king, and they will come trembling to Yahweh and to His goodness in the last days." The key phrase as to the timing of this event is "in the last days." Certainly, God means that after a long period of time and when Jesus returns, the Jews will go from not worshipping God to worshipping Him genuinely with changed hearts.

In addition, they will have a king, i.e., "David" as God calls him here. He must mean the final king of the Davidic Covenant, who we now know to be Jesus of Nazareth and who at his return will destroy Israel's enemies and restore the overall Kingdom of Israel, not of the northern kingdom of Hosea's day, but of the entire nation of Jews. This will be "in the last days" at the end of the present age when God fulfills His promise to Abraham so that all the Jews will live on the land which He promised them. Plus, they "will come trembling to Yahweh" with appropriate fear and respect for His justice and righteousness. They will also come trembling "to His goodness," which they will at long last recognize as a vital part of His loyal faithfulness to them as His chosen people throughout history.

Hosea 11

- 11:1** When Israel was a youth I loved him,
And out of Egypt I called My son.
- 11:2** The more they called them,
The more they went from them;
They kept sacrificing to the Baals
And burning incense to idols.
- 11:3** Yet it is I who taught Ephraim to walk,
I took them in My arms;
But they did not know that I healed them.
- 11:4** I led them with cords of a man, with bonds of love,
And I became to them as one who lifts the yoke from their jaws;
And I bent down and fed them.
- 11:5** They will not return to the land of Egypt;
But Assyria — he will be their king

- Because they refused to return to Me.
- 11:6 The sword will whirl against their cities,
And will demolish their gate bars
And consume them because of their counsels.
- 11:7 So My people are bent on turning from Me.
Though they call them to the One on high,
None at all exalts Him.
- 11:8 How can I give you up, O Ephraim?
How can I surrender you, O Israel?
How can I make you like Admah?
How can I treat you like Zeboiim?
My heart is turned over within Me,
All My compassions are kindled.
- 11:9 I will not execute My fierce anger;
I will not destroy Ephraim again.
For I am God and not man, the Holy One in your midst,
And I will not come in wrath.
- 11:10 They will walk after Yahweh,
He will roar like a lion;
Indeed He will roar
And His sons will come trembling from the west.
- 11:11 They will come trembling like birds from Egypt
And like doves from the land of Assyria;
And I will settle them in their houses, declares Yahweh.

God begins this message of chapter 11 in v. 1 by referring to the people of Israel when they were “a youth,” saying that He loved them. This was early in their history, after they had spent four hundred years in Egypt, starting with Jacob and his twelve sons and families and ending with Moses who led them out of slavery to the land of Canaan which God had promised them. The Jews were God’s “son,” His special and beloved child, so that God can say through Hosea, “And out of Egypt I called My son.”

God continues in v. 2,

- 11:2 The more they called them,
The more they went from them;
They kept sacrificing to the Baals
And burning incense to idols.

I interpret the “they” here as the judges (or rulers, as a better translation of the Hebrew word *shophteem* (שֹׁפְטִים)) of the Israelites who took over leading them occasionally after Joshua died and they had entered the land of Canaan around 1500 B.C. “The more” these judges, e.g., Ehud, Deborah, Barak, Gideon, and Samson, encouraged the people to follow and worship only Yahweh, their God, the one who had rescued them from slavery in Egypt, the more they “went from” the judges and turned away from humbly submitting to God. Instead, “they kept sacrificing” to false gods, whom God calls “the Baals,” and they also burned “incense to idols” as part of their disobedience. As the author of Judges says in 2:8-19,

- Judges 2:8 Then Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of Yahweh, died at the age of one hundred and ten.
- 2:9 And they buried him in the territory of his inheritance in Timnath-heres, in the hill country of Ephraim, north of Mount Gaash.
- 2:10 All that generation also were gathered to their fathers; and there arose another generation after them who did not know Yahweh, nor yet the work which He had done for Israel.
- 2:11 Then the sons of Israel did evil in the sight of Yahweh and served the Baals,

- 2:12 and they forsook Yahweh, the God of their fathers, who had brought them out of the land of Egypt, and followed other gods from among the gods of the peoples who were around them, and bowed themselves down to them; thus they provoked Yahweh to anger.
- 2:13 So they forsook Yahweh and served Baal and the Ashtaroth.
- 2:14 The anger of Yahweh burned against Israel, and He gave them into the hands of plunderers who plundered them; and He sold them into the hands of their enemies around them, so that they could no longer stand before their enemies.
- 2:15 Wherever they went, the hand of Yahweh was against them for evil, as Yahweh had spoken and as Yahweh had sworn to them, so that they were severely distressed.
- 2:16 Then Yahweh raised up judges who delivered them from the hands of those who plundered them.
- 2:17 Yet they did not listen to their judges, for they played the harlot after other gods and bowed themselves down to them. They turned aside quickly from the way in which their fathers had walked in obeying the commandments of Yahweh; they did not do as their fathers.
- 2:18 When Yahweh raised up judges for them, Yahweh was with the judge and delivered them from the hand of their enemies all the days of the judge; for Yahweh was moved to pity by their groaning because of those who oppressed and afflicted them.
- 2:19 But it came about when the judge died, that they would turn back and act more corruptly than their fathers, in following other gods to serve them and bow down to them; they did not abandon their practices or their stubborn ways.

In the midst of these multiple situations where the Israelites rebelled against God approximately 700 years before Hosea, did God ever completely abandon them? God says in vs. 3-4 of Hosea 11,

- 11:3 Yet it is I who taught Ephraim to walk,
I took them in My arms;
But they did not know that I healed them.
- 11:4 I led them with cords of a man, with bonds of love,
And I became to them as one who lifts the yoke from their jaws;
And I bent down and fed them.

God did remain committed to His chosen people, teaching “Ephraim to walk” and taking the people in His arms. We notice that He uses the name of the northern tribes “Ephraim,” which is also the name of Joseph’s second born son whom Jacob blessed with the responsibility of replacing Reuben as his firstborn son. Yet, He seems to be using the name to refer to all the Jews, the entire nation of Israel. Thus, He says that He continued to instruct the people through the judges and like a tender father, He “took them in [His] arms,” caring for their needs in order that they could survive the periodic attacks of their enemies whom He was using to discipline and train them to obey Him from their hearts.

However, “they did not know” that it was God who was bringing healing and sustenance to them as judge after judge led them in victory against their enemies (v. 3). This is to say that they remained unwilling to acknowledge and submit to God in spite of His faithfulness and protection of them. Indeed, God “led them with cords of a man,” by which He is speaking metaphorically of “bonds of love” (v. 4). It should always amaze us that God continues to love and care for the Jewish people regardless of their lack of love for Him—year after year, century after century, millennium after millennium. And He will continue to do so right up to the return of Jesus as their Messiah who will be their final judge, ruler, and king when he restores the Kingdom of Israel. This is exactly what the Hebrew word *hesed* means, that while the Jews may give up on God and reject Him, He never gives up on them and rejects them. The same is true of Christians, that by His *hesed* and faithfulness towards us, God will ensure that we persevere in our faith through even the most difficult circumstances in order to reach our goal of life in the eternal Kingdom of God after Jesus returns.

Sometimes the yoke across an ox’s back was lifted in order to provide him more freedom to graze and eat. God states that this is what He has done repeatedly for His chosen people. While they have

certainly experienced the yoke of God's judgment and disciplines over the years, He has never prevented them completely from finding the means as a group of people to persevere in their existence. He has never allowed their enemies, who have been tools of His discipline, to annihilate them, in spite of their intent to do so (like the government of Iran in our day). Indeed, God has been so loving in the midst of Israel's disobedience that He has "bent down and fed them" (v. 4). He has persistently condescended from His transcendent position to their level within the creation and made sure they have enough to keep at least a remnant alive for the sake of future generations and their becoming the "great nation" of Genesis 12.

However, God continues in vs. 5-7 to say that another judgment is coming,

- 11:5 They will not return to the land of Egypt;
But Assyria — he will be their king
Because they refused to return to Me.
- 11:6 The sword will whirl against their cities,
And will demolish their gate bars
And consume them because of their counsels.
- 11:7 So My people are bent on turning from Me.
Though they call them to the One on high,
None at all exalts Him.

While it was the case during the time of the judges 700 years earlier that the Jews' enemies made life miserable for them, they never drove them off the land of Israel. But the situation is about to change. God says in v. 5 that He will not cause them to "return to the land of Egypt" where they had been in slavery at the time of Moses. Nevertheless, He will make Assyria in the north their new captors, implying that this current and fierce empire will take them into exile. As God says in v. 6, "the sword [of the Assyrians] will whirl against" the cities of Israel and "will demolish their" gates and take them captive. We know that the Assyrians finish this task of God in 722 B.C.

And why is this happening to the people of Israel? In v. 5, God says, "Because they refused to return" to Him in their hearts and minds. In v. 6, He says that is "because of their counsels," referring to simply the Jews' manner of thinking about reality whereby they excluded God in their thoughts, so that they have refused to worship Him from their hearts, and they have pursued other means besides God to protect themselves from the Assyrians. These "counsels" therefore are occurring within their hearts and minds. Plus, God states in v. 7, "My people are bent on turning from Me" instead of towards Him in their hearts. And in spite of the prophets' calling them to worship "the One on high," Yahweh, "none at all exalts Him." There exists within the northern Kingdom of Israel mass rebellion against God. The Jews are obsessed with bowing down to false gods and cannot see their way straight to obeying only Yahweh.

Yet, God still says in vs. 8-11,

- 11:8 How can I give you up, O Ephraim?
How can I surrender you, O Israel?
How can I make you like Admah?
How can I treat you like Zeboiim?
My heart is turned over within Me,
All My compassions are kindled.
- 11:9 I will not execute My fierce anger;
I will not destroy Ephraim again.
For I am God and not man, the Holy One in your midst,
And I will not come in wrath.
- 11:10 They will walk after Yahweh,
He will roar like a lion;
Indeed He will roar
And His sons will come trembling from the west.

11:11 They will come trembling like birds from Egypt
 And like doves from the land of Assyria;
 And I will settle them in their houses, declares Yahweh.

Ephraim, the firstborn son of Jacob and representative of the entire nation of Israel, deserves God unfettered wrath, judgment, and destruction, but he is (they are) also too precious to Him that He would totally abandon His chosen people. He cannot “give [them] up” and “surrender,” i.e. abandon, them. He will not treat them like the cities of Admah and Zeboiim which He destroyed completely along with Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 19 (cf. Deuteronomy 29:23). Instead, God declares that His “heart is turned over within” Him, meaning that all His “compassions” are on fire within Him to remain faithful to His people and preserve them long-term in order to fulfill His promise to Abraham to make them a “great nation” (cf. Genesis 12:2).

As a result, according to v. 9, God will not “execute [His] fierce anger” towards the northern Kingdom of Israel. He will not “destroy Ephraim again,” to the point that He drives them off their land permanently, never to return. And this is because God is not like a human being who is inclined to go beyond the proper boundaries of justice and fail to keep His promises to preserve a perpetual remnant of the Jews for the last days when they become the most powerful nation in history. Eventually, God will “not come in wrath” and justice, but He will approach the nation of Israel with His “compassions.”

In, v. 10, the effect of His forgiveness and kindness towards them will be that the Jews will finally “walk after Yahweh,” because He will reveal Himself like a “lion” who is chasing away the predators of its cubs. God’s protective measures in the last days when Jesus returns will allow “His sons” to “come trembling from the west.” No longer will the Jews stubbornly reject God and His threats of justice and punishment. They will instead acknowledge His justice and His mercy, fully desiring to avoid the former and obtain the latter. “They will come trembling like birds from Egypt and like doves from the land of Assyria,” these two empires and locations representative of all the places where God has driven His people into exile in order eventually to gather them back into the land in the last days of the present age, which He has promised them from the time of Abraham (v. 11).

They will be like “birds” and “doves,” small and needy birds who require God’s protection from hawks who would destroy and consume them for food. It will be at this future time that God “will settle them in their houses,” causing them to dwell in total safety without ever again having to fear harm, persecution, and suffering from their enemies. Consequently, we can assume that God is referring to the coming messianic kingdom of Revelation after Jesus returns.

Hosea 14

14:1 Return (שׁוּבוּהָ), O Israel, to Yahweh your God,
 For you have stumbled because of your iniquity.
14:2 Take words with you and return to Yahweh.
 Say to Him, “Take away all iniquity
 And receive us graciously,
 That we may present the fruit of our lips.
14:3 “Assyria will not save us,
 We will not ride on horses;
 Nor will we say again, ‘Our god,’
 To the work of our hands;
 For in You the orphan finds mercy (יִרְחַם).”
14:4 I will heal their apostasy (בְּיִשׁוּבָהֶם),
 I will love them freely,
 For My anger has turned away from them.
14:5 I will be like the dew to Israel;

- He will blossom like the lily,
And he will take root like the cedars of Lebanon.
- 14:6 His shoots will sprout,
And his beauty will be like the olive tree
And his fragrance like the cedars of Lebanon.
- 14:7 Those who live in his shadow
Will again raise grain,
And they will blossom like the vine.
His renown will be like the wine of Lebanon.
- 14:8 O Ephraim, what more have I to do with idols?
It is I who answer and look after you.
I am like a luxuriant cypress;
From Me comes your fruit.
- 14:9 Whoever is wise, let him understand these things;
Whoever is discerning, let him know them.
For the ways of Yahweh are right,
And the righteous will walk in them,
But transgressors will stumble in them.

This final chapter of Hosea begins with his making a sincere appeal to “Israel,” who are probably not just the northern kingdom, but who include the southern Kingdom of Judah. The whole group “have stumbled because of [their] iniquity.” They have tripped and fallen into God’s judgment with the Assyrians as His instrument of justice and discipline. The prophet urges them to “return” to God, which fundamentally of course must start in their hearts and minds and migrate to their actions.

Nevertheless, in v. 2, Hosea urges them to “take words” in their returning to God that has its foundation in their inwardness, so that they should pray to Him, “Take away all our iniquity and receive us graciously, that we may present the fruit of our lips.” He wants them to worship God with their words and especially to ask that God will forgive them by His grace for their sins so that they may speak of God with sincerity and not in hypocrisy.

Then they should end their prayer as in v. 3,

- 14:3 “Assyria will not save us,
We will not ride on horses;
Nor will we say again, ‘Our god,’
To the work of our hands;
For in You the orphan finds mercy (יִרְחַם).”

The people of Israel should wholeheartedly admit that the Assyrian Empire is no savior for them from any of their enemies (just as no nation today is Israel’s savior, regardless of how much foreign aid they receive). Indeed, the Assyrians themselves are the Jews’ enemies, and the latter should never at any time of their history make an alliance with any group of human beings, with any nation or country, as a way to defend their land and citizens from their enemies. Hosea is implying that God has said that He will protect them so that He alone is their shield and guardian from all life’s burdens and potential sources of harm and suffering.

This means, too, that the finest military equipment, “horses” in Hosea’s day, are not where they should put their trust. Again, it should be only God on whom they count to keep them safe from those who would seek to harm them. In addition, pagan idols, which they make with their own hands within the creation, are not their objects of worship and devotion. Only God is worthy of their loyalty and trust. Indeed, it is in Him alone whom the most vulnerable of society, the “orphan” who has no parents, and, by extrapolation the widow, who has no husband, to support and protect them, should trust so as to find help and compassion in their defenseless plight.

Next, Hosea records in vs. 4-9 God’s words of how He will respond to such a prayer from His people. We begin with v. 4,

14:4 I will heal their apostasy (מִשְׁוֹרְתָם),
I will love them freely,
For My anger has turned away from them.

God will “heal their apostasy,” meaning that He will forgive them for formerly “having turned” from Him to false gods and rejecting Him and His commandments. Indeed, He “will love them freely,” meaning by His grace and His own independent initiative. This implies that their prayer itself will come from His sovereign grace and causation and not from anything which they have done or accomplished within themselves and by virtue of their own inner resources. This is to say that the source of their repentance will be God’s having “turned [His anger] away from them.” And He will decide never again to judge and discipline them.

God continues in vs. 5-7,

14:5 I will be like the dew to Israel;
He will blossom like the lily,
And he will take root like the cedars of Lebanon.
14:6 His shoots will sprout,
And his beauty will be like the olive tree
And his fragrance like the cedars of Lebanon.
14:7 Those who live in his shadow
Will again raise grain,
And they will blossom like the vine.
His renown will be like the wine of Lebanon.

In these verses, God says that He will make Israel fertile and productive, referring to the people’s children and descendants. All the agricultural metaphors—blossoming like a lily, taking root like the cedars of Lebanon, shoots sprouting, becoming beautiful like an olive tree, giving off an aroma like the cedars of Lebanon, raising grain for those who live in the Jews’ shadow, blossoming like a vineyard, and become well-known like fine wine from Lebanon—pertain to the future obedience, prosperity, success, and fame of God’s chosen people on the land of Israel. Even those who “live in [their] shadow,” i.e., the Gentiles who conform their beliefs and lives to the beliefs and moral obedience of this “great nation” of Abraham’s descendants, will likewise thrive. The people of Israel will finally be appropriately famous for their obedience to God that comes from their hearts of humility and repentance. And the rest of the world will reap similar benefits as many Gentiles believe God in the same manner.

Then, God ends His appeal to the Jews in vs. 8-9,

14:8 O Ephraim, what more have I to do with idols?
It is I who answer and look after you.
I am like a luxuriant cypress;
From Me comes your fruit.
14:9 Whoever is wise, let him understand these things;
Whoever is discerning, let him know them.
For the ways of Yahweh are right,
And the righteous will walk in them,
But transgressors will stumble in them.

Again, God speaks to “Ephraim,” a typical name for the northern Kingdom of Israel, but certainly representative of all the Jews. He asks in v. 8, “What more have I to do with idols?” Obviously, this is a rhetorical question, and the correct answer is, “Nothing!!” God wants His people to worship and bow down to only Him. Instead of their addressing their prayers to manmade figurines and the forces of nature which are powerless in and of themselves to help anyone, they should make all their appeals

for help to Him. And God will “answer and look after” them, so that He is “like a luxuriant cypress” tree, which bears its fruit for the sake of His people. In other words, God is always available to the nation of Israel, if they are humble and repentant as He is urging them through Hosea, to provide them with all their needs.

God’s final words are in v. 9. If anyone possesses the appropriate wisdom, then this person will be able to grasp and embrace as truth what God is saying in these verses (and, by extrapolation, in the whole book of Hosea, and, by extrapolation, in the whole Bible comprised of both the Hebrew scriptures before Jesus and the Greek scriptures after Jesus). This is the person who is “discerning” and can truly “know” what God is communicating to the Jews. Nevertheless, there are always two possible responses to God and His messages through the prophets and other authorized spokesmen, e.g., Jesus as His primary prophet and the apostles to whom he gave the responsibility to teach the gospel on his behalf after he ascended from the earth. One possible response is that “the righteous will walk in” these ideas which God is putting forth. These are the Jews (and Gentiles, too, if they emulate the Jews) who fundamentally want to be biblically good people and to pursue obedience to God’s moral commandments by His grace in the light of His mercy and forgiveness.

A second possible response is that “transgressors will stumble in” these ideas. We are all transgressors and sinners, but God is speaking of Jews (and Gentiles similarly) who are unwilling to repent so that they remain committed in their hearts and minds to rejecting God and ignoring His moral commandments. They will “stumble” at the end of their lives and fall into eternal destruction. And both responses, the one of pursuing genuine obedience and the other of remaining stubbornly disobedient are in the light of the fact that “the ways of Yahweh are right,” whether people are willing to admit the rightness of God’s moral requirements or not. The “righteous” Jew will enjoy God’s love, grace, mercy, and participation in the “great nation” of the Abrahamic Covenant (even if he is raised from the dead long after his life of belief), while the Jew who is a transgressor and remains such throughout his life will suffer God’s judgment and condemnation.

Joel 2:18-22

Rather than provide an explanation for the two following passages from the book of Joel, I refer the reader to my paper titled “The Prophecy of Joel” which covers the entire book. I simply include the passages of 2:18-22 and chapter 3 as evidence of this prophet’s looking into the future and predicting the coming messianic kingdom of the Jews on the land of Israel with Jesus of Nazareth as their Messiah and king.

2:18 Then Yahweh will be zealous for His land (לְאֶרֶץ יְהוָה)

And will have pity on His people (עַל-עַמּוֹ).

2:19 Yahweh will answer and say to His people,

“Behold, I am going to send you grain, new wine and oil,

And you will be satisfied in full with them;

And I will never again (וְלֹא-עוֹד) make you a reproach among the nations.

2:20 “But I will remove the northern army far from you,

And I will drive it into a parched and desolate land,

And its vanguard into the eastern sea,

And its rear guard into the western sea.

And its stench will arise and its foul smell will come up,

For it has done great things.”

2:21 Do not fear, O land (אֶרֶץ יְהוָה), rejoice and be glad,

For Yahweh has done great things.

2:22 Do not fear, beasts of the field,

For the pastures of the wilderness have turned green,

For the tree has borne its fruit,

The fig tree and the vine have yielded in full.

- 2:23 So rejoice, O sons of Zion,
And be glad in Yahweh your God;
For He has given you the early rain for your vindication (לְצַדִּיקָהּ).
And He has poured down for you the rain,
The early and latter rain as before.
- 2:24 The threshing floors will be full of grain,
And the vats will overflow with the new wine and oil.
- 2:25 “Then I will make up to you for the years
That the swarming locust has eaten,
The creeping locust, the stripping locust and the gnawing locust,
My great army which I sent among you.
- 2:26 “You will have plenty to eat and be satisfied
And praise the name of Yahweh your God,
Who has dealt wondrously with you;
Then My people will never (וְלֹא...לְעוֹלָם) be put to shame.
- 2:27 “Thus you will know that I am in the midst of Israel,
And that I am Yahweh your God,
And there is no other;
And My people will never (וְלֹא...לְעוֹלָם) be put to shame.
- 2:28 “It will come about after this
That I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind (עַל-כָּל-בָּשָׂר);
And your sons and daughters will prophesy,
Your old men will dream dreams,
Your young men will see visions.
- 2:29 “Even on the male and female servants
I will pour out My Spirit in those days (בַּיָּמִים הַהֵמָּנָה).
- 2:30 “I will display wonders in the sky and on the earth,
Blood, fire and columns of smoke.
- 2:31 “The sun will be turned into darkness
And the moon into blood
Before the great and awesome day of Yahweh comes (לְפָנַי בּוֹא יוֹם יְהוָה הַגָּדוֹל וְהַנּוֹרָא).
- 2:32 “And it will come about that whoever calls on the name of Yahweh
Will be delivered;
For on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem
There will be those who escape,
As Yahweh has said,
Even among the survivors (וּבְשָׂרֵי-יָיִם) whom Yahweh calls.

Joel 3

- 3:1 “1For behold, in those days and at that time (בַּיָּמִים הַהֵמָּנָה וּבְעֵת הַהִיא),
When I restore the fortunes (אֶת-שְׁבוֹת [אֲשֻׁב] אֲשֶׁר אָשָׁר) of Judah and Jerusalem,
- 3:2 I will gather all the nations (וְקִבַּצְתִּי אֶת-כָּל-הַגּוֹיִם)
And bring them down to the valley of Jehoshaphat (יְהוֹשָׁפָט).
Then I will enter into judgment with them there
On behalf of My people and My inheritance, Israel,
Whom they have scattered among the nations;
And they have divided up My land (וְאֶת-אֶרֶצִּי).
- 3:3 “They have also cast lots for My people,
Traded a boy for a harlot
And sold a girl for wine that they may drink.
- 3:4 “Moreover, what are you to Me, O Tyre, Sidon and all the regions of Philistia?
Are you rendering Me a recompense (הַגְּמוּלָה...מִשְׁלָמִים)?
But if you do recompense (וְאִם-גְּמִלִים אַתֶּם) Me,

- swiftly and speedily I will return your recompense (אָשִׁיב וְגַמְלָתְכֶם) on your head.
- 3:5 “Since you have taken My silver and My gold, brought My precious treasures to your temples,
- 3:6 and sold the sons of Judah and Jerusalem to the Greeks in order to remove them far from their territory (מֵעַל גְּבוּלָם),
- 3:7 behold, I am going to arouse them from the place where you have sold them, and return your recompense (וְהִשְׁבַּתִּי וְגַמְלָתְכֶם) on your head.
- 3:8 “Also I will sell your sons and your daughters into the hand of the sons of Judah, and they will sell them to the Sabeans, to a distant nation,” for Yahweh has spoken.
- 3:9 Proclaim this among the nations:
Prepare a war; rouse the mighty men!
Let all the soldiers draw near, let them come up!
- 3:10 Beat your plowshares into swords
And your pruning hooks into spears;
Let the weak say, “I am a mighty man.”
- 3:11 Hasten and come, all you surrounding nations,
And gather yourselves there.
Bring down, Yahweh, Your mighty ones.
- 3:12 Let the nations be aroused
And come up to the valley of Jehoshaphat (יְהוֹשָׁפָט),
For there I will sit to judge
All the surrounding nations.
- 3:13 Put in the sickle, for the harvest is ripe.
Come, tread, for the wine press is full;
The vats overflow, for their wickedness is great.
- 3:14 Multitudes, multitudes in the valley of decision (הַתְּהוֹמִים)!
For the day of Yahweh is near (כִּי קָרוֹב יוֹם יְהוָה) in the valley of decision (הַתְּהוֹמִים).
- 3:15 The sun and moon grow dark
And the stars lose their brightness.
- 3:16 Yahweh roars from Zion
And utters His voice from Jerusalem,
And the heavens and the earth tremble.
But Yahweh is a refuge for His people (מִמְחֶסֶה לְעַמּוֹ)
And a stronghold to the sons of Israel (לְבִגְיֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל).
- 3:17 Then you will know that I am Yahweh your God,
Dwelling in Zion, My holy mountain.
So Jerusalem will be holy,
And strangers will pass through it no more.
- 3:18 And in that day (בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא)
The mountains will drip with sweet wine,
And the hills will flow with milk,
And all the brooks of Judah will flow with water;
And a spring will go out from the house of Yahweh
To water the valley of Shittim.
- 3:19 Egypt will become a waste,
And Edom will become a desolate wilderness,
Because of the violence done to the sons of Judah,
In whose land (בְּאֶרֶץ) they have shed innocent blood.
- 3:20 But Judah will be inhabited forever (וַיִּהְיֶה לְעוֹלָם תֹּשָׁב)
And Jerusalem for all generations (לְדוֹר וָדוֹר).
- 3:21 And I will avenge (וְנִקְיֵיתִי) their blood which I have not avenged,
For Yahweh dwells in Zion.

Amos 8:1-9:15

- 8:1 Thus Adonai Yahweh showed me, and behold, there was a basket of summer fruit.
- 8:2 He said, "What do you see, Amos?" And I said, "A basket of summer fruit." Then Yahweh said to me, "The end has come for My people Israel. I will spare them no longer.
- 8:3 "The songs of the palace will turn to wailing in that day," declares Adonai Yahweh. "Many will be the corpses; in every place they will cast them forth in silence."
- 8:4 Hear this, you who trample the needy, to do away with the humble of the land,
- 8:5 saying,
 "When will the new moon be over,
 So that we may sell grain,
 And the sabbath, that we may open the wheat market,
 To make the bushel smaller and the shekel bigger,
 And to cheat with dishonest scales,
- 8:6 So as to buy the helpless for money
 And the needy for a pair of sandals,
 And that we may sell the refuse of the wheat?"
- 8:7 Yahweh has sworn by the pride of Jacob,
 "Indeed, I will never forget any of their deeds.
- 8:8 "Because of this will not the land quake
 And everyone who dwells in it mourn?
 Indeed, all of it will rise up like the Nile,
 And it will be tossed about
 And subside like the Nile of Egypt.
- 8:9 "It will come about in that day," declares Adonai Yahweh,
 "That I will make the sun go down at noon
 And make the earth dark in broad daylight.
- 8:10 "Then I will turn your festivals into mourning
 And all your songs into lamentation;
 And I will bring sackcloth on everyone's loins
 And baldness on every head.
 And I will make it like a time of mourning for an only son,
 And the end of it will be like a bitter day.
- 8:11 "Behold, days are coming," declares Adonai Yahweh,
 "When I will send a famine on the land,
 Not a famine for bread or a thirst for water,
 But rather for hearing the words of Yahweh.
- 8:12 "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 Yahweh,
 But they will not find it.
- 8:13 "In that day the beautiful virgins
 And the young men will faint from thirst.
- 8:14 "As for those who swear by the guilt of Samaria,
 Who say, 'As your god lives, O Dan,'
 And, 'As the way of Beersheba lives,'
 They will fall and not rise again."
- 9:1 I saw Adonai standing beside the altar, and He said,
 "Smite the capitals so that the thresholds will shake,
 And break them on the heads of them all!
 Then I will slay the rest of them with the sword;
 They will not have a fugitive who will flee,
 Or a refugee who will escape.
- 9:2 "Though they dig into Sheol,
 From there will My hand take them;
 And though they ascend to heaven,

- From there will I bring them down.
- 9:3 “Though they hide on the summit of Carmel,
I will search them out and take them from there;
And though they conceal themselves from My sight on the floor of the sea,
From there I will command the serpent and it will bite them.
- 9:4 “And though they go into captivity before their enemies,
From there I will command the sword that it slay them,
And I will set My eyes against them for evil and not for good.”
- 9:5 And Adonai Yahweh of hosts,
The One who touches the land (בְּאֶרֶץ) so that it melts,
And all those who dwell in it mourn,
And all of it rises up like the Nile
And subsides like the Nile of Egypt;
- 9:6 The One who builds His upper chambers in the heavens
And has founded His vaulted dome over the earth,
He who calls for the waters of the sea
And pours them out on the face of the earth,
Yahweh is His name.
- 9:7 “Are you not as the sons of Ethiopia to Me,
O sons of Israel?” declares Yahweh.
“Have I not brought up Israel from the land of Egypt,
And the Philistines from Caphtor and the Arameans from Kir?”
- 9:8 “Behold, the eyes of Adonai Yahweh are on the sinful kingdom,
And I will destroy it from the face of the earth;
Nevertheless, I will not totally destroy
the house of Jacob (אֲפֹס כִּי לֹא הַשְׁמִיד אֶשְׁמִיד אֶת־בֵּית יַעֲקֹב),”
Declares Yahweh.
- 9:9 “For behold, I am commanding,
And I will shake the house of Israel among all nations
As grain is shaken in a sieve,
And as a pebble does not fall to the ground.
- 9:10 “All the sinners of My people will die by the sword,
Those who say, ‘The calamity will not overtake or confront us.’
- 9:11 “In that day I will raise up the fallen booth of David (בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא אֶקִּים אֶת־סֹכֶת דָּוִד הַנִּפְלֵת),
And wall up its breaches;
I will also raise up its ruins
And rebuild it as in the days of old;
- 9:12 That they may possess the remnant of Edom
And all the nations who are called by My name (וְכָל־הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר־נִקְרָא שְׁמִי עֲלֵיהֶם),”
Declares Yahweh who does this.
- 9:13 “Behold, days are coming (יָמִים בָּאִים),” declares Yahweh,
“When the plowman will overtake the reaper
And the treader of grapes him who sows seed;
When the mountains will drip sweet wine
And all the hills will be dissolved.
- 9:14 “Also I will restore the captivity (וְשִׁבְתִּי אֶת־שְׁבוּת) of My people Israel,
And they will rebuild the ruined cities (וּבְנִי עָרִים נְשֻׁמוֹת) and live in them;
They will also plant vineyards and drink their wine,
And make gardens and eat their fruit.
- 9:15 “I will also plant them on their land (וְנִטְעֵתִים עַל־אֲדָמָתָם),
And they will not again be rooted out from their land (כִּמְעַל אֲדָמָתָם)
Which I have given them (אֲשֶׁר נָתַתִּי לָהֶם),”
Says Yahweh your God.

Amos (אָמֹס), whose name means “the one who is supported,” spoke as a Yahweh’s prophet mainly to the northern Kingdom of Israel, but also to the southern Kingdom of Judah between 760 and 750 B.C. Most of his book is a series of criticisms by God of His chosen people, the Jews, with the result that He is going to destroy the Kingdom of Israel and drive them into exile, which will occur in 722 B.C. The above verses of 8:1-9:4 are the final indictment by God before He changes His tone at the very end of the book and predicts the fulfillment of His promise to Abraham to make his descendants a “great nation” (cf. Genesis 12:2).

While some of God’s criticisms and predictions of judgment on the people of Israel in 8:1-9:4 could refer to the last days of the present age immediately preceding Jesus’ return, The Great and Terrible Day of the Lord (cf. Malachi 4:5), I think that they fit better with the situation in the days of Amos prior to the Assyrian invasion and captivity in the late 8th century B.C. We will move rather quickly through this first part of our passage. Thus, God says in 8:1-3 that a basket of fruit which is the last of the harvest in the summer is an appropriate symbol for the Kingdom of Israel at the time of Amos. As God says in 2, “The end has come for My people.” The people of Israel are going to die and their songs, which most likely are not praise songs of Yahweh, will become lamentations and wailing over the suffering which they will endure. Indeed corpses are going to be thrown everywhere (v. 3).

In 8:4-6 God indicts the Jews for celebrating the monthly new moons and weekly Sabbaths with insincerity and impatience, waiting for them to end so that they can get back to making money and cheating the poor. As a result, He declares in vs. 7-8 that the land will rise and fall like the seasonal movements of the Nile River in Egypt. Israel’s land will undulate due to an earthquake, meaning that the Assyrians will cause the land to shake as their vast army marches over it. And they will reduce the number of people living on it to a trickle as happens annually to the Nile. Then in 8:9-10 He indicates that a great darkness will come over the land, both spiritually and physically, due to a lack of belief among the Jews, so that only “mourning” and “songs of lamentation” will be heard as the Assyrians destroy them and expel them from the land. Their sadness will be so great that the sound of it will be like a funeral for an only son.

At the same time, God will bring about a famine of truth among the Jews (8:11-13). They will hunger and thirst for a message of hope, but there will be none. They will travel everywhere desperately seeking to hear what God has to say that can encourage to them, But there will no one who will be able to provide them with this kind of information. Even the youth will lack the truth that they seek from God. In v. 14, God declares that the Jews will think that they are properly worshiping God in the places which they and their recent ancestors have chosen. But they are wrong, because they are not carrying out their ceremonies in Jerusalem, the only true city of God, which is situated in the southern Kingdom of Judah and from which they have chosen to be separate. As a result, they and their kingdom will fall, never to rise again as it had been formerly.

Then in 9:1-2, Amos sees God standing in the alternate (and illegitimate) temple in Samaria, north of Jerusalem, and He tells someone (The Assyrians as a collective person? Amos? Anyone listening?) to destroy it, thus crushing the people inside. This is very likely a reference to the Jews’ seeking shelter and protection from the Assyrians, but they will not escape. And God says that those of His people who are in other places of the northern kingdom and who are trying to flee the invading army will not escape either. Indeed, if they could dig a hole in the ground that reached to the location of the dead, to *Sheol* (שְׁאוֹל; *Hades* (ᾍδης) in the Greek Septuagint), even there God would find them and kill them. The same would be true if they ascended into the heavens above the earth.

The Israelites could try to hide on the top of Mt. Carmel or at the bottom of the sea, but God would still find them and kill them (9:3-4). In addition, as they are being taken into captivity, their enemies will slay them with their swords because God has set His eyes “against them for evil and not for good.” Such is the bleak picture which God is painting through the prophet Amos to His chosen people of the northern Kingdom of Israel around the time of 750 B.C., not too many years before all this becomes a reality for them.

Now we will slow down and read each portion of the last part of this passage. All of a sudden God completely changes His tone as He continues in 9:5-6,

- 9:5 And Adonai Yahweh of hosts,
The One who touches the land (יָאֲרֹךְ) so that it melts,
And all those who dwell in it mourn,
And all of it rises up like the Nile
And subsides like the Nile of Egypt;
- 9:6 The One who builds His upper chambers in the heavens
And has founded His vaulted dome over the earth,
He who calls for the waters of the sea
And pours them out on the face of the earth,
Yahweh is His name.

Here is the prophet's introduction to God's next statements. He reminds himself and his fellow Jews exactly who God is—the transcendent creator, who is in constant and complete control of what is happening on the land of Israel (and, by extrapolation, the entire rest of the creation and universe). He “touches” the land with the Assyrians “so that it melts,” and the people and their kingdom are destroyed. He raises it up “like the Nile” had causes it to subside, so that the Jews are reduced to almost nothing on it. He is the creator of “the heavens,” of all the rest of the universe that forms a “vaulted dome over the earth.” It is God alone who has provided the waters of the sea to cover a major portion of the earth. And His name is Yahweh, i.e., “He is,” and by implication there is no one even close to being as powerful, knowledgeable, and capable as He is. Not even Satan, whom He has created, can be compared to God in these areas.

Then God speaks starting in v. 7,

- 9:7 “Are you not as the sons of Ethiopia to Me,
O sons of Israel?” declares Yahweh.
“Have I not brought up Israel from the land of Egypt,
And the Philistines from Caphtor and the Arameans from Kir?”

God asks if His chosen people are not like “the sons of Ethiopia,” [literally “the sons of the Cushites”], who are most likely pagan idolators steeped in their own unwillingness to worship the one, true God. Indeed, this is how God has described the Israelites throughout the book of Amos. Therefore, while the Jews are certainly the chosen people of God, individually they will experience the same kind of treatment as any others who reject worshipping Him alone.

In addition, just as God caused the Philistines to migrate from Caphtor (modern Crete?) and the Arameans to do the same from Kir (northern Syria?), God also “brought up Israel from the land of Egypt.” Again, even though the Jews are the chosen people of God, He is no less sovereign over them than He is over all other peoples of the earth. What does God mean by asking the Jews, “Are you not as the sons of Ethiopia to Me,” and “Have I not brought” you up from Egypt as I caused these other people to leave some place and move to another? He answers in the following verses, starting with 9:8-10,

- 9:8 “Behold, the eyes of Adonai Yahweh are on the sinful kingdom,
And I will destroy it from the face of the earth;
Nevertheless, I will not totally destroy
the house of Jacob (אֲפֹס כִּי לֹא הִשְׁמַד אֶשְׁמַד אֶת־בֵּית יִשְׂרָאֵל),”
Declares Yahweh.
- 9:9 “For behold, I am commanding,
And I will shake the house of Israel among all nations
As grain is shaken in a sieve,
And as a pebble does not fall to the ground.

9:10 “All the sinners of My people will die by the sword,
Those who say, ‘The calamity will not overtake or confront us.’”

The Jews of the northern Kingdom of Israel are as sinful as the pagan nations who surround them. And, in line with His threats in Deuteronomy 28, God “will destroy it from the face of the earth.” We know this happened at the hands of the Assyrians in 722 B.C. But notice how God continues to speak in v. 8, “Nevertheless, I will not totally destroy the house of Jacob,” where I think that “Jacob” here refers to only the ten tribes of the northern Kingdom, just as the names “Israel” and “Ephraim” do on many occasions in the prophets.

God will issue a commandment to the Assyrians who “will shake the house of Israel,” i.e., the Jews of the northern kingdom, “among all the nations as grain is shaken in a sieve, and as a pebble does not fall to the ground.” In other words, God is going to scatter the teeny, tiny individual Jews around the world, after having driven them from their land. In the process “all the sinners of [God’s] people will die by the sword” at the hands of the Assyrians. These are the same people who still think that God will protect them from their enemies in spite of their refusal to obey Him (v. 9), that their election by God makes them impervious to His judgment.

Yet, there is coming a time when God will definitely complete His promise to Abraham as He goes on to describe in the final verses of the book (vs. 11-15),

9:11 “In that day I will raise up the fallen booth of David (בְּיָוֹם הַהוּא אֶקְרָא אֶת־סֹכֶת דָּוִד הַנִּפְלֵת),
And wall up its breaches;
I will also raise up its ruins
And rebuild it as in the days of old;

9:12 That they may possess the remnant of Edom
And all the nations who are called by My name (וְכָל־הַגּוֹיִם אֲשֶׁר־נִקְרָא שְׁמִי עָלֵיהֶם),”
Declares Yahweh who does this.

9:13 “Behold, days are coming (וַיָּמִים בָּאִים),” declares Yahweh,
“When the plowman will overtake the reaper
And the treader of grapes him who sows seed;
When the mountains will drip sweet wine
And all the hills will be dissolved.

9:14 “Also I will restore the captivity (וְשִׁבְתִּי אֶת־שְׁבוּת) of My people Israel,
And they will rebuild the ruined cities (וּבְנִי עָרִים נְשֻׁמוֹת) and live in them;
They will also plant vineyards and drink their wine,
And make gardens and eat their fruit.

9:15 “I will also plant them on their land (וְנִטְעֵתִים עַל־אֲדָמָתָם),
And they will not again be rooted out from their land (בְּמַעַל אֲדָמָתָם)
Which I have given them (אֲשֶׁר נָתַתִּי לָהֶם),”
Says Yahweh your God.

As we have seen before, it will be “in that day,” *bayyom hahu* (בְּיָוֹם הַהוּא), that God will make the people of Israel the most powerful nation in human history. And here we learn that He will accomplish this by raising “up the fallen booth of David,” repairing its walls and rebuilding it as it was formerly during the time of David himself (v. 11). The Hebrew word for “booth,” *succah* (סֹכֶה) means a hut or tabernacle, i.e., a small tent in which someone may live. The Feast of Tabernacles, the *hag hassuccoth* (חַג הַסֻּכּוֹת), was one of the three feasts during the year at which God required the presence of the Jews in Jerusalem. This one commemorated the time when the Israelites lived in booths or tents in the Sinai Wilderness for forty years after God had rescued them from slavery in Egypt.

Here God is using the word to refer to the line of David as kings of Israel. Even though this monarchy will continue to exist after Amos’ day for approximately a hundred and fifty years in the

southern Kingdom of Judah, God is implying that it will eventually disappear, only to be revived at the end of the present age. He must be referring to the return of Jesus, who will establish the messianic kingdom and become the nation of Israel's final and permanent king as described in Revelation 20. His power and authority over them will result in the Jews' ruling over their ancient enemies, the Edomites, who are descendants of Esau, and over all other nations too (v. 12).

Verse 13 describes an existence for God's chosen people of prosperity and success on the land of Israel without any of the common hindrances in our current world to obtaining what is necessary in order to live life well. The "plowman" will barely have finished planting when the "reaper" will appear to gather in the harvest. The same will be true of the one who sows the seeds of grapes to be cultivated for wine and the "treader of grapes" who appears to crush them and make them into wine. In other words, the natural world will work so vigorously on behalf of the Jews that they will have a superabundance of food and drink. God will ensure this all happens for them.

In v. 14, a description of the good life for God's people on their land of promise continues. First, He "will restore the captivity" of the nation of Israel, meaning that He will give them back whatever they have lost in the past. As a result, they will rebuild any cities previously destroyed by their enemies, they will sow vineyards and enjoy the wine from them, and they will plant gardens and take advantage of the abundance of their fruit.

And the final upshot of all God's merciful, gracious, and faithful actions towards the Jews will be that He will "plant them on their land and they will not again be rooted out from their land which [He has] given them" (v. 15). This is to say that never again will there be an Assyrian invasion, a Babylonian invasion, a Roman invasion, a Muslim invasion, or successful attack by any of the Jews' enemies that ends with their having to flee from the land which God promised to them through the Abrahamic Covenant. However, this implies that not only will God protect them completely from any who would seek to destroy them, but also the Jews themselves will all be different. God will change the hearts of each and every individual Jew as they all live on their land with authentic belief in Him and His Messiah Jesus. Plus, they will obey the Mosaic Covenant for the entire existence of the messianic kingdom as God always had required of them—with circumcised hearts that demonstrate authentic repentance and a fundamental desire for righteousness and goodness in their actions.

God is therefore looking into the future at what will be the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20, with Jesus ruling over the Jews on the land of Israel and over the rest of the world from his capital of Jerusalem. In this way, God through the prophet Amos confirms His commitment to the Abrahamic Covenant of Genesis 12-22.

Obadiah 15-21

15 "For the day of Yahweh draws near on all the nations (כִּי־קָרִיב יוֹם־יְהוָה עַל־כָּל־הַגּוֹיִם).

As you have done, it will be done to you.

Your dealings will return on your own head.

16 "Because just as you drank on My holy mountain (עַל־הַבְּרָךְ קָדְשִׁי),

All the nations will drink continually (יִשְׁתּוּ כָּל־הַגּוֹיִם תָּמִיד).

They will drink and swallow

And become as if they had never existed (וְהָיוּ כְּלֹא־הָיוּ).

17 "But on Mount Zion there will be those who escape,

And it will be holy.

And the house of Jacob will possess their possessions (וְהָיוּ בְּיַד יַעֲקֹב אֵת מוֹרְשֵׁיהֶם).

18 "Then the house of Jacob will be a fire

And the house of Joseph a flame;

But the house of Esau will be as stubble.

And they will set them on fire and consume them,

So that there will be no survivor of the house of Esau,"

For Yahweh has spoken.

19 Then those of the Negev will possess (וְהָיוּ לְיָד) the mountain of Esau,

- And those of the Shephelah the Philistine plain;
 Also, possess (וְיָרְשׁוּ) the territory of Ephraim and the territory of Samaria,
 And Benjamin will possess Gilead.
- 20 And the exiles of this host of the sons of Israel,
 Who are among the Canaanites as far as Zarephath,
 And the exiles of Jerusalem who are in Sepharad
 Will possess the cities of the Negev.
- 21 The deliverers (מְוֹשְׁעִים) will ascend Mount Zion
 To rule (לְשָׂבֵט) the mountain of Esau,
 And the kingdom will be Yahweh's (וְהַמְּלִיכָה הַמְּלִיכָה).

Around 850 B.C., approximately a hundred years before Assyria destroyed the northern Kingdom of Israel in 722 B.C. and a hundred and fifty years before Babylon's destruction of Judah in 586 B.C., Obadiah, whose name means "Servant of Yahweh," presented his message from God to the Gentile nation of Edom. These were descendants of Jacob's older brother Esau from whom he stole his father's birthright and blessing as recorded in Genesis 25 & 27 respectively. The Edomites, who are living southeast of Judah in the cliffs of the desert, are arrogantly thinking that they can avoid God's judgment while gloating over the eventual destruction of Jerusalem and the southern Kingdom of Judah. However, God predicts through Obadiah that He will humble and destroy them instead.

In v. 15, God warns the Edomites that "the day of Yahweh draws near on all the nations," most likely referring to the last judgment of the Gentile peoples of the Middle East who gather their armies to invade and annihilate the Jews on the land of Israel. We know from the other Old Testament prophets and the book of Revelation that this will coincide with the return of Jesus as the "branch of David" and the Messiah (cf. Jeremiah 33:15). The descendants of Esau have been a constant enemy of the Jews, his brother's (Jacob's) descendants, and God declares to them that "As you have done, it will be done to you. Your dealings will return on your head" (v. 15). God will cause a *quid pro quo* for the Edomites. They have mistreated and rejoiced in the suffering of God's people to the extent that they are finding delight in the destruction of the northern Kingdom of Israel and the southern Kingdom of Judah, but they will pay for their unwillingness to desire only what is good for God's chosen people and to help them achieve it.

Plus, verse 16 reveals that the Edomites have participated to some degree in Jerusalem's pain, and God speaks of what He will do to them in response. We must see this as an example of how God will exact punishment from all the Middle Eastern Gentile nations who seek to harm the Jews anytime during their history and especially at the end of the present age immediately before Jesus' return. The future descendants of Esau will drink of God's justice and destruction "on [His] holy mountain" when Jesus returns. In addition, "all the nations" who join the Edomites in their criminal pursuits against Israel "will drink continually" of God's judgments. In fact, "they will drink and swallow and become as if they had never existed," literally "they will be as though they are not" (וְהָיָה כְּלֹא הָיָה) (καὶ ἔσονται καθὼς οὐχ ὑπάρχοντες). God will bring a level of destruction on this collection of Gentile armies and their nations that will render them completely powerless before Jesus and the Jews whom he has come to defend.

Speaking of the Jews, "On Mount Zion there will those who escape, and it will be holy" (v. 17). These must be the 144,000 of the book of Revelation, the Jews whom God preserves from all the devastation which He brings on the people of Israel and who will enter into the messianic kingdom as the first, complete generation of authentic believers. And Mount Zion, i.e., Jerusalem, "will be holy" and sacred so that it is never defiled by Gentile invaders but remains God's dwelling place for the rest of the age under Jesus' rule. Another result will be that the nation of Israel as Jacob's descendants who are receiving the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham to make them a "great nation," will "possess their possessions" (v. 17). Rather than the Gentiles plundering and taking ownership of all that belongs to the Jews, including their land which God has granted to them as His chosen people,

the Jews will become the owners so to speak of the Gentiles' lands and countries in the sense that they will rule over them, including the Edomites.

God continues in v. 18,

18 “Then the house of Jacob will be a fire
And the house of Joseph a flame;
But the house of Esau will be as stubble.
And they will set them on fire and consume them,
So that there will be no survivor of the house of Esau,”
For Yahweh has spoken.

Since Jacob had replaced Reuben as his official firstborn with Ephraim, Joseph's second son, God indicates through the names of Jacob and Joseph that the nation of Israel will destroy the people of the descendants of Esau as “fire” burns up “stubble.” Indeed, “there will be no survivor of the house of Esau.” And this is because “Yahweh has spoken,” and no one can prevent Him from carrying out His eternal plans.

Then, in v. 19, God indicates that the Jews, specifically “those of the Negev” south of Jerusalem, will replace the Edomites in “the mountain of Esau.” In addition, the Jews of the “Shephelah,” the plain southwest of Jerusalem between the hills of Judea and the Mediterranean coast where the Philistines live, will extend their possession of the land of Israel to the coast. They will also dwell in “Ephraim” and “Samaria,” in northern Israel, and even east of the Jordan River in “Gilead.”

Verse 20 refers to the “exiles,” those Jews outside the land of Israel, who will return from “Zarephath,” i.e., Lebanon, and from “Sepharad,” either Turkey or Spain, and they too “will possess the cities of the Negev” in the south. As a result of vs. 19 & 20, the entirety of the land of Israel, which God promised to Abraham and his descendants through Isaac and Jacob, will become the possession of the Jews. Thus, all “the deliverers,” meaning Jesus, the *angeloi* of Yahweh (theophanies of the transcendent God), and the surviving Jewish people “will ascend Mount Zion” in Jerusalem and take their position of ruling over the area formerly possessed by the Edomites. In this way “the kingdom will be Yahweh's” (v. 21). This will constitute the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20 when Jesus returns to fulfill God's promise to Abraham in Genesis 12-22 as the greatest nation in human history and who will exercise complete hegemony over the entire world.

Micah 4:1-5:1

- 4:1 And it will come about in the last days (וְהָיָה אִבְרָהָם הַיָּמִים)
That the mountain of the house of Yahweh (הַר בֵּית יְהוָה)
Will be established as the chief of the mountains (נִכְוֵן בְּרֹאשׁ הַהָרִים).
It will be raised above the hills,
And the peoples will stream to it (וַיִּהְיוּ עָלָיו עַמִּים).
- 4:2 Many nations (גוֹיִם רַבִּים) will come and say,
“Come and let us go up to the mountain of Yahweh
And to the house of the God of Jacob,
That He may teach us about His ways (וַיְרַנְּנוּ מִדְרָכָיו)
And that we may walk in His paths (וַיִּלְכְּדוּ בְּאַרְצוֹתָיו).”
For from Zion will go forth the law (כִּי מִצִּיּוֹן תֵּצֵא תוֹרָה),
Even the word of Yahweh from Jerusalem (וְדִבְרֵי יְהוָה מִירוּשָׁלַם).
- 4:3 And He will judge between many peoples (וְשָׁפֵט בֵּין עַמִּים רַבִּים)
And render decisions for mighty, distant nations (וְהוֹכִיחַ לְגוֹיִם עֲצֻמִּים עֲדֵר־רְחֹק).
Then they will hammer their swords into plowshares
And their spears into pruning hooks;
Nation will not lift up sword against nation (לֹא-יִשְׁאֹר גּוֹי אֶל-גּוֹי חֶרֶב),
And never again will they train for war (וְלֹא-יִלְמְדוּן עוֹד מִלְחָמָה).

- 4:4 Each of them will sit under his vine
And under his fig tree,
With no one to make them afraid (וְאִין מִמְרִיד),
For the mouth of Yahweh of hosts has spoken.
- 4:5 Though all the peoples walk
Each in the name of his god,
As for us, we will walk
In the name of Yahweh our God forever and ever (לְעוֹלָם וָעֶד).
- 4:6 “In that day (בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא),” declares Yahweh,
“I will assemble (אֶסְבְּעָה) the lame
And gather (אֶקְבְּצָה) the outcasts,
Even those whom I have afflicted.
- 4:7 “I will make the lame a remnant (לְשְׂאֵרִית)
And the outcasts a strong nation (לְגוֹי עֲצוּם),
And Yahweh will reign (וַיִּמְלֹךְ) over them in Mount Zion
From now on and forever (מֵעַתָּה וְעַד-עוֹלָם).
- 4:8 “As for you, tower of the flock,
Hill of the daughter of Zion,
To you it will come —
Even the former dominion will come (וּבִאָהּ הַמְּמִשְׁלָה הַקְּדָמָה),
The kingdom of the daughter of Jerusalem (מַמְלַכְתָּה לְבַת-יְרוּשָׁלַם).
- 4:9 “Now, why do you cry out loudly?
Is there no king among you,
Or has your counselor perished,
That agony has gripped you like a woman in childbirth?
- 4:10 “Writhe and labor to give birth,
Daughter of Zion,
Like a woman in childbirth;
For now you will go out of the city,
Dwell in the field,
And go to Babylon.
There you will be rescued (שָׁם תִּנְצָלִי);
There Yahweh will redeem you (שָׁם יִגְאֹלֶךָ יְהוָה)
From the hand of your enemies.
- 4:11 “And now many nations have been assembled against you
Who say, ‘Let her be polluted,
And let our eyes gloat over Zion.’
- 4:12 “But they do not know the thoughts of Yahweh (וְהֵמָּה לֹא יָדְעוּ מִחִשְׁבוֹת יְהוָה),
And they do not understand His purpose (וְלֹא הִבִּינוּ עֲצָתוֹ);
For He has gathered them (קָבְצָם) like sheaves to the threshing floor.
- 4:13 “Arise and thresh, daughter of Zion,
For your horn I will make iron
And your hoofs I will make bronze,
That you may pulverize many peoples (וְהִדְרַקוּת עַמִּים רַבִּים),
That you may devote (וְהִתְדַרְמַתִּי) to Yahweh their unjust gain
And their wealth to the Lord of all the earth (לְאֲדוֹן כָּל-הָאָרֶץ).

Micah and Isaiah presented their messages from God to primarily the southern Kingdom of Judah during approximately the same time, from about 740-690 B.C. The northern Kingdom of Israel was in its last days as Assyria finally destroyed it in 722 B.C., and the people of Judah were straying farther and farther from Yahweh on their way to seeing their kingdom come to an end in 586 B.C. at the hands of the Babylonians.

Micah 4:1-3 are almost exactly the same as Isaiah 2:2-4. Obviously God wanted to communicate this important message twice to the Kingdom of Judah. Isaiah's and Micah's point is that God will make Jerusalem and Israel the most powerful nation in the world in fulfillment of His first promise to Abraham in Genesis 12. But this makes sense only in connection with Jesus' return as their Messiah, when he rules over the millennial kingdom of Israel and the whole world as described in the vision of Revelation 20. In addition, many people of the Gentile nations will look to Jesus and the Jews for instruction on how to worship and obey God. And Jesus will rule so strongly over all the nations that none of them will go to war against one another during the time of his messianic kingdom.

Then in v. 4, Micah proceeds differently from Isaiah,

4:4 Each of them will sit under his vine
And under his fig tree,
With no one to make them afraid,
For the mouth of Yahweh of hosts has spoken.

Do the words "with no one to make them afraid" refer to only the Jews during the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20 when they will live in complete security and safety on the land of Israel? Or will everyone throughout the world, the Jews on their land and the Gentiles in their countries, enjoy such peace under the rule of Jesus? Notice the last two lines of v. 3, "Nation will not lift up sword against nation, and never again will they train for war." Therefore, the context points to the latter being the case. With Jesus ruling over the entire world, all individuals everywhere will live without the threat of harm from anyone else. And this is what Yahweh declares, "For the mouth of Yahweh of hosts has spoken."

But then in v. 5 there is a change in speakers,

4:5 Though all the peoples walk
Each in the name of his god,
As for us, we will walk
In the name of Yahweh our God forever and ever.

While the whole world may experience peace because the Messiah will exercise hegemony over them from his capital city, Jerusalem, nevertheless not all the Gentiles will worship God and Jesus with changed hearts. Indeed, probably most of them will "walk each in the name of his god," i.e., worshiping some aspect of the created reality, even if it is themselves. In contrast, "as for us," and this must be Micah and his fellow Jews who are speaking, "we will walk in the name of Yahweh our God." When God said to Abraham in Genesis 12 that He would make his descendants a "great nation," that their greatness will be partly in the fact that God will circumcise their hearts, so that they demonstrate genuine belief in Him and His Messiah, whom we now know is Jesus of Nazareth.

Plus, the Jews will be this kind of people "forever and ever," which is the Hebrew phrase *le'olam va'ed*, which I would translate "into perpetuity and beyond." In other words, God through Micah puts the words in mouths of the nation of Israel that, from the moment the Messiah establishes his kingdom (that is, when Jesus returns) they will exist as entire ethnic group of authentic faith, and they will never stop doing so—during the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20 and into the next age of the eternal Kingdom of God after He destroys the present realm and then creates a new heaven and a new earth (cf. Revelation 21).

After Micah and the Jews speak, God once again picks up the thread in vs. 6-8,

4:6 "In that day (בְּיוֹם הַהוּא)," declares Yahweh,
"I will assemble (אֶסְפָּה) the lame
And gather (אֶקְבְּצָה) the outcasts,
Even those whom I have afflicted.

- 4:7 “I will make the lame a remnant (לְשֹׂאֲרֵית),
 And the outcasts a strong nation (לְגֹי עֲצוּם),
 And Yahweh will reign (וַיִּמְלֹךְ) over them in Mount Zion
 From now on and forever (מִעַתָּה וְעַד-עוֹלָם).
 4:8 “As for you, tower of the flock,
 Hill of the daughter of Zion,
 To you it will come —
 Even the former dominion will come (וּבִאָהּ הַמְּמֹשְׁלָה הַתְּרַאשׁוּנָה),
 The kingdom of the daughter of Jerusalem (מַמְלַכְתָּ לְבַת-יְרוּשָׁלַם).

Thus, the God of Israel categorically states in v. 6 that “in that day,” the day when peace and shalom rule His people and the earth, He will gather all the Jews, who have suffered greatly as a result of persecution from the Gentiles (the “lame,” the “outcasts,” and those whom He has “afflicted” for their disobedience), and, in v. 7, they will become the “remnant” (*sh' ayreeth*; שְׂאֲרֵית) of Israel who will constitute the “strong nation” of the promise of Genesis 12. “And Yahweh will reign over them in Mount Zion” and Jerusalem. And His rule over the Jews (and over the world) will be “from now on and forever,” which is the Hebrew phrase *may 'attah ve 'ad 'olam* (מִעַתָּה וְעַד-עוֹלָם). This means “from now and into perpetuity,” which in the context of God’s reign over the earth means from the moment the Messiah establishes his kingdom (when Jesus returns) to the moment when God brings the Kingdom of Israel to a close and creates a new universe which will last into eternity (cf. Revelation 21).

To say it another way in v. 8, God states that to “the daughter of Zion,” the people of Israel who are God’s earthly, ethnic chosen people, the “former dominion” of the “kingdom” of Israel will return to them when God so decides at the end of this age. As extensive and expansive as the kingdoms of David and Solomon were, so also (and more!) will be the kingdom of the coming Messiah, because he with all the Jews will rule the whole world. And thus God’s people will enjoy the fulfillment of His promise to Abraham to make them a “great nation.”

Then, in vs. 9-12, God predicts the destruction of the southern Kingdom of Judah,

- 4:9 “Now, why do you cry out loudly?
 Is there no king among you,
 Or has your counselor perished,
 That agony has gripped you like a woman in childbirth?
 4:10 “Writhe and labor to give birth,
 Daughter of Zion,
 Like a woman in childbirth;
 For now you will go out of the city,
 Dwell in the field,
 And go to Babylon.
 There you will be rescued (שָׁם תִּנְצָלִי);
 There Yahweh will redeem you (שָׁם יִגְאֹלֶךָ יְהוָה);
 From the hand of your enemies.
 4:11 “And now many nations have been assembled against you
 Who say, ‘Let her be polluted,
 And let our eyes gloat over Zion.’
 4:12 “But they do not know the thoughts of Yahweh (וְהִמָּה לֹא יָדְעוּ מַחְשְׁבוֹת יְהוָה),
 And they do not understand His purpose (וְלֹא הִבִּינּוּ עֲצָתוֹ);
 For He has gathered them (קָבְצָם) like sheaves to the threshing floor.”

God hears the cries of the Jews of Judah. They have lost their king, and there is no one who can provide them with the right strategy to combat and defeat their enemies. They are in pain like a woman in labor during childbirth, and they are leaving Jerusalem for a distant city and land, Babylon

(vs. 9-10a). However, eventually God will rescue them and “redeem” them “from the hand of [their] enemies.” This is always His encouragement to the nation of Israel—to look to the future if they are going through suffering because He is disciplining them. In other words, according to God’s promise to make them a “great nation,” they will never be completely defeated and wiped out by their enemies, even though they will suffer greatly at their hands (v. 10b).

Indeed, even though God calls the time “now,” it will be at some point in the future that there will be “many nations” who will gather their armies to invade Israel and to destroy the Jews. This is most likely just before Jesus returns as their Messiah at the end of this age. The “many” Gentile nations will have as their goal to see the nation of Israel “polluted” by their presence among the Jews and to “gloat” over their destruction as they defile (from God’s perspective) the promised land with their armies (v. 11).

However, in their pride and arrogance and because they have not studied and embraced the truth of the Bible, the Gentiles “do not know the thoughts of Yahweh, and they do not understand His purpose,” which is exactly this—that “He has gathered them like sheaves to the threshing floor.” They think that they will destroy Israel, but, instead, God will destroy them. He will pummel them to death like threshed grain on the threshing floor. Consequently, God cannot be referring to the Babylonian destruction of the southern Kingdom of Judah in the 6th century B.C. He must be talking about the time just before and during the Messiah’s appearance, when he destroys Israel’s belligerent enemies and establishes his earthly kingdom with its capital in Jerusalem.

Micah ends his prophetic message in v. 13,

4:13 “Arise and thresh, daughter of Zion,
 For your horn I will make iron
 And your hoofs I will make bronze,
 That you may pulverize many peoples (וְהִדְרִקוּת עַמִּים רַבִּים),
 That you may devote (וְהִתְרַמְּתִי) to Yahweh their unjust gain
 And their wealth to the Lord of all the earth (לְאֲדֹנָי כָּל-הָאָרֶץ).

God through Micah encourages the Jews to rise up and “thresh” their enemies, “many peoples” who have gathered to destroy them. God will make the Jews’ “horn,” which is their strength, like “iron” and their “hoofs,” which are their weapons, like “bronze,” so that they may crush their enemies. He also uses a highly technical term, the Hebrew verb *herem*, which means to destroy something in order to make it sacred to God. They are to “devote” and dedicate to God their enemies and their “unjust gain,” which would be any wealth they acquired through unscrupulous means, which is certainly a common practice and effect among all peoples of the earth. However, during the final battle between Israel and their enemies, the Battle of Armageddon, the Jews will join their Messiah and annihilate the invading armies, which will put an end to any “unjust gain” among these nations.

The implication is that, once the Messiah appears and establishes his reign over the entire world, the nation of Israel will never have to fear their enemies again, because God will have fulfilled His promise to Abraham to make them a “great nation” according to Genesis 12, and they will live in complete safety and security with their Messiah ruling over them and the world for as long as God desires that the present earth exist.

Micah 5:1-15

5:1 “Now muster yourselves in troops, daughter of troops;
 They have laid siege against us;
 With a rod they will smite the judge of Israel (שֹׁפֵט יִשְׂרָאֵל) on the cheek.
 5:2 “But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,
 Too little to be among the clans of Judah,

- From you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel (מוֹשֵׁל בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל).
 His goings forth are from long ago (וּמוֹצְאֵתוֹ מִקְדָּמָה),
 From the days of eternity (בְּיָמֵי עוֹלָם).”
- 5:3 Therefore He will give them up until the time
 When she who is in labor has borne a child.
 Then the remainder of His brethren (וְהַיִּתְּרֵי אֶחָיו)
 Will return to the sons of Israel (וְיָשׁוּבוּן עַל-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל).
- 5:4 And He will arise and shepherd His flock
 In the strength of Yahweh,
 In the majesty of the name of Yahweh His God.
 And they will remain (וְיִשָּׁבוּ),
 Because at that time He will be great
 To the ends of the earth (עַד-אַפְסֵי-אֲרֶץ).
- 5:5 This One will be our peace (וְהָיָה זֶה שְׁלֹום).
 When the Assyrian invades our land (בְּאֲרָצֵנוּ),
 When he tramples on our citadels,
 Then we will raise against him
 Seven shepherds and eight leaders of men.
- 5:6 They will shepherd the land of Assyria with the sword,
 The land of Nimrod at its entrances;
 And He will deliver us (וְהִצִּיל) from the Assyrian
 When he attacks our land (כִּי-יָבֹא בְּאֲרָצֵנוּ)
 And when he tramples our territory.
- 5:7 Then the remnant of Jacob (שְׁאֵרֵית יִשְׂרָאֵל)
 Will be among many peoples (בְּקִרְבַּי עַמִּים רַבִּים),
 Like dew from Yahweh,
 Like showers on vegetation
 Which do not wait for man
 Or delay for the sons of men.
- 5:8 The remnant of Jacob (שְׁאֵרֵית יִשְׂרָאֵל)
 Will be among the nations,
 Among many peoples (בְּגוֹיִם בְּקִרְבַּי עַמִּים רַבִּים)
 Like a lion among the beasts of the forest,
 Like a young lion among flocks of sheep,
 Which, if he passes through,
 Tramples down and tears,
 And there is none to rescue.
- 5:9 Your hand will be lifted up against your adversaries (תִּלְוֶה יָדְךָ עַל-צָרֶיךָ),
 And all your enemies will be cut off (וְכָל-אֹיְבֶיךָ יִקָּרְטוּ).
- 5:10 “It will be in that day (וְהָיָה בַּיּוֹם-הַהוּא),” declares Yahweh,
 “That I will cut off your horses from among you
 And destroy your chariots.
- 5:11 “I will also cut off the cities of your land
 And tear down all your fortifications.
- 5:12 “I will cut off sorceries from your hand,
 And you will have fortune-tellers no more.
- 5:13 “I will cut off your carved images
 And your sacred pillars from among you,
 So that you will no longer bow down
 To the work of your hands.
- 5:14 “I will root out your Asherim from among you
 And destroy your cities.
- 5:15 “And I will execute vengeance in anger and wrath

On the nations which have not obeyed.”

I have chosen to start this passage with v. 1 of chapter 5, but it is difficult to know exactly how to translate it. The Hebrew reads as above, while the Septuagint reads, “Now, the Daughter of Ephraim will be barred passage within the wall. He has appointed distress for us. With a staff they will strike the tribes of Israel on the cheek.” If the Hebrew is correct, then God may very well be referring to the end of this age, starting with the Gentiles’, i.e., the Romans’, participation in the rejection of the “judge,” which should be translated “ruler,” of the Jews. This would be the crucifixion of Jesus during his first appearance. Then it would be later that God encourages the Jews to “muster” their “troops” to resist and even defeat the final armies who have invaded the land of Israel in order to subjugate and eventually to try to annihilate the Jews.

If the Greek Septuagint is correct, then God is referring to these end times armies who will be attacking the Jews on the land of Israel and causing all “the tribes of Israel” great suffering immediately before Jesus’ return. Interestingly enough, the root verb of the Hebrew word judge/ruler is *shaphat* (שָׁפַט) while that for tribe is *shaphah* (שָׁפָה). Therefore, it is very possible that the original word was “tribes” and not “judge/ruler.” And I think that this makes more sense in the context, that God is warning the nation of Israel, all the tribes of the Jews, of a future attack by their enemies, and yet, as He goes on to say in the rest of this passage, He will raise up a ruler in Israel so that the nation will exercise power and authority over the Gentile nations.

Thus, vs. 2-4 say,

- 5:2 “But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah,
 Too little to be among the clans of Judah,
 From you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel (מוֹשֵׁל בְּיִשְׂרָאֵל).
 His goings forth are from long ago (וּמִזְמַנְתָּיו מִקְדָּמָה),
 From the days of eternity (מִיָּמֵי עוֹלָם).”
- 5:3 Therefore He will give them up until the time
 When she who is in labor has borne a child.
 Then the remainder of His brethren (וְהַיְתָר אֶחָיו)
 Will return to the sons of Israel (וְיָשׁוּבוּן עַל־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל).
- 5:4 And He will arise and shepherd His flock
 In the strength of Yahweh,
 In the majesty of the name of Yahweh His God.
 And they will remain (וְיִשְׁבּוּ),
 Because at that time He will be great
 To the ends of the earth (עַד־אַפְסֵי־אֲרֶזְיָן).

In v. 2, God speaks directly to the small town of Bethlehem Ephrathah, which is approximately five miles south of Jerusalem. The second name of this town distinguishes it from other towns and villages in Israel by the same name of Bethlehem, such as the one in the area of the tribe of Zebulun (cf. Joshua 19:15). We also know, according to 1 Samuel 17:12, that Bethlehem Ephrathah was the one where King David was born, thus making a connection between the “One” who “will go forth from [God] to be ruler in Israel” and the Davidic Covenant whereby God will eventually bring about a permanent king, the Messiah, for His chosen people. And we now know that this person is Jesus of Nazareth.

God also says in v. 2 in regard to this “ruler” that “his goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity.” The words “from long ago” are the Hebrew *miqqedem* (מִקְדָּמָה), literally “from the east,” which is to say from the place of the rising sun, while “eternity” is the familiar *’olam* (עוֹלָם), meaning perpetuity, or a long time past. Considering that all human beings, including Jesus, are created characters in God’s story which He is telling, this means that God has planned from long, long ago, indeed from before He brought the creation into existence, that this person will lead and

rule Israel as the ultimate fulfillment of the Davidic Covenant when He also fulfills His Abrahamic promise to make them a “great nation.” Consequently, the greatness of the Jews will include both the changed inwardness of the entire population that reveals itself in authentic belief and the presence of Jesus as the final king of the restored Kingdom of Israel as planned by God from long, long ago.

In v. 3, I think that God is saying that He will relinquish the Jews to an existence that is less than ideal until a woman, “she who is in labor,” bears a very special child. Indeed, this will be the most important child to come into existence in the nation of Israel and in the world, because he will be the “ruler in Israel” mentioned in v. 2. After his birth, eventually those who constitute “the remainder of his brethren will turn [not “return”] towards the sons of Israel.” This is to say that from the time of the birth of this ruler until he fulfills his entire responsibility, those who choose to be his followers will turn towards Israel and the promises which God made to Abraham to make the Jews a “great nation” and to grant him and believers like him eternal life. Even though the Jews have not yet been the kind of people whom God has instructed of them, that they have not yet become an entire nation of authentic believers in God and His Messiah Jesus, nevertheless they through their scriptures have been the ones to whom all other peoples should have and actually have “turned” to find the truth about God in the Bible. Yes, Luke, one of the authors of the New Testament, was a Gentile, but all the rest of the biblical authors have been Jews and even Luke learned his theology from probably the greatest theologians of all time (except for Jesus), the apostle Paul of Tarsus.

As a result of God’s giving over the Jews to unbelief and the Gentiles’ seeking to become genuine believers in God through the material provided by the Jews, v. 4 goes on to say that this “ruler in Israel” who has been born of a woman, i.e., of Jerusalem in the context of chapter 4, “will arise and shepherd his flock in the strength of Yahweh, in the majesty of His name, because at that time he will be great to the ends of the earth.” This refers to Jesus’ second appearance when he returns, restores the Kingdom of Israel, rules over the Jews from his capital Jerusalem, and exercises authority over the entire world.

Micah goes on in vs. 5-15 to describe the effects that this person will have on the Jews and the world. We begin with vs. 5-6,

- 5:5 This One will be our peace (וְהָיָה זֶה שְׁלוֹמֵנוּ).
 When the Assyrian invades our land (בְּאַרְצֵנוּ),
 When he tramples on our citadels,
 Then we will raise against him
 Seven shepherds and eight leaders of men.
- 5:6 They will shepherd the land of Assyria with the sword,
 The land of Nimrod at its entrances;
 And He will deliver us (וְהִצִּיל) from the Assyrian
 When he attacks our land (כִּי יִבֹּא בְּאַרְצֵנוּ)
 And when he tramples our territory.

The ruler born of Jerusalem, i.e., of the Jews, will bring *shalom* to them and defeat and crush their enemies. Here, “the Assyrian” as the first major enemy of the Jews during the monarchical period of the northern and southern kingdoms, most likely refers to the future coalition of nations in the Middle East, who are described in Revelation 16 and 19 and who invade Israel in order to subjugate and eventually attempt to destroy the Jews immediately before the return of the Messiah. These armies will “trample” the “citadels” of Israel, but as told in Revelation, God’s armies led by His Messiah will eventually destroy them. There will be “seven shepherds and eight leaders” of the Jews, meaning a goodly number of capable men, who will oppose these armies. Afterwards, “they will shepherd the land of Assyria,” the nations which have attacked them, because “he,” the “ruler in Israel,” will have rescued his people “from the Assyrian,” from this collection of Gentile armies. But before they experience their own demise, they will attack and even “trample” much of the land, causing

considerable harm and suffering until their destructive actions are brought to a halt by the Messiah and his army of Jews.

Verses 7-9 offer more information about the Jews at this time in the future,

- 5:7** Then the remnant of Jacob (שְׁאֲרֵי יַעֲקֹב)
 Will be among many peoples (בְּקִרְבַּ עַמִּים רַבִּים)
 Like dew from Yahweh,
 Like showers on vegetation
 Which do not wait for man
 Or delay for the sons of men.
- 5:8** The remnant of Jacob (שְׁאֲרֵי יַעֲקֹב)
 Will be among the nations,
 Among many peoples (בְּגוֹיִם בְּקִרְבַּ עַמִּים רַבִּים)
 Like a lion among the beasts of the forest,
 Like a young lion among flocks of sheep,
 Which, if he passes through,
 Tramples down and tears,
 And there is none to rescue.
- 5:9** Your hand will be lifted up against your adversaries (תָּרִם יָדְךָ עַל־צָרֶיךָ),
 And all your enemies will be cut off (וְכָל־אֹיְבֶיךָ יִכָּרְתוּ).

I think that this is a parenthetical statement in the midst of describing the effects of the coming Messiah as “ruler” of Israel. The word “Then” at the beginning of v. 7 is not actually present in the Hebrew text. It is merely the word “And,” which I suggest is a better translation. Thus, Micah is communicating that when all that God fulfills His promises to Abraham at the end of the age, “the remnant of Jacob will be among many peoples,” i.e., “among the nations.” And they will be “like dew from Yahweh,” offering a symbol of God’s faithfulness to the Gentiles. They will also be “like a lion among the beasts of the forest” and “among flocks of sheep, which, if he passes through, tramples down and tears, and there is none to rescue.” In other words, these will be Jews who have been scattered by God among the Gentile nations to be gathered eventually back into the land of Israel to join in the destruction of the Gentiles who have remained committed enemies of God and His people.

Thus, v. 9 addresses the remnant as the singular “you” and says to them, “Your hand will be lifted up against your adversaries, and all your enemies will be cut off.” The Jews who participate with the Messiah in his battle against Israel’s enemies will succeed just like him, so that they will never have to fear their enemies again. Indeed, this will be the last time that any foe of Israel causes any kind of harm or destruction on the land of Israel. From this point on, the Messiah will reign over not only the Jews, but also the Gentiles worldwide. According to Psalm 2:9, the latter will experience his “rod of iron” that will keep them in check.

The passage of Micah 5 ends with vs. 10-15,

- 5:10** “It will be in that day (וַיְהִי בַיּוֹם־הַהוּא),” declares Yahweh,
 “That I will cut off your horses from among you
 And destroy your chariots.
- 5:11** “I will also cut off the cities of your land
 And tear down all your fortifications.
- 5:12** “I will cut off sorceries from your hand,
 And you will have fortune-tellers no more.
- 5:13** “I will cut off your carved images
 And your sacred pillars from among you,
 So that you will no longer bow down
 To the work of your hands.
- 5:14** “I will root out your Asherim from among you

And destroy your cities.

5:15 “And I will execute vengeance in anger and wrath
On the nations which have not obeyed.”

The “day” of which Yahweh speaks is the same as that which the other passages indicate as the rise of the Messiah and the destruction of Israel’s enemies. The question is, who is the singular “you” in these verses? Is it the “remnant” of vs. 8-9? Is it “the Assyrian” of v. 5? Is it “the nations” of v. 15? While certainly God will “root out” all idolatry from amongst the nation of Israel during the millennial kingdom, and they will worship only Yahweh and His Messiah by means of the gospel and the Mosaic Covenant, it seems to me that God is saying that He is going to destroy all military capability of the Gentile nations, many of their fortified cities, and any opportunity to worship other gods, at least outwardly in their actions. Many Gentiles may still have hearts of unbelief and be desirous of looking to the creation or other religions for all their needs and well-being instead of worshipping the God of the Jews, but Jesus will forbid them and prevent them from acting on their desire.

Therefore, I think that the third option is correct, that the “you” here are “the nations which have not obeyed” God and who have committed themselves to be sworn enemies of Israel. God is going to “execute vengeance in anger and wrath” on those who attack the Jews for the last time just before Jesus returns, and He will destroy their armies, their entire military capability, and their cities. Even though He will not change the hearts of all the Gentiles living in these nations, God will render it impossible for them to worship other gods outwardly while the Messiah reigns over the earth during the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20. And all this will be a part of what it means for Abraham’s descendants to become a “great nation” according to the Abrahamic Covenant of Genesis 12-22.

Micah 7:7-20

7:7 But as for me, I will watch expectantly for Yahweh;
I will wait for the God of my salvation (לְאֱלֹהֵי יִשְׁעֵי).
My God will hear me.

7:8 Do not rejoice over me, O my enemy.
Though I fall I will rise;
Though I dwell in darkness, Yahweh is a light for me.

7:9 I will bear the indignation of Yahweh
Because I have sinned against Him,
Until He pleads my case (עַד אֲשֶׁר יִרְיֵב רִיבִי) and executes justice for me (וַעֲשֶׂה כְּמוֹשְׁפָטִי).
He will bring me out to the light (וַיֹּצִיאֵנִי לְאוֹר),
And I will see His righteousness (אֶרְאֶה בְּצִדְקָתוֹ).

7:10 Then my enemy will see,
And shame will cover her who said to me,
“Where is Yahweh your God?”
My eyes will look on her;
At that time she will be trampled down
Like mire of the streets.

7:11 It will be a day for building your walls.
On that day will your boundary be extended.

7:12 It will be a day when they will come to you
From Assyria and the cities of Egypt,
From Egypt even to the Euphrates,
Even from sea to sea and mountain to mountain.

7:13 And the earth will become desolate because of her inhabitants,
On account of the fruit of their deeds.

7:14 Shepherd Your people with Your scepter,
The flock of Your possession (צֹאֵן נֶחֱלָתְךָ).

Which dwells by itself in the woodland,
 In the midst of a fruitful field.
 Let them feed in Bashan and Gilead
 As in the days of old (כִּי־מִן עוֹלָם).

7:15 “As in the days when you came out from the land of Egypt,
 I will show you miracles.”

7:16 Nations will see and be ashamed
 Of all their might.
 They will put their hand on their mouth,
 Their ears will be deaf.

7:17 They will lick the dust like a serpent,
 Like reptiles of the earth.
 They will come trembling out of their fortresses;
 To Yahweh our God they will come in dread
 And they will be afraid before You.

7:18 Who is a God like You, who pardons iniquity
 And passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession (לְשֹׂאֲרֵית נִחַלְתּוֹ)?
 He does not retain His anger forever (לְעַד),
 Because He delights in unchanging love (כִּי־חֶפְצוֹ חֶסֶד הוּא).

7:19 He will again have compassion on us (יִרְחַמְנוּ);
 He will tread our iniquities under foot.
 Yes, You will cast all their sins
 Into the depths of the sea.

7:20 You will give truth (אֱמֶת) to Jacob
 And unchanging love (חֶסֶד) to Abraham,
 Which You swore to our forefathers (אֲשֶׁר־נִשְׁבַּעְתָּ לְאֲבוֹתֵינוּ)
 From the days of old (מִיָּמֵי קֶדֶם).

These are the final words of Micah to the southern Kingdom of Judah around 700 B.C., a hundred years before the Babylonians destroy it and take the people into captivity in Babylon. He tells them in v. 7 that he is a man of patience and watchfulness who is able to wait for God fulfill His plans and purposes according to His own timetable. Micah is looking for God to bring about even his own salvation, which is his prayer to God. Then, in v. 8, the prophet exhorts his enemies, whether unbelieving Jews or unbelieving Gentiles we are not told, not to “rejoice” over any harm that might come to him. He knows that if he may “fall,” so that it appears as if his enemies have the opportunity destroy him, but he will still “rise.” Ultimately, Micah must know that God will raise him from the dead if his enemies succeed in killing him. He also knows that if he is surrounded by the “darkness” of evil and lies wherever he lives, nevertheless God, who Himself is pure goodness and truth, is the “light” who is with him and supplying him with the truth of the biblical message—including the Abrahamic Covenant promises of the Jews’ becoming a great nation and of believers obtaining eternal life.

In v. 9, Micah states that even if he gets caught up in the wrath of God against the nation of Israel, and specifically the Kingdom of Judah, for their disobedience and his own sin, that God is his advocate and “executes justice” for him. But Micah means that God brings about justification and forgiveness for him while He brings him out “to the light” of the truth of God’s mercy. As a result, he will see God’s “righteousness,” which, again, is more likely His justification, so that God, because of Micah’s changed inwardness and authentic belief, has placed him in a position where he stands to receive God’s eternal mercy and forgiveness. In other words, Micah’s spiritual situation as a genuine believer and follower of God is no different from a Christian’s having the same expectation of obtaining God’s eternal salvation from His wrath and condemnation.

We find out in v. 10 that whenever this happens, Micah’s enemies, who arrogantly thought that they were more powerful than God and could destroy all His people, will be put to shame as they

“see” and observe God’s rescuing him from His wrath and condemnation. His enemies will have mocked him for what appears to be God’s having abandoned him, saying, “Where is Yahweh your God?” Yet, while they think that their god or gods are more powerful than Micah’s, they will find themselves trampled underfoot “like mire in the streets” when God destroys them according to His justice and promise to shield His people from their enemies.

Then in vs. 11-13 Micah again turns his attention to Jerusalem and the entire nation of Israel,

7:11 It will be a day for building your walls.

On that day will your boundary be extended.

7:12 It will be a day when they will come to you

From Assyria and the cities of Egypt,

From Egypt even to the Euphrates,

Even from sea to sea and mountain to mountain.

7:13 And the earth will become desolate because of her inhabitants,

On account of the fruit of their deeds.

When Micah experiences his own salvation, “it will be a day for building [the] walls” of the city of Jerusalem. It will also be a “day” when Israel’s “boundary” will “be extended” (v. 11). This is to say that the land of Israel will find itself in a time of *shalom*, peace and safety when the Jews who have been previously exiled from the land “will come” to it “from Assyria and the cities of Egypt, from Egypt to the Euphrates, even from sea to sea and mountain.” Yet, v. 13 indicates that there will be a certain desolation that Gentiles will experience because of their sin and immorality. All this sounds like what we have read already about the coming of the Messiah, his defeat of Israel’s enemies, and the return of the Jews to the land of Israel in order to live on it under the complete leadership of God as a fulfillment of His promise to Abraham.

In v. 14, Micah appeals directly to God,

7:14 Shepherd Your people with Your scepter,

The flock of Your possession (בְּאַיִן גְּמֻלָּתְךָ)

Which dwells by itself in the woodland,

In the midst of a fruitful field.

Let them feed in Bashan and Gilead

As in the days of old (בְּיָמֵי עוֹלָם).

The prophet urges God to care for His people, the Jews, by ruling over them with the strength of His “scepter,” His ornate staff as a symbol of His sovereign authority—not that the staff actually exists, but God’s power, strength, and authority certainly do. And His subjects are those who live “in the woodland” and “in the midst of a fruitful field,” which the land of Israel will become as a result of God’s blessing them when He fulfills His promise to Abraham to make them a “great nation.” Thus, as they had abundant food “in the days of old,” when they first regained the land after their four-hundred-year sojourn in Egypt, Micah encourages God to provide likewise for them at the end of the present age.

And God responds in the affirmative in v. 15,

7:15 “As in the days when you came out from the land of Egypt,

I will show you miracles.”

In other words, just as God, under the leadership of Moses, miraculously rescued the Israelites from their slave masters in Egypt, He will perform the same kind of miracles and rescue the Jews from all their enemies at the end of this age so as to provide them with a period of time when they will dwell on the land He has promised them in complete safety, security, and with an abundance of everything they need to live life to its fullest.

Micah takes up this torch and, in vs. 16-17, continues extolling God for the effect which His great faithfulness to His chosen people will have on the Gentiles,

- 7:16** Nations will see and be ashamed
Of all their might.
They will put their hand on their mouth,
Their ears will be deaf.
- 7:17** They will lick the dust like a serpent,
Like reptiles of the earth.
They will come trembling out of their fortresses;
To Yahweh our God they will come in dread
And they will be afraid before You.

When God executes His wrath and justice on the armies which have invaded Israel and on unbelieving Jews during the Great and Terrible Day of the Lord and as Jesus returns to restore the Kingdom of Israel and to establish his rule over the entire earth, the Gentile “nations will see and be ashamed of all their might.” However, their power will be minimal in comparison to God’s, so that in awe “they will put their hand on the mouth,” knowing that they have nothing to say in response to God’s display of His power and strength. Plus, “their ears will be deaf” to the truth being shown them by God’s justice, so that they remain stubborn-minded and unwilling to submit to them in their hearts.

The Gentiles will be so humbled by how puny they are in comparison to God that it will be as though “they lick the dust like a serpent, like the reptiles of the earth. They will [also] come trembling out of their fortresses,” whatever they have been using to protect themselves from their enemies and from God. They will be afraid because it will be obvious that there is no hiding from the transcendent creator. Micah says, “To Yahweh our God they will come in dread and they will be afraid.” No longer will they have an exaggerated sense of their own importance and greatness. Their arrogance will evaporate into thin air, and they will finally realize that they are as nothing before God, even while still being unwilling submit to them in their hearts.

Micah ends this passage in vs. 18-20 with a question and statements about God’s relationship to the nation of Israel,

- 7:18** Who is a God like You, who pardons iniquity
And passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession (לְשֹׂאֲרֵית נִחְלָתָו)?
He does not retain His anger forever (לְעַד),
Because He delights in unchanging love (כִּי־תִפְגַּז חֶסֶד הוּא).
- 7:19** He will again have compassion on us;
He will tread our iniquities under foot.
Yes, You will cast all their sins
Into the depths of the sea.
- 7:20** You will give truth (אֱמֶת) to Jacob
And unchanging love (חֶסֶד) to Abraham,
Which You swore to our forefathers (אֲשֶׁר־נִשְׁבַּעְתָּ לְאַבְרָהָם)
From the days of old (בְּיָמֵי קִדְמָה).

The question in v. 18 is obviously rhetorical. No one is like God. No one comes close to being the author of all reality, who forgives the sins of the remaining Jews, who have all been His possession down through the centuries, and who will finally become the “great nation” of authentic believers after Jesus returns. Indeed, God does not remain angry towards the Jews forever, so that He would change His mind and not fulfill His promises to them. And the reason why His anger towards them eventually subsides is because He delights in His *hesed* towards them, His “unchanging love” and loyal, constant faithfulness towards the nation of Israel in the light of His Abrahamic promises.

In v. 19 Micah states clearly that God “will again have compassion on us” Jews so that “He will tread our iniquities under foot” and “cast all [our] sins into the depths of the sea.” God will forgive each and every individual of the nation of Israel for each and every sin which he has committed. But when and how will this take place? I think that we have to conclude the how is through the death and resurrection of Jesus of Nazareth as the Jewish Messiah, and the when is at Jesus’ return and God circumcises the hearts of all the Jews who survive The Great and Terrible Day of the Lord, the 144,000 of the book of Revelation (cf. Malachi 4:5).

And finally, according to v. 20, God’s compassion and forgiveness of the Jews will take place when also He “will give truth to Jacob and unchanging love (*hesed*) to Abraham.” As we have seen, this will be in the midst of God’s fulfilling His promises to these patriarchs of the nation of Israel, which He “swore” to the Jews’ “forefathers from the days of old,” which is to say from the beginning of the Jewish people when God made His covenant with Abraham and confirmed it to Isaac and Jacob. Micah thus ends his messages to the southern Kingdom of Judah with encouragement to them and all the Jews of all time that God will not forget them and will eventually grant them the exalted status among all the nations of the world which He has promised them.

Zephaniah 1-3

- 1:1** The word of Yahweh which came to Zephaniah son of Cushi,
son of Gedaliah, son of Amariah, son of Hezekiah,
in the days of Josiah son of Amon, king of Judah:
- 1:2** “I will completely remove all things
From the face of the earth [ground],” declares Yahweh.
- 1:3** “I will remove man and beast;
I will remove the birds of the sky
And the fish of the sea,
And the ruins along with the wicked;
And I will cut off man from the face of the earth [ground],” declares Yahweh.
- 1:4** “So I will stretch out My hand against Judah
And against all the inhabitants of Jerusalem.
And I will cut off the remnant of Baal from this place,
And the names of the idolatrous priests along with the priests.
- 1:5** “And those who bow down on the housetops to the host of heaven,
And those who bow down and swear to Yahweh and yet swear by ^{1c}Milcom,
- 1:6** And those who have turned back from following Yahweh,
And those who have not sought Yahweh or inquired of Him.”
- 1:7** Be silent before Adonia Yahweh!
For the day of Yahweh is near,
For Yahweh has prepared a sacrifice,
He has consecrated His guests.
- 1:8** “Then it will come about on the day of Yahweh’s sacrifice
That I will punish the princes, the king’s sons
And all who clothe themselves with foreign garments.
- 1:9** “And I will punish on that day all who leap on the temple threshold,
Who fill the house of their Lord with violence and deceit.
- 1:10** “On that day,” declares Yahweh,
“There will be the sound of a cry from the Fish Gate,
A wail from the Second Quarter,
And a loud crash from the hills.
- 1:11** “Wail, O inhabitants of the Mortar,
For all the people of Canaan will be silenced;
All who weigh out silver will be cut off.
- 1:12** “It will come about at that time
That I will search Jerusalem with lamps,

- And I will punish the men
Who are stagnant in spirit,
Who say in their hearts,
'Yahweh will not do good or evil!'
- 1:13 "Moreover, their wealth will become plunder
And their houses desolate;
Yes, they will build houses but not inhabit them,
And plant vineyards but not drink their wine."
- 1:14 Near is the great day of Yahweh,
Near and coming very quickly;
Listen, the day of Yahweh!
In it the warrior cries out bitterly.
- 1:15 A day of wrath is that day,
A day of trouble and distress,
A day of destruction and desolation,
A day of darkness and gloom,
A day of clouds and thick darkness,
- 1:16 A day of trumpet and battle cry
Against the fortified cities
And the high corner towers.
- 1:17 I will bring distress on men
So that they will walk like the blind,
Because they have sinned against Yahweh;
And their blood will be poured out like dust
And their flesh like dung.
- 1:18 Neither their silver nor their gold
Will be able to deliver them
On the day of Yahweh's wrath;
And all the earth will be devoured
In the fire of His jealousy,
For He will make a complete end,
Indeed a terrifying one,
Of all the inhabitants of the earth [land].
- 2:1 Gather yourselves together, yes, gather,
O nation without shame,
- 2:2 Before the decree takes effect —
The day passes like the chaff —
Before the anger of Yahweh comes upon you,
Before the of the Yahweh's anger comes upon you.
- 2:3 Seek Yahweh,
All you humble of the land
Who have carried out His ordinances;
Seek righteousness, seek humility.
Perhaps you will be hidden
In the day of Yahweh's anger.
- 2:4 For Gaza will be abandoned
And Ashkelon a desolation;
Ashdod will be driven out at noon
And Ekron will be uprooted.
- 2:5 Woe to the inhabitants of the seacoast,
The nation of the Cherethites!
The word of Yahweh is against you,
O Canaan, land of the Philistines;
And I will destroy you
So that there will be no inhabitant.
- 2:6 So the seacoast will be pastures,

- With caves for shepherds and folds for flocks.
- 2:7** And the coast will be
 For the remnant of the house of Judah,
 They will pasture on it.
 In the houses of Ashkelon they will lie down at evening;
 For Yahweh their God will care for them
 And restore their fortune.
- 2:8** "I have heard the taunting of Moab
 And the revilings of the sons of Ammon,
 With which they have taunted My people
 And become arrogant against their territory.
- 2:9** "Therefore, as I live," declares Yahweh of hosts,
 The God of Israel,
 "Surely Moab will be like Sodom
 And the sons of Ammon like Gomorrah —
 A place possessed by nettles and salt pits,
 And a perpetual desolation.
 The remnant of My people will plunder them
 And the remainder of My nation will inherit them."
- 2:10** This they will have in return for their pride,
 because they have taunted and become arrogant
 against the people of Yahweh of hosts.
- 2:11** Yahweh will be terrifying to them, for He will starve all the gods of the earth;
 and all the coastlands of the nations will bow down to Him,
 everyone from his own place.
- 2:12** "You also, O Ethiopians, will be slain by My sword."
- 2:13** And He will stretch out His hand against the north
 And destroy Assyria,
 And He will make Nineveh a desolation,
 Parched like the wilderness.
- 2:14** Flocks will lie down in her midst,
 All beasts which range in herds;
 Both the pelican and the hedgehog
 Will lodge in the tops of her pillars;
 Birds will sing in the window,
 Desolation will be on the threshold;
 For He has laid bare the cedar work.
- 2:15** This is the exultant city
 Which dwells securely,
 Who says in her heart,
 "I am, and there is no one besides me."
 How she has become a desolation,
 A resting place for beasts!
 Everyone who passes by her will hiss
 And wave his hand in contempt.
- 3:1** Woe to her who is rebellious and defiled,
 The tyrannical city!
- 3:2** She heeded no voice,
 She accepted no instruction.
 She did not trust in Yahweh,
 She did not draw near to her God.
- 3:3** Her princes within her are roaring lions,
 Her judges are wolves at evening;
 They leave nothing for the morning.
- 3:4** Her prophets are reckless, treacherous men;
 Her priests have profaned the sanctuary.

- They have done violence to the law.
- 3:5 Yahweh is righteous within her;
He will do no injustice.
Every morning He brings His justice to light;
He does not fail.
But the unjust knows no shame.
- 3:6 "I have cut off nations;
Their corner towers are in ruins.
I have made their streets desolate,
With no one passing by;
Their cities are laid waste,
Without a man, without an inhabitant.
- 3:7 "I said, 'Surely you will revere Me,
Accept instruction.'
So her dwelling will not be cut off
According to all that I have appointed concerning her (כִּלְ אֲשֶׁר־פָּקַדְתִּי עָלֶיהָ).
But they were eager to corrupt all their deeds.
- 3:8 "Therefore wait for Me," declares Yahweh,
"For the day when I rise up as a witness.
Indeed, My decision is to gather nations (לְאַזְכֹּר גּוֹיִם),
To assemble kingdoms (לְקַבְּצֵי מַמְלָכוֹת),
To pour out on them My indignation,
All My burning anger;
For all the earth will be devoured
By the fire of My zeal.
- 3:9 "For then I will give to the peoples purified lips,
That all of them may call on the name of Yahweh,
To serve Him shoulder to shoulder.
- 3:10 "From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia
My worshipers, My dispersed ones,
Will bring My offerings.
- 3:11 "In that day (בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא) you will feel no shame (לֹא תבוֹשִׁי)
Because of all your deeds
By which you have rebelled against Me;
For then I will remove from your midst
Your proud, exulting ones,
And you will never again be haughty
On My holy mountain.
- 3:12 "But I will leave among you
A humble and lowly people,
And they will take refuge in the name of Yahweh.
- 3:13 "The remnant of Israel (שְׁאֵרֵית יִשְׂרָאֵל) will do no wrong
And tell no lies,
Nor will a deceitful tongue
Be found in their mouths;
For they will feed and lie down
With no one to make them tremble."
- 3:14 Shout for joy, O daughter of Zion!
Shout in triumph, O Israel!
Rejoice and exult with all your heart,
O daughter of Jerusalem!
- 3:15 Yahweh has taken away His judgments against you (הִסִּיר יְהוָה מִשְׁפָּטָיִךְ),
He has cleared away your enemies (פָּנָה אֹיְבָבֶיךָ).
The King of Israel, Yahweh, is in your midst;
You will fear disaster no more (לֹא־תִירָאִי דָע עוֹד).

- 3:16 In that day (בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא) it will be said to Jerusalem:
 “Do not be afraid, O Zion;
 Do not let your hands fall limp.
- 3:17 “Yahweh your God is in your midst,
 A victorious warrior.
 He will exult over you with joy,
 He will be quiet in His love,
 He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy.
- 3:18 “I will gather (אֶסְבְּרָה) those who grieve about the appointed feasts —
 They came from you, O Zion;
 The reproach of exile is a burden on them.
- 3:19 “Behold, I am going to deal at that time
 With all your oppressors,
 I will save the lame (וְהוֹשַׁעְתִּי אֶת־הַצֵּלְעָה)
 And gather the outcast (וְהִנְדַּחְתִּי אֶקְבָּיִן),
 And I will turn their shame into praise and renown
 In all the earth (בְּכָל־הָאָרֶץ).
- 3:20 “At that time I will bring you in (בְּעֵת הַהִיא אָבִיִּיא אֶתְכֶם),
 Even at the time when I gather you together (וּבְעֵת קַבְּצִנִי אֶתְכֶם);
 Indeed, I will give you renown and praise
 Among all the peoples of the earth (בְּכָל־עַמְּנֵי הָאָרֶץ),
 When I restore your fortunes before your eyes (בְּשׁוּבִי אֶת־שְׁבוּתֵיכֶם לְעֵינֵיכֶם),”
 Says Yahweh.

Zephaniah, whose name means either “Yahweh has hidden” or “The watchman for Yahweh,” brought his messages to the southern Kingdom of Judah from 640 to 621 B.C. just before Jeremiah and Ezekiel and during the reign of King Josiah (640-609 B.C.). His book is only three chapters long, and we will walk through it quickly to see what he has to say about God’s promises to Abraham in Genesis 12-22. The prophet begins by speaking of the impending destruction of Judah and Jerusalem, which will take place between 605 and 586 B.C. The Babylonian army under the leadership of their king Nebuchadnezzar will invade and destroy the Kingdom of Judah. Nevertheless, Zephaniah ends in chapter 3 by looking into the far distant future at the restoration of the Jews to their land, when they will live in complete security and safety, which we know from the Revelation 20 will be the millennial kingdom under the reign of their Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth. The difficulty in interpreting the book of Zephaniah (and just about any Old Testament prophetic book) is figuring out exactly which passages pertain to his own southern Kingdom of Judah and which pertain to the future fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham to make them a “great nation” in the millennial kingdom.

For example, in 1:1-6, God says explicitly through Zephaniah, “I will stretch out My hand against Judah, and against all the inhabitants of Jerusalem.” Therefore, it seems most likely that He is speaking of the destruction of the southern kingdom in Zephaniah’s day (because we know also that the Assyrians destroyed the northern Kingdom of Israel in 722 B.C.). Thus, He “will completely remove all things from the face of the ground” of Judah and its capital city Jerusalem, whose destruction was completed by the Babylonians in 586 B.C. This would be in contrast to interpreting these verses as referring to the devastation that the Man of Lawlessness, who is also the Beast of Revelation, will cause on the land of Israel immediately before Jesus’ return (cf. 2 Thessalonians 2; Revelation 16-19).

However, in the rest of the chapter, vs. 7-28, several times God speaks in various ways of “the day of Yahweh” that is “near.” In vs. 7 & 14, He calls it “the day of Yahweh.” In v. 8, it is “the day of Yahweh’s sacrifice,” while it is simply “that day” in vs. 9 & 10. Finally, God also refers to it as “the great day of Yahweh” in v. 14. Verses 15 & 16 are quite explicit as to what is involved in this future “day.”

- 1:15 A day of wrath is that day,
 A day of trouble and distress,
 A day of destruction and desolation,
 A day of darkness and gloom,
 A day of clouds and thick darkness,
 1:16 A day of trumpet and battle cry
 Against the fortified cities
 And the high corner towers.

The language in these two verses is rather apocalyptic and resembles that in other passages which refer to the end of the present age when God will bring about The Great and Terrible Day of Yahweh of Malachi 4:5 just before Jesus' return (cf. Joel 2; Amos 5:18-10). Therefore, the question is, what exactly does the word "near" mean, that this day is "near" (בְּרִיבָה; *qarov* (ἐγγύς; *engus* in the Greek Septuagint))? Is God pointing to the far distant future in vs. 7-28 of Zephaniah, so that this is even future to us in the 21st century? Or is He referring to the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians at the time of Zephaniah in the 7th century B.C.? If the former, then the "nearness" of this day is in the fact that God will certainly bring it about when He has planned to do so. It is "near" in His mind, because nothing will prevent Him from causing it to happen. If the latter, then the "nearness" is both in the fact in the certainty of its occurrence and that the Kingdom of Judah will soon experience it—within approximately twenty years. However, it is difficult to conclude which option is correct. At the very least, God is warning Zephaniah's contemporaries of what is about to befall them, while also warning any future Jews who will be living on the land of Israel that such will happen to them if they reject Him and disobey Him as their ancestors did.

Then, in the first three verses of chapter 2, God finishes this message that began with a prediction of the destruction of the Judah of the prophet's day with an exhortation to these same Jews to "gather" themselves together before God drops the hammer on them. Thus, those who are "humble of the land" and who have genuinely sought to obey God should "seek Yahweh," because "perhaps [they] will be hidden in the day of Yahweh's anger." Again, this sounds very much like the 144,000 of the book of Revelation who will be Jews whom God preserves alive throughout the judgments He brings on the land of Israel immediately before Jesus' return. But they could also be Jews of authentic belief who are alive at the time of the Babylonian destruction of the Kingdom of Judah, that God will preserve their faith and eventually grant them eternal life. Therefore, even if God is speaking to Zephaniah's contemporaries, He is still providing a message of hope to those Jews at the end of this age who can find refuge from God's wrath and live through it into the millennial kingdom of Jesus when he returns.

In the rest of chapter 2, the prophet provides warnings to four Gentile nations who have been perennial enemies of Israel—the Philistines (2:4-7), the Moabites and Ammonites (2:8-11), the Ethiopians (2:12), and the Assyrians (2:13-15), representing the four directions of the compass—west, east, south, and north respectively. God declares in 2:4-7 that He is going to destroy the Philistines and that "the remnant of the house of Judah...will pasture on it." In addition, God "will care for them and restore their fortune." This remnant could be the Babylonian exiles who return to the land of Israel seventy years after Nebuchadnezzar destroys their kingdom and Jerusalem, or they could be the 144,000 of Revelation who will live on the land in complete safety under Jesus' rule. Or, as above, they could be the former with a clear message to the later, future Jews.

Next in 2:8-11, God assures the Moabites and Ammonites east of the Jews that He has heard their taunting and mocking of His people. As a consequence, God will make them "like Sodom...and...Gomorrah." In addition, the Jews "will plunder them, and the remainder of [God's] nation will inherit them." As above, these Jews may be the exiles who return from Babylon after seventy years of captivity, or they will be the 144,000 of Revelation, or both with God speaking specifically to the former while also thinking of the significance of what He is saying for the latter.

In the third case, God says in verse 12 that the Ethiopians are going to die by the sword. Finally, in vs. 13-15, He promises the Assyrians and their capital city, Nineveh, that their land will also become “a desolation” and “parched like the wilderness.” These are the people who claim, “I am, and there is no one besides me.” In their arrogance, the Assyrians have come to believe that they are invincible. Plus, they have ignored how powerful God is and how committed He is to His chosen people, the Jews. I think that God’s statements to these four groups of people are intended to be a warning to any other group of people in the past, present, and future who mock, persecute, and mistreat the Jews. They will find themselves defenseless and subject to eternal destruction when God holds them accountable for their evil intent and actions.

Chapter 3 begins with a reference to “the tyrannical city,” and one would think that this is a continuation of God’s indictment of Nineveh, who has “heed no voice,” “accepted no instruction,” and “did not trust in Yahweh” (3:2). Certainly, every Gentile city filled with unbelievers fits this description. But then God also identifies this specific city at the end of v. 2 with the statement, “She did not draw near to **her** God” (emphasis mine). Who can readily claim that Yahweh is their God? The Jews. Therefore, I think that chapter 3 is a separate message to mainly the nation of Israel and not to the Gentiles.

Thus, God begins by warning Jerusalem and her Jewish inhabitants of impending doom, “Woe to her who is rebellious and defiled, the tyrannical city.” Indeed, in Zephaniah’s day, God’s chosen people have disobeyed Him, and their leaders have ruled unjustly in a tyrannical and authoritarian manner. As God goes on to say in v. 3, “Her princes within her are roaring lions, her judges [or rulers] are wolves at evening” in that “they leave nothing for the morning.” Just as wild animals hunt down and consume their prey for their evening meal, so also the rulers of Judah hunt down their fellow Jews and exploit and oppress them to the maximum.

Continuing, God says in v. 4 in regard to Jerusalem, “Her prophets are reckless, treacherous men,” in that they claim to speak for God by spouting whatever ideas pop into their heads, declaring that these are things that God wants the people to know. In other words, they are recklessly making things up about God and have no concern that they are being so treacherous and deceptive. In addition, “Her priests have profaned the sanctuary. They have done violence to the law.” The Levitical priests believe that they are performing their duties, but they are improperly carrying out their responsibilities as intermediaries between God and their fellow Jews. Somehow, and we are not told exactly what they are doing, the priests’ actions are immoral and disobedient to the stipulations which God originally laid out in the Mosaic Covenant. Therefore, both the nation of Israel’s political leaders and religious leaders are wicked and evil men, while the rest of the people are no better.

In v. 5, the prophet indicates, “Yahweh is righteous within her; He will do no injustice. Every morning He brings His justice to light; He does not fail. But the unjust knows no shame.” Whatever Judah’s leaders are doing wrong in Jerusalem, it is in the midst of God’s doing what is right in the same place. As with the Levitical priests and their disobedience of the Mosaic Covenant, Zephaniah does not specify exactly what God’s righteous actions are. But at a minimum he is saying that God’s work among His rebellious people is good and righteous. Thus, God is making sure that truth and goodness exists in the midst of lies, deceit, and immorality in Judah, if the Jews will only open their eyes to see His truth and abide by it. Perhaps God’s definition of morality and the truth of His character, plans, and purposes are being exhibited by only a few believers in Judah like Zephaniah, who exist among the majority of unbelievers and those who are hostile towards God. The point is that God always has His witnesses to the truth in every culture, society, nation, and period of time. Just as the apostle John says in his gospel, the darkness of evil and lies never extinguishes or swallows up the light of truth and goodness (cf. John 1:5).

Then, in Zephaniah 3:6-7, God speaks of what should be an object lesson to His people in Jerusalem and the southern Kingdom of Judah,

3:6 “I have cut off nations;
Their corner towers are in ruins.

I have made their streets desolate,
 With no one passing by;
 Their cities are laid waste,
 Without a man, without an inhabitant.

3:7 "I said, 'Surely you will revere Me,
 Accept instruction.'
 So her dwelling will not be cut off
 According to all that I have appointed concerning her.
 But they were eager to corrupt all their deeds."

God has punished the surrounding Gentile nations and made them "desolate" so that, to some degree if not completely, they or their capital city "are in ruins" ...with no one passing by" (v. 6). For example, Nineveh and the Assyrian Empire, which destroyed the northern Kingdom of Israel, fell to the Babylonians in 612 B.C. But God could also be referring to the Canaanite nations whom Joshua and the Israelites destroyed when they took over their land after leaving Egypt around 1500 B.C. In either case, God expects the Jews to look at these past and/or recent events and learn from them that He is a God of justice, even towards His own people.

And God has also declared, "Surely you [Jerusalem and Judah] will revere Me and accept instruction." If they do, God will not "cut off" their city in the same way that He has the cities of the Gentiles. Instead, the Jews will live in safety and security on their land "according to all that" He has "appointed concerning her," which is to say, as a fulfillment of His promise to Abraham to make them a "great nation" (v. 7; cf. Genesis 12:1-3). However, the Jews have ignored God's obvious warnings. Instead, "they were [and are] eager to corrupt all their deeds," bringing God's judgment on them also. In this case, He is more likely referring to the upcoming Babylonian invasion and not to the end of the present age.

Yet, there is hope for Israel and the Jews as God begins to describe in vs. 8-9,

3:8 "Therefore wait for Me," declares Yahweh,
 "For the day when I rise up as a witness.
 Indeed, My decision is to gather nations (לְאַסֵּף גּוֹיִם),
 To assemble kingdoms (לְקַבֵּץ מַמְלָכוֹת),
 To pour out on them My indignation,
 All My burning anger;
 For all the earth will be devoured
 By the fire of My zeal.
 3:9 "For then I will give to the peoples (אֶל-עַמִּים) purified lips,
 That all of them may call on the name of Yahweh,
 To serve Him shoulder to shoulder."

To whom is God speaking? To only the Gentile nations? To Israel only? To all peoples, Jews and Gentiles? I think that the last option is correct, but with an emphasis on the Jews because of His promise to Abraham to make his descendants a "great nation." God is encouraging everyone to wait for "the day" when He will "rise up as a witness." And He will do so because He has made a "decision to gather nations" and "to assemble kingdoms" in order to "pour out on them" His wrath, all His "burning anger," and "indignation." This sounds like what the other prophets have described when God will judge the Beast of Revelation and his multi-national armies who arise out of the Middle East at the end of this age to subjugate and destroy the Jews in Israel. However, the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, will return and express God's wrath towards them and destroy them. Thus, "all the earth" (or land) of the Middle East where these Gentile nations exist will experience "the fire" of God's "zeal," so that many of these people who are sworn enemies of God's chosen people will be destroyed (v. 8).

Yet, God “will give the peoples [i.e., some of the people in these very nations] purified lips,” which is to say changed hearts through the inner work of His Holy Spirit, “that all of them may call on the name of Yahweh, to serve Him should to shoulder.” And this will be during the millennial kingdom which Jesus will establish at his return when he restores the Kingdom of Israel and rules over the entire earth (cf. Acts 1:6; Psalm 2; Revelation 20).

But, as God goes on to say in vs. 10-13, these Jews and Gentiles of the Middle East will not be the only people whom God transforms into authentic believers,

3:10 “From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia
My worshipers, My dispersed ones,
Will bring My offerings.

3:11 “In that day (בְּיוֹם־הַהוּא) you will feel no shame (לֹא תִבוֹשׂוּ)
Because of all your deeds
By which you have rebelled against Me;
For then I will remove from your midst
Your proud, exulting ones,
And you will never again be haughty
On My holy mountain.

3:12 “But I will leave among you
A humble and lowly people,
And they will take refuge in the name of Yahweh.

3:13 “The remnant of Israel (שְׁאֵרֵית יִשְׂרָאֵל) will do no wrong
And tell no lies,
Nor will a deceitful tongue
Be found in their mouths;
For they will feed and lie down
With no one to make them tremble.”

In v. 10, God speaks of His “dispersed ones,” a common phrase of His for the Jews who were exiled from the land of Israel during the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities and continued to live outside the land and even migrate to far distant Gentile nations. But some of them will become His “worshipers,” bona fide believers whose hearts His Spirit will change. “From beyond the rivers of Ethiopia,” meaning from wherever they may be outside Israel and Judah, Jews who genuinely believe in God “will bring [His] offerings” to Jerusalem (and, I assume, to the temple). But when will this be with respect to the time of Zephaniah and the Babylonian invasion and exile? Will it be seventy years later as God has predicted in Jeremiah 29:10 that the exiles will return from Babylon? Or could it sometime later, even much, much later in the far distant future?

First, there is the fact that in v. 10 God refers to the area(s) from which the Jews will return as “from beyond the rivers of Ethiopia,” and not simply from Babylon. Therefore, the time of this returning of the Jews must be later in the future. Second, we see that God goes on to say in v. 11, “In that day you will feel no shame because of all your deeds by which you rebelled against Me.” And the reason why this will be the case is because God “will remove from [the Jews’] midst [their] proud, exulting ones,” and God also says, “And you will never again be haughty on My holy mountain.” Thus, we can ask, when will there be a time when God’s chosen people, the nation of Israel, will never ever again rebel against Him in their hearts and disobey the Mosaic Covenant on the land of Israel and in Jerusalem, especially on the temple mountain, when they have repeatedly disobeyed God down through history? And the answer is, when Jesus returns, restores the Kingdom of Israel, rules over the entire world, and the Jews all finally become a complete ethnic group of authentic believers for generation after generation until the end of the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20.

We can verify this answer to be correct by continuing with v. 12. God says that He “will leave among” the Jews “a humble and lowly people, and they will take refuge in the name of Yahweh.” God Himself will make sure that there are no Jews still living who remain stubborn and disobedient in

their hearts. Instead, He will cause a group of Jews to exist who are in the process of becoming genuinely humble and obedient before Him. These Jews will return to their land, the land of Israel, and find safety and security in God as they live there under the rule of their Messiah.

In v. 13, God labels these future, believing Jews as “the remnant of Israel” and declares that they “will do no wrong,” by which I think He means that they will never disobey Him as their ancestors have done through the centuries because they were unwilling to follow properly the Mosaic Covenant and then eventually to believe in Jesus as their Messiah. These future Jews’ desire will be to do what is right, even though they will still be sinners. However, their sinfulness will not be the root cause of their eternal destiny, which would be to incur God’s wrath, condemnation, and destruction. Instead, their hearts of belief and obedience as changed by the Spirit of God will be the root cause of their eternal destiny, which will be to receive God’s blessing of complete forgiveness through Jesus’ advocacy and life in the permanent Kingdom of God.

With the same thing in minds, God goes on in v. 13 to describe these Jews as those who will “tell no lies, nor will a deceitful tongue be found in their mouths, for they will feed and lie down with no one to make them tremble.” It is not that the people of Israel who live during the restored kingdom under Jesus’ leadership will be morally perfect, but they will certainly not be dominated by their natural born sinful humanity, what the apostles Paul calls their “flesh” in Romans 6-8. In addition, they will dwell on the land which God promised to Abraham without ever having to be afraid of their enemies attacking and destroying them or taking them into exile. Every meal will be a full meal, and every night of sleep will be restful and peaceful with nothing and no one threatening to disturb them.

Zephaniah continues in the rest of the chapter with other details of Israel’s wonderful experience during this future time. We will look first at vs. 14-17,

3:14 Shout for joy, O daughter of Zion!

Shout in triumph, O Israel!

Rejoice and exult with all your heart,

O daughter of Jerusalem!

3:15 Yahweh has taken away His judgments against you (מִשְׁפָּטָיִךְ יְהוָה יִהְיֶה לְךָ מִשְׁפָּטָיִךְ),

He has cleared away your enemies (פָּנָה אֲיִבֶיךָ).

The King of Israel, Yahweh, is in your midst;

You will fear disaster no more (לֹא-תִירָאִי קֵרַע קִוֵּר).

3:16 In that day (בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא) it will be said to Jerusalem:

“Do not be afraid, O Zion;

Do not let your hands fall limp.

3:17 “Yahweh your God is in your midst,

A victorious warrior.

He will exult over you with joy,

He will be quiet in His love,

He will rejoice over you with shouts of joy.”

First, the prophet encourages the Jews of Jerusalem (and all Israel by extrapolation) to “shout for joy” and “in triumph.” They should “rejoice and exult” with all their “heart” (v. 14). And why? Because “Yahweh has taken away His judgments” that have built up against them over the centuries. Plus, He “has cleared away” their enemies, those nations surrounding Israel who have been hostile towards the Jews and even sought to destroy them. God has destroyed them instead, so that now, He, the “King of Israel,” rules in the midst of His people from Jerusalem (in the form of the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, as becomes clear from the rest of the Bible). Therefore, the Jews “will fear no more disaster” that would come from God and His judgments (v. 15).

Zephaniah states confidently in v. 16, “In that day it will be said to Jerusalem, ‘Do not be afraid, O Zion,’” because “Yahweh your God is in your midst” (v. 17). He is a “victorious warrior” on behalf of His chosen people and thus has defeated and destroyed their Middle Eastern enemies. Indeed, God Himself “will exult...with joy” over the Jews, while also being “quiet in His love” towards them. The

implication is that nothing and no one will prevent God from fulfilling His promise to Abraham to make His descendants the most powerful nation in history when Jesus returns so that they live in complete *shalom* and safety on their land.

Then God finishes His thoughts with vs. 18-20,

- 3:18** "I will gather (אֶסְבְּעָה) those who grieve about the appointed feasts —
They came from you, O Zion;
The reproach of exile is a burden on them.
- 3:19** "Behold, I am going to deal at that time
With all your oppressors,
I will save the lame (וְהוֹשַׁעְתִּי אֶת־הַצֹּלְעָה)
And gather the outcast (וְהִנְדַּחְתִּי אֶקְבָּיִן),
And I will turn their shame into praise and renown
In all the earth (בְּכָל־הָאָרֶץ).
- 3:20** "At that time I will bring you in (בְּעֵת הַהִיא אָבִי־א אֶתְכֶם),
Even at the time when I gather you together (וּבְעֵת קַבְּצִי אֶתְכֶם);
Indeed, I will give you renown and praise
Among all the peoples of the earth (בְּכָל־עַמֵּי הָאָרֶץ),
When I restore your fortunes before your eyes (בְּשׂוּבִי אֶת־שְׁבוּתֵיכֶם לְעֵינֵיכֶם),"
Says Yahweh.

Once again, God states unequivocally that He will “gather” the Jews who were dispersed into foreign nations, who originally “came from” Zion, from Jerusalem, and who have grieved over their inability to celebrate the three required feasts of the Mosaic Covenant at the temple in Jerusalem. Instead, as exiles in these foreign lands, it has been a “reproach” and a “burden” to them not to have direct access to Jerusalem and its temple (v. 18). But God says that He is “going to deal at that time,” at the end of the present age when Jesus returns to restore the Kingdom of Israel, “with all [the Jews’] oppressors” who surround them in the Middle East in order to “save the lame and gather the outcast.” He “will turn” the “shame” of all the antisemitism which the Jews have experienced “into praise and renown in all the earth” (v. 19). In other words, the Jews on the land of Israel will become a magnificent and admired nation, recognized by all the Gentiles as the greatest people in all history.

As God says in v. 20, “At that time” [a few years before and at the beginning of the messianic kingdom] I will bring you in, even at the time when I gather you together.” God’s plan for the Jews is to assemble them into a cohesive and unified country from all the Gentile nations where they have been dispersed. He will bring them into the land of Israel where they will live for generations afterward during the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20. There, He “will give” them “renown and praise among all the peoples of the earth,” because He will restore their former glory which they enjoyed during the reigns of David and Solomon around 1000 B.C. and make it even greater during the reign of their Messiah Jesus over them. Thus we see that God ends this prophetic message with an assurance to His chosen people, the Jews, that all that He has promised them, starting in Genesis 12 with making them a “great nation,” will come to fruition. Their own sin will not stop Him, and their enemies, especially those in the Middle East, will not either.

Haggai 2:1-9

- 2:1** On the twenty-first of the seventh month, the word of Yahweh came by Haggai the prophet saying,
2:2 “Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and to the remnant of the people (וְאֶל־שְׂאֵרֵי־יְהוּדָה) saying,
2:3 ‘Who is left among you who saw this temple in its former glory?
And how do you see it now? Does it not seem to you like nothing in comparison?
2:4 ‘But now take courage, Zerubbabel,’ declares Yahweh, ‘take courage also,

Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and all you people of the land (כָּל־עַם הָאָרֶץ) take courage,' declares Yahweh, 'and work; for I am with you (כִּי־אֲנִי אִתְּכֶם),' declares Yahweh of hosts.

- 2:5 'As for the promise (אֶת־הַדְּבָר) which I made you when you came out of Egypt, My Spirit is abiding in your midst; do not fear!'
 2:6 "For thus says Yahweh of hosts, 'Once more in a little while, I am going to shake the heavens and the earth, the sea also and the dry land.
 2:7 'I will shake all the nations; and they will come with the wealth of all nations, and I will fill this house with glory,' says Yahweh of hosts.
 2:8 'The silver is Mine and the gold is Mine,' declares Yahweh of hosts.
 2:9 'The latter glory of this house will be greater than the former,' says Yahweh of hosts, 'and in this place I will give peace (אֶתֶּן שְׁלֹמֹם),' declares Yahweh of hosts."

Haggai presented his messages from God to the Jewish people in 520 B.C. after they had begun returning from captivity in Babylon fifteen years earlier. His purpose was to encourage God's chosen people to rebuild His temple which the Babylonians had destroyed in 586 B.C. In the first chapter, Haggai speaks directly to two men, Zerubbabel and Joshua, on this subject, and they respond accordingly. Here in the second chapter, the prophet continues encouraging the Jews through these two men. He begins in vs. 1-3,

- 2:1 On the twenty-first of the seventh month, the word of Yahweh came by Haggai the prophet saying,
 2:2 "Speak now to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and to the remnant of the people (וְאֵל־שְׁאָרֵי־הָעָם) saying,
 2:3 'Who is left among you who saw this temple in its former glory? And how do you see it now? Does it not seem to you like nothing in comparison?'

While Haggai originally communicated God's words to Zerubbabel and Joshua on "the first day of the sixth month" of 520 B.C. (cf. Haggai 1:1), now it is "the twenty-first of the seventh month" that "the word of Yahweh" is coming to him (2:1). He again speaks to these two men, the "governor of Judah" and "the high priest" respectively, along with "the remnant of the people" (v. 2). They all were exiles in Babylon and have returned to Jerusalem and the land of Israel. God asks in v. 3 if there is anyone among them "who saw this temple in its former glory," referring to the magnificence of the building which King Solomon had constructed approximately four hundred years earlier. Then God asks if the temple which they are now building comes close to being as beautiful and awe-inspiring as its predecessor? Indeed, He is implying that the work of their hands cannot hold a candle to Solomon's temple. "Does it not seem to you like nothing in comparison?" Thus, God goes on to exhort these two men and the rest of the people in v. 4,

- 2:4 'But now take courage, Zerubbabel,' declares Yahweh, 'take courage also, Joshua son of Jehozadak, the high priest, and all you people of the land (כָּל־עַם הָאָרֶץ) take courage,' declares Yahweh, 'and work; for I am with you (כִּי־אֲנִי אִתְּכֶם),' declares Yahweh of hosts.

The main point God is making to His chosen people, the Jews, is that, regardless of what this new temple looks like, He is "with" them—caring for them, protecting them, and remaining faithful to His promise to Abraham eventually to turn them into the greatest and most powerful nation on earth that has ever existed. Consequently, He exhorts them to "take courage" and "work," because their efforts in obedience to God are never in vain. And He verifies this by saying in vs. 5-9,

- 2:5 'As for the promise (אֶת־הַדְּבָר) which I made you when you came out of Egypt, My Spirit is abiding in your midst; do not fear!'

- 2:6 “For thus says Yahweh of hosts, ‘Once more in a little while, I am going to shake the heavens and the earth, the sea also and the dry land.
 2:7 ‘I will shake all the nations; and they will come with the wealth of all nations, and I will fill this house with glory,’ says Yahweh of hosts.
 2:8 ‘The silver is Mine and the gold is Mine,’ declares Yahweh of hosts.
 2:9 ‘The latter glory of this house will be greater than the former,’ says Yahweh of hosts, ‘and in this place I will give peace (וְשָׁלוֹם אֶתֵּן),’ declares Yahweh of hosts.”

First, in v. 5, God reminds the Jews that He made a promise, literally a “word,” to them when He brought them out of Egypt under Moses’ leadership. For example, when God met with them at Mt. Sinai and gave them the Ten Commandments along with rest of the Mosaic Covenant, He said to them in Exodus 19:4-6,

- Exodus 19:4 ‘You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles’ wings, and brought you to Myself.
 19:5 ‘Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine;
 19:6 and you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words that you shall speak to the sons of Israel.”

This sounds like a conditional promise, that “if” the Israelites obey Him, then God will make them the “great nation” of Genesis 12:2, which is to say “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” as His teachers and intermediaries for the rest of the world. Indeed, it is a conditional promise, but one whose fulfillment we know from the rest of the Old Testament God will sovereignly bring about, so that the Israelites will meet the condition when His Holy Spirit changes the hearts of all living Jews.

God also says in Exodus 29:45-46,

- Exodus 29:45 “I will dwell among the sons of Israel (וְשָׁכַנְתִּי בְתוֹכָם) and will be their God.
 29:46 “They shall know that I am Yahweh their God who brought them out of the land of Egypt, that I might dwell among them (וְשָׁכַנְתִּי בְתוֹכָם); I am Yahweh their God.”

While these verses could refer to only the time when the Jews enter into the land of Canaan/Israel around 1500 B.C. after being led by Moses through the Sinai Desert, they become standard statements for God’s relationship with them throughout the rest of history, especially during the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20 after Jesus returns as their Messiah and restores the Kingdom of Israel. For example, in the next passage we will examine, God says in Zechariah 2:10,

- Zechariah 2:10 “Sing for joy and be glad, O daughter of Zion; for behold I am coming and I will dwell in your midst (וְשָׁכַנְתִּי בְתוֹכְךָ),” declares Yahweh.

And God also says in Jeremiah 16:21,

- Jeremiah 16:21 “Therefore behold, I am going to make them know —
 This time I will make them know My power and My might;
 And they shall know that My name is Yahweh.”

Thus, God will eventually fulfill His promise to Abraham so that the entire nation of Israel knows Him to be Yahweh their God, because He by His Spirit will have circumcised and changed their hearts. In addition, He “will dwell among the sons of Israel and will be their God” (cf. Exodus 29:45).

An intriguing aspect of what God is saying in Haggai 2:5ff. is that He does not refer directly to Genesis 12 and the Abrahamic Covenant where He first made the promise of being the Jews’ God. Instead, He refers to the exodus from Egypt and the Mosaic Covenant which both came five hundred

years later. Why does God do this? I think that it is to connect the temple, which the returning Jewish exiles are building and for which God originally provided the plans in the Mosaic Covenant, with the Abrahamic Covenant. Often Christians view the Mosaic Covenant as something completely separate from the Abrahamic Covenant. But we have seen in our consideration of Old Testament passages regarding this latter covenant that the Mosaic Covenant is an important continuation of God's promises in Genesis 12-22. Therefore, we should not be surprised that God expresses Himself this way in Haggai—that the promises associated with the Mosaic Covenant when He rescued the Israelites from slavery in Egypt are the same as those He gave within the Abrahamic Covenant.

This means that the nation of Israel is under obligation to obey the Mosaic Covenant in the midst of God's fulfilling His Abrahamic Covenant promise to them to make them the "great nation" of Genesis 12:2. Another way to say this is that the Mosaic Covenant is not a burden which God gave to Israelites merely to show them how sinful they are. While it does reveal their sin through the individual commandments (cf. Exodus 20:17; Romans 7) and the prescribed offerings and sacrifices which they bring to God (cf. Leviticus; Hebrews), it is the means by which God sets the Jews apart from the all other ethnic groups of the world and makes them distinct and holy as the only nation who can call themselves God's chosen people (cf. Deuteronomy 4).

God then continues in Haggai 2:6 above to predict that "once more in a little while" He is "going to shake the heavens and the earth, the sea also and the dry land." The first phrase is literally the Hebrew "again it is one of a little," which the Septuagint translates with ἔτι ἅπαξ (*eti hapax*), which is literally "yet once for all." As a result, I think that the Hebrew is better translated, "again it will take little time," referring not to the fact that God is about to do something soon, but that when He does it, it will occur with a swiftness and definiteness that no one will escape noticing. It may be something which He does soon, or it may be something which He accomplishes much, much later. I think that it is the latter, when Jesus returns.

And what is God going to do? He says that He is "going to shake" the creation as well as "all the nations." By this I think that He is going to shake up the physical creation and the spiritual condition of both the Jews and the Gentiles as part of the grand finale of the present age as He brings judgment on both the Jews and their enemies in the Middle East and restores the Kingdom of Israel through the Messiah Jesus. The effect will be that the people around the world "will come with the wealth of all the nations," so that God "will fill this house [the temple in Jerusalem] with glory" (v. 7). Many Gentiles will become authentic believers in God as they observe His powerful actions on behalf of the Jews, and they will want to worship Him in Jerusalem by bringing gifts of their own wealth and riches. And this will be because ultimately God is always in control of all the money in the world. He says in v. 8, "The silver is Mine and the gold is Mine." Wherever gold and silver (or any kind of currency and means of exchange) may be found in this world, whether in the ground and ready to be extracted or in people's pockets or bank accounts, all of it actually belongs to God and not to the people. He controls where it is and who currently has use of it. And when He is ready, the Gentiles will contribute their money to the construction and support of the temple in Jerusalem, resulting in "the latter glory" of the temple being greater than the former" glory of God's house. I think that this means that eventually the Jews will build a temple to God in Jerusalem that will outshine all other versions, even that of Jesus' day, which Herod the Great built and which was one of the seven wonders of the world. In addition, it will be believing Gentiles from the world over who will worship God and financially support the Jews' obedience to the Mosaic Covenant.

When will all this happen? When Jesus returns and restores the Kingdom of Israel as part of God's fulfilling His promise of Genesis 12 to make the Jews the most powerful nation in all human history. God also says in v. 9 that He "will give peace [*shalom*]" in the place where the temple resides and where the Gentile nations bring their wealth in support of it. This is also how we know that He is speaking of a time still future to us, because this too will be an important aspect of what it will mean for the Jews to be a "great nation." Where the temple resides, God will give forth shalom and peace to not only the Jews on the land of Israel, but also the Gentiles in the rest of the world. They will all experience national and international peace and safety, because God through Jesus as the King of

Israel and the earth, the Messiah and High Priest of all believers, and the incarnate God on earth will protect the Jews from their enemies and the Gentiles from one another throughout the entire existence of the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20. No one will dare go to war with anyone and especially with Israel, because according to Psalm 2:8 Jesus will rule with “a rod of iron.”

Zechariah 2

- 2:1 Then I lifted up my eyes and looked, and behold, there was a man with a measuring line in his hand.
 2:2 So I said, “Where are you going?” And he said to me, “To measure Jerusalem, to see how wide it is and how long it is.”
 2:3 And behold, the angel who was speaking with me was going out, and another angel was coming out to meet him,
 2:4 and said to him, “Run, speak to that young man, saying, ‘Jerusalem will be inhabited without walls because of the multitude of men and cattle within it.
 2:5 ‘For I,’ declares Yahweh, ‘will be a wall of fire around her, and I will be the glory in her midst.’”
 2:6 “Ho there! Flee from the land of the north,” declares Yahweh, “for I have dispersed you as the four winds of the heavens,” declares Yahweh.
 2:7 “Ho, Zion! Escape, you who are living with the daughter of Babylon.”
 2:8 For thus says Yahweh of hosts, “After glory He has sent Me against the nations which plunder you, for he who touches you, touches the apple of His eye.
 2:9 “For behold, I will wave My hand over them so that they will be plunder for their slaves. Then you will know that Yahweh of hosts has sent Me.
 2:10 “Sing for joy and be glad, O daughter of Zion; for behold I am coming and I will dwell in your midst (וְשָׁכַנְתִּי בְּתוֹכָךְ),” declares Yahweh.
 2:11 “Many nations will join themselves to Yahweh in that day (בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא) and will become My people. Then I will dwell in your midst (וְשָׁכַנְתִּי בְּתוֹכָךְ), and you will know that Yahweh of hosts has sent Me to you.
 2:12 “Yahweh will possess Judah as His portion in the holy land (חֶלְקִי עַל אֶרֶץ יְהוּדָה הַקְּדוֹשָׁה) and will again choose Jerusalem (וּבָחַר עוֹד בִּירוּשָׁלַם).
 2:13 “Be silent, all flesh, before Yahweh; for He is aroused from His holy habitation (מִמְקוֹמֵי קִדְשׁוֹ).”

Zechariah, like Haggai, presented his prophetic messages from God between 520 and 480 B.C. This was after the Jews had returned from captivity in Babylon and were rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem, which they completed in 516 B.C. The main purpose of this prophet’s book is to encourage the Jews to trust God for His promise to make them a “great nation” and never again disobey Him the way their immediate ancestors had which had resulted in the Babylonians’ destroying the southern Kingdom of Judah in 586 B.C. The demise of this kingdom also resulted in the destruction of both Jerusalem and the temple. God’s key statement to them is in 1:3-6,

- 1:3 “Therefore say to them, ‘Thus says Yahweh of hosts, “Return to Me,” declares Yahweh of hosts, “that I may return to you,” says Yahweh of hosts.
 1:4 “Do not be like your fathers, to whom the former prophets proclaimed, saying, ‘Thus says Yahweh of hosts, “Return now from your evil ways and from your evil deeds.”’ But they did not listen or give heed to Me,” declares Yahweh.
 1:5 “Your fathers, where are they? And the prophets, do they live forever?
 1:6 “But did not My words and My statutes, which I commanded My servants the prophets, overtake your fathers? Then they repented and said, ‘As Yahweh of hosts purposed to do to us in accordance with our ways and our deeds, so He has dealt with us.’”

God urges the current Jews who are rebuilding the temple in Jerusalem not to act like their stubborn forefathers to whom the prophets such as Isaiah and Jeremiah had warned of impending disaster if they did not turn from their evil ways. For everything which these prophets predicted

occurred, and then (probably while in captivity in Babylonian), after the destruction of the Kingdom of Judah, some of the Israelites repented and acknowledged that God was right to send them into exile and away from the promised land of Israel for. Thus, God says in v. 3, “Return to Me, ...that I may return to you.” Returning to God always involves turning away from sin, thereby repenting of it, and turning towards obedience to Him. And this also involves God’s turning towards the people and granting them grace, mercy, and forgiveness for their sins, so that, in the case of the nation of Israel, eventually it will include His fulfilling His promise to them to make them the “great nation” of Genesis 12:2.

Then, in chapter 2, after the first vision of 1:7-17 and the second vision of 1:18-21, which we will not cover, Zechariah sees his third vision in 2:1-13, where God declares that in the future He will make the city of Jerusalem a glorious place where both He will dwell and the Gentile nations will join the Jews in worshipping Him. Zechariah begins his description of this vision in vs. 1-4,

- 2:1 Then I lifted up my eyes and looked, and behold,
there was a man with a measuring line in his hand.
2:2 So I said, “Where are you going?” And he said to me,
“To measure Jerusalem, to see how wide it is and how long it is.”
2:3 And behold, the angel who was speaking with me was going out,
and another angel was coming out to meet him,
2:4 and said to him, “Run, speak to that young man, saying, ‘Jerusalem
will be inhabited without walls because of the multitude of men and cattle within it.
2:5 ‘For I,’ declares Yahweh, ‘will be a wall of fire around her, and I will be the glory in her midst.’”

The vision begins with Zechariah’s observing a surveyor, “a man with a measuring line in his hand,” whose goal is “to measure Jerusalem, to see how wide it is and how long it is.” Why are the dimensions of the city a concern? Because two angels converse, with one telling the other to say to the surveyor that “Jerusalem will be inhabited without walls because of the multitude of men and cattle within it.” In other words, there will come a time (and it makes the most sense to interpret the time as the messianic kingdom after Jesus returns) when Jerusalem will be overflowing with inhabitants and their flocks, and even growing in number, so that it would not be wise to build a wall around the city to contain everyone. Implied also in v. 4 is that the city will not need material protection such as a wall, because no one will exist who can threaten and harm the Jewish people.

God then makes explicit in v. 5 that He “will be a wall of fire around” the city, and He “will be the glory in her midst.” If God Himself is the city’s wall, and we know Him to be the creator of the entire cosmos, then clearly no one can go in or out of the city without His allowing them to do so. And with His “glory in her midst,” Jerusalem and its inhabitants are safe and secure from their enemies. Again, most likely this refers to the millennial kingdom after Jesus returns and restores the Kingdom of Israel for the “thousand years” of Revelation 20. When Jesus rules over them and the rest of the world, the Jews will never again have to be concerned about anyone harming them.

In vs. 6-7, God makes another appeal to the Jews,

- 2:6 “Ho there! Flee from the land of the north,” declares Yahweh,
“for I have dispersed you as the four winds of the heavens,” declares Yahweh.
2:7 “Ho, Zion! Escape, you who are living with the daughter of Babylon.”

God wants the Israelites to “flee” from “the north” and “the four winds of the heavens” where He has “dispersed” them. These are Jews who have left the land of Israel and been living in various Gentile nations, both in a northerly direction and in the other three directions besides in respect to Israel. God also calls to them “who are living with the daughter of Babylon,” a clear reference to Jews who were taken into exile by the Babylonians seventy or so years before Zechariah. But is He speaking to only these Babylonian exiles in these two verses, so that all the Jews who are living in foreign lands at that time should return to Israel? Probably not. He certainly calls to the Babylonian

exiles specifically, but in the context of the whole vision, He is appealing to the entire nation of Israel who dwell in foreign lands when He becomes the “wall of fire” around Jerusalem and “the glory in her midst.” Therefore, God is speaking of the distant future when the Messiah appears and the people of Israel become “Zion” in a full-fledged manner, i.e., the inhabitants of the city when God completes His promise to Abraham to make his descendants the “great nation” of Genesis 12:2.

Then, in the next two verses of 8-9, a third person appears and speaks,

2:8 For thus says Yahweh of hosts, “After glory He has sent Me against the nations which plunder you, for he who touches you, touches the apple of His eye.

2:9 “For behold, I will wave My hand over them so that they will be plunder for their slaves. Then you will know that Yahweh of hosts has sent Me.”

Who is this third person? And why does v. 8 begin, “For thus says Yahweh of hosts,” as if God Himself is this person, speaking of Himself and about Himself as if He is different from Himself? I think that it makes more sense to connect the first part of the verse with v. 7, so that sentence would read in its entirety,

2:7 “Ho, Zion! Escape, you who are living with the daughter of Babylon,” **2:8** for thus says Yahweh of hosts.

In this way, God as “Yahweh of hosts” is instructing the Jews to leave not only “Babylon” now and in the future, but also all other nations where they may be dwelling when the Messiah appears, which is to say when Jesus returns. Then, the rest of v. 8 along with v. 9 are an important parenthesis of a third person who simply appears in the midst of God’s statements and declares that He has sent him to defeat Israel’s enemies, who stole valuable things from the Jews, so as to make both their enemies and their possessions accessible to “the slaves” of the Jews. As a result, the Jews will retrieve all their stolen property and bring it back to the land of Israel as they live in the restored Kingdom of Israel under Jesus’ rule.

But who are the “slaves” of the Jews who retrieve these items for them? They may very well be believing Gentiles who immigrate from their homelands to Israel and attach themselves to Jewish families in order to serve not only them but also God as they all worship Him together by means of the Mosaic Covenant and the new temple in Jerusalem. This would be in line with Isaiah 56:6-7,

Isaiah 56:6 “Also the foreigners who join themselves to Yahweh,

To minister to Him, and to love the name of Yahweh,

To be His servants, everyone who keeps from profaning the Sabbath and holds fast My covenant;

56:7 Even those I will bring to My holy mountain

And make them joyful in My house of prayer.

Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be acceptable on My altar;

For My house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples.”

And who could this person be in Zechariah 2:8-9 who destroys Israel’s enemies? Clearly, he is the Messiah? After the “glory” of God’s starting to bring His people, the Jews, back from foreign nations to the land of Israel, He then sends the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, against the nations of the Middle East who have invaded and stolen valuable property from the Jews and taken it back to their countries. However, the Jews are “the apple of [God’s] eye,” and to mess with them is to mess with God. Therefore, no one can get away with this and live. God will destroy those who try to destroy the Jews. Thus, when Jesus returns, he “will wave [his] hand over” Israel’s enemies, meaning that he will strike them with the weapons with which God provides him. And he will defeat them and make them ready for the Jews’ “slaves,” those Gentiles who are in complete support of them in their nationhood and who worship God with them, to recapture all the stolen property and bring it back to them. In addition, this will be an important piece of evidence for the Jews as to how they can “know that

Yahweh of hosts has sent” Jesus to be their savior, champion, Messiah, and king who will rule over them during the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20.

Then God speaks again in v. 10,

2:10 “Sing for joy and be glad, O daughter of Zion; for behold I am coming and I will dwell in your midst (וְשָׁכַנְתִּי בְּתוֹכָךְ),” declares Yahweh.

He encourages the exiles who have returned from Babylon (and, by extrapolation, all other Jews who return to Israel at a future time) to rejoice in Him, because He will come to their land and “dwell” among them. And His dwelling among them will involve the third person of vs. 8 and 9, and now also this same person who interjects another set of statements in vs. 11-13,

2:11 “Many nations will join themselves to Yahweh in that day (בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא) and will become My people. Then I will dwell in your midst (וְשָׁכַנְתִּי בְּתוֹכָךְ), and you will know that Yahweh of hosts has sent Me to you.

2:12 “Yahweh will possess Judah as His portion in the holy land (וְיָרְדוּ עָלָיו) and will again choose Jerusalem (וְיָבִיט עָלֶיהָ).”

2:13 “Be silent, all flesh, before Yahweh; for He is aroused from His holy habitation (מִמְעוֹן קִדְשׁוֹ).”

The returning Messiah declares that many Gentile nations will become followers of Yahweh just as the Jews will do so during the messianic kingdom. As a result, these Gentiles will become God’s people, also just like the Jews. Like the Jews whose hearts have been circumcised and changed, these Gentiles of authentic belief will be possessed and loved by God just as much as His own original chosen people will be. Plus, the Messiah states that he will “dwell in [the] midst” of the Jews, and they “will know that Yahweh of hosts has sent” him to them—to be their king and ruler for the rest of their existence on this earth.

And the portion of the land of Israel, “the holy land” which was originally allotted to the tribe of Judah in Joshua 15: will be a special place for God, because He “will again choose Jerusalem” as the capital of the restored Kingdom of Israel. It will be from there that the Messiah will rule not only the Jews but also the Gentiles of the rest of the world. Then, this third person, the Messiah, ends his exhortation by commanding “all flesh,” which in this case is most likely all human beings, i.e., the whole world, to “be silent” in the light of the fact that God “is aroused from His holy habitation.” In other words, God has taken notice from His transcendent position as the creator of all reality of everything what has happened and is happening to His chosen people, the nation of Israel. And He will be responding according to His promise to Abraham to shape them into the most powerful nation of all history. This will mean also that their Messiah will rule over them and protect them from any potential enemies, especially after having destroyed those enemies who attacked them and stole from them immediately prior to his return. And this will enable the Jews’ stolen property to be returned to them by believing Gentiles who will be serving them and worshiping them in Israel.

Zechariah 3

3:1 Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of Yahweh, and Satan standing at his right hand to accuse him.

3:2 Yahweh said to Satan, “Yahweh rebuke you, Satan! Indeed, Yahweh who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?”

3:3 Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments and standing before the angel.

3:4 He spoke and said to those who were standing before him, saying, “Remove the filthy garments from him.” Again he said to him, “See, I have taken your iniquity away from you and will clothe you with festal robes.”

3:5 Then I said, “Let them put a clean turban on his head.” So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him with garments, while the angel of Yahweh was standing by.

- 3:6 And the angel of Yahweh admonished Joshua, saying,
 3:7 “Thus says Yahweh of hosts, ‘If you will walk in My ways and if you will perform My service, then you will also govern My house and also have charge of My courts, and I will grant you free access among these who are standing here.
 3:8 Now listen, Joshua the high priest, you and your friends who are sitting in front of you — indeed they are men who are a symbol, for behold, I am going to bring in My servant the Branch.
 3:9 ‘For behold, the stone that I have set before Joshua; on one stone are seven eyes. Behold, I will engrave an inscription on it,’ declares Yahweh of hosts, ‘and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day (יִמְשְׁתִּי אֶת־עֵוֹן הָאָרֶץ־הַזֶּה בְּיוֹם אֶחָד).
 3:10 ‘In that day (בְּיוֹם הַהוּא),’ declares Yahweh of hosts, ‘every one of you will invite his neighbor to sit under his vine and under his fig tree.’”

This is the third vision which Zechariah sees. The angel (or messenger) of God points out the prophet the current high priest, Joshua, of 520 B.C. is standing before a theophany of God. By the way, Joshua (transliterated *Y^ehoshua* ‘ from יהושע) is the Hebrew word for Jesus, meaning Yahweh Saves. At the right hand of God is one who is accusing Joshua of being unworthy of receiving God’s blessings. The word “accuser” may very well be a proper name in this context, referring to Satan himself as the translation indicates. He is the chief-accuser of all God’s people, the Jews and all Gentile believers in God and His Messiah, Jesus, always claiming that God should never grant any of them the fulfillment of His promises and His blessings of forgiveness, the messianic kingdom, and eternal life. Of course Satan is correct, that no sinner deserves or ever does enough on his own to warrant God’s forgiveness and salvation. But this is exactly the point. Of His own independent choice and freewill God grants (graces) to sinners His salvation. He never expects them to deserve it. He only wants them to desire it and pursue obedience to Him while continuing to deserve His condemnation and destruction.

The beginning of the theophany’s response is in v. 2,

- 3:2 Yahweh said to Satan, “Yahweh rebuke you, Satan! Indeed, Yahweh who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?”

Satan may accuse God’s people for all eternity, which actually is impossible because God will destroy him at The Great White Throne Judgment of Revelation 20, but God will always “rebuke” him and order him to stand down. Not because His people, who are sinners, deserve His blessings, but because He has promised the Jews to change their hearts and make them a “great nation” and He has promised Abraham and all those who genuinely imitate his belief to change their hearts and grant them eternal life. Therefore, Satan’s accusations basically fall on deaf ears whenever he speaks in this manner to God.

God freely gives salvation and life to sinners on the basis of His predestined choice to be gracious to them and Jesus’ death when he qualified to intercede on their behalf before God and thereby gain His mercy for them. Obviously knowing this, the angel of God (the theophany) says to Satan, “Yahweh...has chosen Jerusalem,” so that the Jews, abject sinners that they are, are “a brand plucked from the fire.” Yes, they deserve to be destroyed in the heat of the fire of God’s wrath and condemnation. However, God saves them from that which they deserve and grants them mercy and life through Jesus’ death, resurrection, and advocacy according to His sovereign plans and purposes. God does not destroy completely the Jews at the time of the Babylonian invasion, and He certainly is looking forward all the way to the messianic kingdom when all living Jews will become authentic believers in Yahweh and His Messiah.

Then the vision provides a lesson in God’s forgiveness in vs. 3-5,

- 3:3 Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments and standing before the angel.

- 3:4 He spoke and said to those who were standing before him, saying, “Remove the filthy garments from him.” Again he said to him, “See, I have taken your iniquity away from you and will clothe you with festal robes.”
- 3:5 Then I said, “Let them put a clean turban on his head.” So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him with garments, while the angel of Yahweh was standing by.

Again, this is a vision, so that Joshua is not actually present, but both he and the angel of God are appearing only in Zechariah’s mind. Therefore, the high priest is not really wearing dirty and soiled clothes except in the vision, which is symbolic of his sin and the sin of all the Jews, because, as their high priest and especially on the Day of Atonement (cf. Leviticus 16), he has the responsibility to intercede on their behalf and thereby take their sins on himself in a similar manner to what Jesus did when he died on the cross. But, in v. 4, God orders those who are “standing before him” to remove his “filthy garments.” And the reason is because He has “taken away” Joshua’s (and therefore Israel’s) “iniquity” and sin and clothed him (and them) with “festal robes.” These clothes, along with a clean “turban” (v. 5), demonstrate that God has forgiven them, which we now know comes only through Jesus’ death and resurrection during his first appearance and his intercession on their behalf at his second appearance and the final judgment.

Zechariah goes on to add in vs. 6-7,

- 3:6 And the angel of Yahweh admonished Joshua, saying,
 3:7 “Thus says Yahweh of hosts, ‘If you will walk in My ways and if you will perform My service, then you will also govern My house and also have charge of My courts, and I will grant you free access among these who are standing here.’”

Here we have the necessary condition which Jewish sinners must fulfill in order to receive God’s forgiveness and blessings, “If you walk in My ways...,” which is to say, if they obey properly with changed hearts the commandments of the Mosaic Covenant. But then there is something specific to Joshua which God mentions, “If you will perform My service,” meaning his priestly responsibilities in the temple, that he must do them with genuine belief, “then you will also govern” and administrate the temple in Jerusalem freely and responsibly “among” the city’s inhabitants (and among all the Jews who live in the land of Israel).

I think that God is also looking to the future when a high priest will serve the people of Israel and God during the messianic kingdom. In other words, there will be a Levitical high priest who serves the Jewish people in the earthly temple according to the instructions in the Mosaic Covenant, and there will be a high priest “according to the order of Melchizedek” (cf. Psalm 110:4; Hebrews 5-10) who serves the Jewish people in the heavenly temple. The latter we learn from the rest of the Bible is Jesus of Nazareth, who is both king and priest of Jewish (and Gentile) believers.

But the future Levitical priest of the messianic kingdom will definitely perform his responsibilities with authentic belief in God, because He goes on to say in vs. 8-10,

- 3:8 ‘Now listen, Joshua the high priest, you and your friends who are sitting in front of you — indeed they are men who are a symbol, for behold, I am going to bring in My servant the Branch.
 3:9 ‘For behold, the stone that I have set before Joshua; on one stone are seven eyes. Behold, I will engrave an inscription on it,’ declares Yahweh of hosts, ‘and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day (וַיִּשְׁתֵּי אֶת־עֵינַי הָאֶבֶן־הַזֶּה בְּיוֹם אֶחָד).
 3:10 ‘In that day (בְּיוֹם הַהוּא),’ declares Yahweh of hosts, ‘every one of you will invite his neighbor to sit under his vine and under his fig tree.’”

First, Joshua and his “friends who are sitting in front of” him “are a symbol” for God of a future time when He will “bring in [His] servant the Branch,” who is most likely the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth (v. 8). In addition, there is a “stone” that God has “set before Joshua,” and this stone has “seven eyes, which is symbolic of its ability to see all that is happening on the land of Israel and

probably throughout the whole world, because the Messiah will rule both “with a rod of iron” as David says in Psalm 2 (v. 9).

God will also “engrave an inscription on” the stone, but He does not tell us what it is. Yet, it must involve the fact that He “will remove the iniquity of that land in one day” (v. 9). This could refer to the day of Jesus’ crucifixion when he qualified to become the Jews’ “high priest according to the order of Melchizedek” as stated by the author of Hebrews in accordance with David’s words in Psalm 110 (cf. Psalm 110:4; Hebrews 7:17). Or God may be speaking of the day of Jesus’ return when He circumcises the hearts of the 144,000 Jews (another symbolic number) who will comprise the first generation of the “great nation” of Israel and who become forgiven believers in Jesus as their Messiah as a result of his crucifixion. I am inclined to think that God means the latter, the forgiveness of all living Jews in Israel when Jesus returns on the basis his crucifixion and death, because of what He goes on to say in v. 10.

It will be “in that day,” the same day in which God removes Israel’s sin, every Jew “will invite his neighbor to sit under his vine and under his fig tree,” a picture of peace and safety for God’s chosen people that will be permanent and everlasting. Never again will the Jews have to fear an attack from their enemies. Never again will their peaceful lives in Jerusalem and all the other towns and villages on the land of Israel be disrupted by terrorists or any other enemies, because they will be living in the restored Kingdom of Israel under the rule of their Messiah as a fulfillment of God’s promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:2 to make them the most powerful (and most peaceful) nation in all history.

Zechariah 8

- 8:1 Then the word of Yahweh of hosts came, saying,
 8:2 “Thus says Yahweh of hosts, ‘I am exceedingly jealous for Zion, yes, with great wrath I am jealous for her.’
 8:3 “Thus says Yahweh, ‘I will return to Zion (שְׁבִתִּי אֶל־צִיּוֹן) and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem (וְשָׁכַנְתִּי בְּתוֹךְ יְרוּשָׁלַם). Then Jerusalem will be called the City of Truth (עִיר־הָאֱמֻנָה), and the mountain of Yahweh of hosts will be called the Holy Mountain (הַר הַקִּדְשׁ).’
 8:4 “Thus says Yahweh of hosts, ‘Old men and old women will again sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each man with his staff in his hand because of age.
 8:5 ‘And the streets of the city will be filled with boys and girls playing in its streets.’
 8:6 “Thus says Yahweh of hosts, ‘If it is too difficult (יִפְּלֵא) in the sight of the remnant of this people in those days (לְשָׂאֵרֵי הָעָם הַיּוֹמִים הָהֵם), will it also be too difficult (יִפְּלֵא) in My sight?’ declares Yahweh of hosts.
 8:7 “Thus says Yahweh of hosts, ‘Behold, I am going to save My people (הִנְנִי מוֹשִׁיעַ אֶת־עַמִּי) from the land of the east and from the land of the west;
 8:8 and I will bring them back (וְהִבֵּאתִי אֹתָם) and they will live in the midst of Jerusalem (וְשָׁכְנוּ בְּתוֹךְ יְרוּשָׁלַם); and they shall be My people, and I will be their God in truth and righteousness (בְּאֱמֻנָה וּבִצְדָקָה).’
 8:9 “Thus says Yahweh of hosts, ‘Let your hands be strong, you who are listening in these days (בְּיָמֵי הָאֵלֶּה) to these words from the mouth of the prophets, those who spoke in the day that the foundation of the house of Yahweh of hosts was laid, to the end that the temple might be built.
 8:10 ‘For before those days (כִּי לִפְנֵי הַיָּמִים הָהֵם) there was no wage for man or any wage for animal; and for him who went out or came in there was no peace because of his enemies, and I set all men one against another.
 8:11 ‘But now I will not treat the remnant of this people (לְשָׂאֵרֵי הָעָם הַיּוֹמִים) as in the former days (כְּיָמֵי הַרְאֵשִׁימָה),’ declares Yahweh of hosts.
 8:12 ‘For there will be peace for the seed (כִּי־יִרְעֶה הַשְּׁלֹמֹה): the vine will yield its fruit,

the land (וְהָאָרֶץ) will yield its produce and the heavens will give their dew;
and I will cause the remnant of this people to inherit (וְהִנְחַלְתִּי אֶת־שְׁאֵרֵיט הָעָם הַזֶּה)
all these things (אֶת־כָּל־אֵלֶּה).

- 8:13 'It will come about that just as you were a curse among the nations (קָלָלָהּ בַּגּוֹיִם),
O house of Judah and house of Israel, so I will save you (בְּן אוֹשִׁיעַ אֶתְכֶם)
that you may become a blessing (וְהָיִיתֶם בְּרֻכָּה). Do not fear; let your hands be strong.'
- 8:14 "For thus says Yahweh of hosts, 'Just as I purposed to do harm to you (כַּאֲשֶׁר זָמַמְתִּי לְהַרְעֵ לָכֶם)
when your fathers provoked Me to wrath,'
says Yahweh of hosts, 'and I have not relented (וְלֹא נִחַמְתִּי),
8:15 so I have again purposed in these days (כֵּן שָׁבַתִּי זָמַמְתִּי בַּיָּמִים הָאֵלֶּה)
to do good (לְהַיַּטִּיב) to Jerusalem and to the house of Judah. Do not fear!
8:16 'These are the things which you should do:
speak the truth to one another;
judge with truth and judgment for peace (אֱמֶת וּמִשְׁפָּט שְׁלוֹם שִׁפְטוּ) in your gates.
8:17 'Also let none of you devise (אֶל־תִּחְשְׁבוּ) evil in your heart against another,
and do not love perjury (וּשְׂבַעַת שֶׁקֶר); for all these are what I hate,' declares Yahweh."
8:18 Then the word of Yahweh of hosts came to me, saying,
8:19 "Thus says Yahweh of hosts, 'The fast of the fourth, the fast of the fifth,
the fast of the seventh and the fast of the tenth months
will become joy, gladness, and cheerful feasts for the house of Judah;
so love truth and peace (וְהָאֱמֶת וְהַשְׁלוֹם אֶהְבּוּ).'
8:20 "Thus says Yahweh of hosts, 'It will yet be that peoples will come (עַד אֲשֶׁר יָבֹאוּ עַמִּים),
even the inhabitants of many cities (וַיֵּשְׁבוּ עָרִים רַבּוֹת).
8:21 'The inhabitants of one will go to another, saying,
"Let us go at once to entreat the favor of Yahweh (לְחַלּוֹת אֶת־פָּנֵי יְהוָה),
and to seek Yahweh of hosts; I will also go."
8:22 'So many peoples and mighty nations will come (וּבָאוּ עַמִּים רַבִּים וְגוֹיִם עֲצוּמִים)
to seek Yahweh of hosts in Jerusalem and to entreat the favor of Yahweh (וּלְחַלּוֹת אֶת־פָּנֵי יְהוָה).'
8:23 "Thus says Yahweh of hosts, 'In those days (בַּיָּמִים הַהֵמָּה) ten men
from all the nations (מִכָּל לְשׁוֹנוֹת הַגּוֹיִם)
will grasp the garment of a Jew (בִּכְנָף אִישׁ יְהוּדִי),
saying, "Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you (אֱלֹהִים עִמָּכֶם)."'

This prophetic message begins with God's saying that He is "exceedingly jealous for Zion."
Indeed, "with great wrath" He is jealous for Jerusalem and her Jewish inhabitants, probably because
they are periodically invaded and mistreated by their enemies over the course of time. But verses 3-5
are intended to give God's chosen ethnic group great hope,

- 8:3 "Thus says Yahweh, 'I will return to Zion (שָׁבַתִּי אֶל־צִיּוֹן)
and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem (וּשְׁכַנְתִּי בְּתוֹךְ יְרוּשָׁלַם).
Then Jerusalem will be called the City of Truth (עִיר־הָאֱמֶת),
and the mountain of Yahweh of hosts will be called the Holy Mountain (הַר הַקִּדְשׁ).'
8:4 "Thus says Yahweh of hosts, 'Old men and old women will again sit
in the streets of Jerusalem, each man with his staff in his hand because of age.
8:5 'And the streets of the city will be filled with boys and girls playing in its streets.'

Even though God periodically has abandoned the Jews and brought about the destruction of
Jerusalem because of their disobedience of His instructions in the Mosaic Covenant, nevertheless, He
states in v. 3 that eventually He will "return to Zion and dwell in the midst of" the city. In addition,
"Jerusalem will be called the City of Truth," because the Jews will finally subscribe to only what the
Bible teaches and not believe the lies of this world, such as the atheism and secularism that many of

them embrace today. Plus, “the mountain” of God, on which the temple has resided at various times in history, “will be called the Holy Mountain.” Everyone will acknowledge that the temple mount is different and separate from all the rest of the land of Israel and the entire earth. The temple on this mountain and the mountain itself is a very important place of both God’s earthly habitation and the Jewish people’s worship of Him in all the world. I think that God is saying that the physical temple where the Jews should bring their offerings and sacrifices as instructed in the Mosaic Covenant will not only exist on this mountain, but it will do so permanently.

In v. 4, God indicates that “old men and old women will again sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each man with his staff in his hand because of his age.” In other words, even though people will still die during this period of time, and I assume that God is referring to the future restoration of the Kingdom of Israel, i.e., the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20, no one will die young in Israel. Everyone will live to a ripe old age, because no youth will go to war and be killed, no disease will strike the young and kill them, and no one within the nation of Israel will murder another Jew, ending his life before he has the opportunity to grow old. Plus, “the streets of the city will be filled with boys and girls playing in its streets,” meaning that they will never have to be afraid again of terrorists within their cities who target Jews and kill them (v. 5).

As I suggested above, the only biblical answer to when all this will take place is during the millennial kingdom of Revelation after Jesus’ return. This will be when God fulfills His promise to Abraham and makes the Jews a “great nation” according to Genesis 12:2. This will also be the last and only time when the Jewish people live in complete safety and peace under the rule of their Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth. Then God Himself asks an important question in v. 6,

8:6 “Thus says Yahweh of hosts, ‘If it is too difficult (רַפְּזָא) in the sight of the remnant of this people in those days (שְׁאַרֵי־תֵלֵם הַיּוֹם בְּיָמֵי הַהֵם), will it also be too difficult (רַפְּזָא) in My sight?’ declares Yahweh of hosts.

The allusion here, I think, is to the time just prior to God’s bringing about the messianic kingdom when life will become quite difficult and rough for the Jewish people. This will be when God brings about The Great and Terrible Day of the Lord of Malachi 4:5, and He disciplines the nation of Israel for the last time. There will be a “remnant,” and relatively small group of Jews in comparison to all the Jews who have lived in history, on the land of Israel (and perhaps throughout the rest of the world who are observing what is happening in Israel) “in those days,” the days immediately before God’s fulfilling His promise to Abraham. And their circumstances will seem so dire and desperate that they will wonder if even God can rescue them from complete annihilation.

But will this actually mean that it will “be too difficult in [God’s] sight” to accomplish His long-held plans and purposes for the Jewish people? The theological and biblical answer is obviously, No! Nothing will prevent God from making the nation of Israel the safest and most powerful nation in all human history. So everyone, both the Jews of Zechariah’s day and the Jews living at the time of Jesus’ return, can be encouraged and have hope. God is more powerful than their enemies and their own sin, the latter of which often results in God’s disciplining them and many of them dying, e.g., during the Assyrian invasion in the late 8th century B.C., during the Babylonian invasion in the early 6th century B.C., and during the Roman invasions of A.D. 70 and 132. during the course of their history.

In vs. 7-8 God continues His description of what He is going to do when He brings about all these wonderful things for the Jews,

8:7 “Thus says Yahweh of hosts, ‘Behold, I am going to save My people (הִנְנִי מוֹשִׁיעַ אֶת־עַמִּי) from the land of the east and from the land of the west;

8:8 and I will bring them back (וְהִבֵּאתִי אֹתָם) and they will live in the midst of Jerusalem (וְיָשְׁבוּ בְתוֹךְ יְרוּשָׁלַם); and they shall be My people, and I will be their God in truth and righteousness (בְּאֱמֻנָה וּבְצֶדֶקָה).’

The bottom line here is that many of the Jews who live outside Israel will return to the land which God promised them in the Abrahamic Covenant. In addition, “they shall be [His] people, and [He] will be their God in truth and righteousness.” This is to say that they will finally become the kind of people whom God has longed for them to be from the beginning of His choosing them. Every single one of them will have a circumcised and changed heart, so that they all demonstrate authentic belief and obedience. This will even mean obedience to the Mosaic Covenant—not because the Jews are attempting to use it to make themselves worthy of God’s blessings, but because they simply have a fundamental and appropriate desire to obey God. They will embrace the “truth” of God and will pursue “righteousness” as genuine believers in God. And their following the Mosaic Covenant from a spiritual place of authentic faith will simply reveal just how serious they are in regard to obeying God.

Then, in vs. 9-10, God encourages His listeners who are alive at the time of Zechariah,

- 8:9** “Thus says Yahweh of hosts, ‘Let your hands be strong, you who are listening in these days (בְּיָמֵי הָאֵלֶּה) to these words from the mouth of the prophets, those who spoke in the day that the foundation of the house of Yahweh of hosts was laid, to the end that the temple might be built.
- 8:10** ‘For before those days (כִּי לִפְנֵי הַיָּמִים הָהֵם) there was no wage for man or any wage for animal; and for him who went out or came in there was no peace (אֵין-שָׁלוֹם) because of his enemies, and I set all men one against another.

Back in the days when the prophets Haggai and Zechariah began urging the returning exiles from Babylon to rebuild the temple in Jerusalem, in fact even before that time, “there was no wage for man or any wage for animal.” I think that God means that the land of Israel and its capital city lacked the proper labor force who could build the temple and worship God within it. Plus, “there was no peace,” no *shalom*, on the land because their enemies, the Babylonians, refused to allow the exiles to return and restore their homes and God’s temple in Jerusalem. Plus, any Jew who did live in Israel was antagonistic towards God and his fellow Jews. They all lacked the proper inwardness of a changed heart to love God and one another in obedience to the two greatest commandments of the Mosaic Covenant, “You shall love Yahweh your God with all your heart, existence, and mind” and “You shall love your neighbor [your fellow Jew] as yourself” (cf. Deuteronomy 6:4 and Leviticus 19:18 respectively; Matthew 22:36-40). But God exhorts His Jewish listeners in Zechariah’s day, “Let your hands be strong,” because eventually, if they believe God with genuine faith, they will be resurrected from the dead and will see Him fulfill His promise to Abraham to bring peace and greatness to their descendants, which is how God continues in vs. 11-13,

- 8:11** ‘But now I will not treat the remnant of this people (לְשִׂאֲרֵי־הָעָם הַזֶּה) as in the former days (כְּיָמֵי הַרְאֲשֵׁנִים),’ declares Yahweh of hosts.
- 8:12** ‘For there will be peace for the seed (כִּי-יָנֹרֵעַ תְּשֻׁלוֹם): the vine will yield its fruit, the land (וְהָאָרֶץ) will yield its produce and the heavens will give their dew; and I will cause the remnant of this people to inherit (וְהִנְחַלְתִּי אֶת-שִׂאֲרֵי־הָעָם הַזֶּה) all these things (אֶת-כָּל-אֵלֶּה).
- 8:13** ‘It will come about that just as you were a curse among the nations (קָלָלָה בְּגוֹיִם), O house of Judah and house of Israel, so I will save you (בִּן אוֹשִׁיעַ אֶתְכֶם) that you may become a blessing (וְהָיִיתֶם בְּרִכָּה). Do not fear; let your hands be strong.’

As God stated in v. 6, there will come a “remnant of this people as in the former days,” a relatively small group of Jews, living on the land of Israel, and God will bless them. Again, I think that these are the same as the 144,000 of the book of Revelation, who become the first generation of

Jews of the messianic kingdom after Jesus returns. They will plant the seeds of their grapes and grain, and “there will be peace” for them, such that “the vine will yield its fruit” and “the land will yield its produce” because “the heavens will give their dew” and moisture to the ground. As a result, all that the Jews need to sustain their lives physically will become available to them. Thus, God “will cause the remnant of this people to inherit all these things.” Indeed, they will experience the fulfillment of His promise to Abraham to give them the land and grant them safety and greatness on it (vs. 11-12).

It would be appropriate here to remind ourselves of Deuteronomy 28:7-14, a passage by Moses around a thousand years before Zechariah, where God describes the characteristics of the “great nation” of the Jews which He will eventually bring about,

Deuteronomy 28:7 “Yahweh shall cause your enemies who rise up against you to be defeated before you; they will come out against you one way and will flee before you seven ways.

28:8 “Yahweh will command the blessing upon you in your barns and in all that you put your hand to, and He will bless you in the land which Yahweh your God gives you.

28:9 “Yahweh will establish you as a holy people to Himself, as He swore to you, if you keep the commandments of Yahweh your God and walk in His ways.

28:10 “So all the peoples of the earth will see that you are called by the name of Yahweh, and they will be afraid of you.

28:11 “Yahweh will make you abound in prosperity, in the offspring of your body and in the offspring of your beast and in the produce of your ground, in the land which Yahweh swore to your fathers to give you.

28:12 “Yahweh will open for you His good storehouse, the heavens, to give rain to your land in its season and to bless all the work of your hand; and you shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow.

28:13 “Yahweh will make you the head and not the tail, and you only will be above, and you will not be underneath, if you listen to the commandments of Yahweh your God, which I charge you today, to observe them carefully,

28:14 and do not turn aside from any of the words which I command you today, to the right or to the left, to go after other gods to serve them.”

We can see that Zechariah 8:13 is a shortened version of this description, that just as the Jews “were a curse among the nations,” God will “save” them that they “may become a blessing.” As a result, God says to the prophet’s contemporaries in the 6th century B.C., “Do not fear; let your hands [which are building the new temple and plowing your fields in order to grow food] be strong.” And the message continues in this vein in vs. 14-15,

8:14 “For thus says Yahweh of hosts, ‘Just as I purposed to do harm to you (בְּאֲשֶׁר זָמַמְתִּי לְהַרְעֵ לָכֶם) when your fathers provoked Me to wrath,’

says Yahweh of hosts, ‘and I have not relented (וְלֹא נִחַמְתִּי),

8:15 so I have again purposed in these days (כִּן שָׁבַחְתִּי זָמַמְתִּי בַּיָּמִים הָאֵלֶּה) to do good (לְהַיַּטִּיב) to Jerusalem and to the house of Judah. Do not fear!

God threatened in Deuteronomy 28:15-68 and through the more recent prophets to discipline the Jews of the southern Kingdom of Judah for their disobedience, and He did not relent and change His mind. Now, though, He has “purposed in these days,” the days of their return from Babylon and, by extrapolation in this context, the days in the far distant future when Jesus returns, “to do good to Jerusalem and the house of Judah.” God will remain faithful to His promises to Abraham’s descendants and provide them with safety, prosperity, and greatness, specifically to the descendants of Judah in the city of Jerusalem who will eventually see the appearance of their Messiah, when he rules over them and over the rest of the world. Therefore, God again exhorts the people of Zechariah’s day, “Do not fear!”

And what kind of people should the nation of Israel be? What is their obligation to God? Verses 16-17 tell us,

8:16 'These are the things which you should do:

 speak the truth to one another;

 judge with truth and judgment for peace (אַמְתָּוּת וּדְמוּשָׁפֶט שְׁלוֹם שִׁפְטוּ) in your gates.

8:17 'Also let none of you devise (אַל־תִּהְיוּשְׁבוּ) evil in your heart against another,

 and do not love perjury (וּשְׂבָעַת שִׁקְרָה); for all these are what I hate,' declares Yahweh."

The Jews should be the kind of people who "speak truth to one another," who "judge with truth and judgment for peace [*shalom*]" within the gates of Jerusalem and the other cities and villages on the land of Israel. Truth, and not simply that $1+3=4$, but biblical truth that the transcendent Creator is working out His eternal plans and purposes of revealing His goodness, justice, and mercy within human history, especially through the existence of His icon, Jesus of Nazareth, is the most valuable commodity that any human being can acquire, possess, and embrace with genuine belief. This is why the apostle John calls Jesus "the true Light, which comes into the world and enlightens every man," which is to say makes any human being who believes in Jesus the most brilliant human being possible (cf. John 1:9).

And truth is meant to shape the Jews' into people who never "devise evil in [their] heart against another," who "do not love perjury" and making false statements about God, their fellow men, or the nature of reality, "for all these" are what God hates. In contrast, He loves goodness, righteousness, love, and truth. He hates evil, immorality, mistreatment of others, and lies. Thus, the Jews of the messianic kingdom will pursue goodness and morality as the fundamental desire of their hearts, because God will have changed their hearts and made them authentic believers in Him, in Jesus the Messiah, and in biblical truth.

 Additionally, vs. 18-19 tell us,

8:18 Then the word of Yahweh of hosts came to me, saying,

8:19 "Thus says Yahweh of hosts, 'The fast of the fourth, the fast of the fifth,

 the fast of the seventh and the fast of the tenth months

 will become joy, gladness, and cheerful feasts for the house of Judah;

 so love truth and peace (וְהָאֱמֶת וְהַשְּׁלוֹם אֲהַבּוּ).'

One question we can ask is, why these particular four fasts when the Mosaic Covenant requires of the Jews only one, during Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement (cf. Leviticus 16). Apparently the above fasts are associated with the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple by the Babylonians in 586b B.C. *The Illustrated Family Encyclopedia* says,

Counting the beginning of the year from the month of Nisan, the Jewish sages identified these dates as follows (in the Talmudical tractate *Rosh Hashanah* 18b): the fast of the fourth month fell on the ninth of Tammuz, the day when the city walls were breached (2 Kings 25:3-4; Jer. 39:2); the fast of the fifth month was on the ninth of Ab, when the house of God was destroyed by fire (2 Kings 25:8-10); the fast of the seventh month was on the third of Tishri, the anniversary of the assassination of Gedaliah the son of Ahikam (ibid. 25; Jer. 41:2); and the fast of the tenth month fell on the tenth of Tebeth, which was the day when the king of Babylon laid siege to Jerusalem (2 Kings 25:1, Ezek. 24:2). In Zechariah's day, sixty-eight years after the destruction, when the rebuilding of the Temple was almost complete, the question naturally arose [in Zechariah 7:2-3] whether the time had not come to annul these fasts, since Jeremiah's prophecy about the duration of the exile might well be thought to have been fulfilled.

Here in Zechariah 8:18-19, God states clearly that eventually these fasts, which the prophet's contemporaries are performing in order to remember the recent destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, will end. Therefore, by extrapolation, all fasts (except the one prescribed in the Mosaic Covenant) will end. The Jews will never again lose their appetites, which naturally occurs when we human beings encounter grievous situations. Instead, God's chosen people on the land of Israel and in Jerusalem will only celebrate with great joy and happiness, "for the house of Judah" and all the Jews will finally be a complete nation of authentic believers during the messianic kingdom. Consequently, God's people are obligated to "love truth and peace [*shalom*]," because these obviously will accompany their celebrations and their circumcised and changed hearts.

Then, as vs. 20-23 indicate, it will not be only the Jews who will rejoice in God,

8:20 "Thus says Yahweh of hosts, 'It will yet be that peoples will come (עַד אֲשֶׁר יָבֹאוּ עַמִּים), even the inhabitants of many cities (וַיֵּשְׁבוּ עָרִים רַבּוֹת).

8:21 'The inhabitants of one will go to another, saying, "Let us go at once to entreat the favor of Yahweh (לְחַלּוֹת אֶת־פָּנֵי יְהוָה), and to seek Yahweh of hosts; I will also go."

8:22 'So many peoples and mighty nations will come (וּבָאוּ עַמִּים רַבִּים וְגוֹיִם עֲצוּמִים) to seek Yahweh of hosts in Jerusalem and to entreat the favor of Yahweh (וּלְחַלּוֹת אֶת־פָּנֵי יְהוָה).'

8:23 "Thus says Yahweh of hosts, 'In those days (בַּיָּמִים הַהֵמָּה) ten men from all the nations (מִכָּל לְשׁוֹנֹת הַגּוֹיִם) will grasp the garment of a Jew (בְּכַנְף אִישׁ יְהוּדִי), saying, "Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you (אֵלֵהֶם עִמָּכֶם).'"

The "peoples" and "inhabitants of many cities" (v. 20), meaning "many peoples and mighty nations" (v. 22), "will come to seek Yahweh...in Jerusalem and to entreat the favor of Yahweh." Thus, Gentiles from around the world will travel to Israel and Jerusalem, not just to tour the country because of its past Christian and Jewish history as they do now, but to join the Jews in their worship of God in the capital city during the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20. Therefore, "in those days ten men from all the nations will grasp the garment of [one] Jew, saying, 'Let us go with you [to Jerusalem], for we have heard that God is with you.'" These Gentile believers will want to participate in not only worshipping God, but also in the blessings which He will be granting to the Jews as the most powerful nation in human history according to His promise to Abraham in Genesis 12:2.

Zechariah 9:1-10:1

9:1 The burden of the word of Yahweh is against the land of Hadrach, with Damascus as its resting place (for the eyes of men, especially of all the tribes of Israel (וְכָל שְׁבֵטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל), are toward Yahweh),

9:2 And Hamath also, which borders on it; Tyre and Sidon, though they are very wise (כִּי הִכְמָה מְאֹד).

9:3 For Tyre built herself a fortress
And piled up silver like dust,
And gold like the mire of the streets.

9:4 Behold, the Lord will dispossess her (יִזְרֹשֶׁנָּה)
And cast her wealth into the sea;
And she will be consumed with fire.

9:5 Ashkelon will see it and be afraid.
Gaza too will writhe in great pain;
Also Ekron, for her expectation has been confounded.
Moreover, the king will perish from Gaza,
And Ashkelon will not be inhabited.

9:6 And a mongrel race will dwell (וַיֵּשְׁבוּ מִמִּזְרַח) in Ashdod,

- And I will cut off the pride of the Philistines.
- 9:7 And I will remove their blood from their mouth
And their detestable things from between their teeth.
Then they also will be a remnant for our God (וְנִשְׁאָר גַּם־הוּא לְאֱלֹהֵינוּ),
And be like a clan in Judah,
And Ekron like a Jebusite.
- 9:8 But I will camp around My house because of an army,
Because of him who passes by and returns;
And no oppressor will pass over them anymore (עוֹד),
For now I have seen with My eyes.
- 9:9 Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!
Shout in triumph, O daughter of Jerusalem!
Behold, your king is coming to you;
He is just and endowed with salvation (צְדִיק וְנוֹשֵׁעַ הוּא),
Humble, and mounted on a donkey,
Even on a colt, the foal of a donkey.
- 9:10 I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim
And the horse from Jerusalem;
And the bow of war will be cut off.
And He will speak peace to the nations (וְדִבֶּר שָׁלוֹם לְגוֹיִם);
And His dominion will be from sea to sea (וּמִשְׁלֹל מִיָּם עַד־יָם),
And from the River to the ends of the earth (וּמִנְהַר עַד־אַפְסֵי־אֲרֶיץ).
- 9:11 As for you also, because of the blood of My covenant with you (בְּדַם־בְּרִיתִיךָ),
I have set your prisoners free from the waterless pit (מִבּוֹר אֵין־מַיִם בּוֹ).
- 9:12 Return to the stronghold, O prisoners who have the hope (אֲסִירֵי הַתְּקוּוּהָ);
This very day (גַּם־הַיּוֹם) I am declaring that I will restore (אֲשִׁיב) double to you.
- 9:13 For I will bend Judah as My bow,
I will fill the bow with Ephraim.
And I will stir up your sons, O Zion, against your sons, O Greece;
And I will make you like a warrior's sword.
- 9:14 Then Yahweh will appear over them,
And His arrow will go forth like lightning;
And Adonai Yahweh will blow the trumpet,
And will march in the storm winds of the south.
- 9:15 Yahweh of hosts will defend them.
And they will devour and trample on the sling stones;
And they will drink and be boisterous as with wine;
And they will be filled like a sacrificial basin,
Drenched like the corners of the altar.
- 9:16 And Yahweh their God will save them in that day (וַיִּחַשְׁבֵם יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיהֶם בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא)
As the flock of His people;
For they are as the stones of a crown,
Sparkling in His land (עַל־אֲרָמְתוֹ).
- 9:17 For what comeliness and beauty will be theirs!
Grain will make the young men flourish, and new wine the virgins.
- 10:1 Ask rain from Yahweh at the time of the spring rain —
Yahweh who makes the storm clouds;
And He will give them showers of rain, vegetation in the field to each man.

This passage begins in vs. 1-7 with a message of judgment towards certain Gentile nations and cities, starting north of Israel and working its way down the coast into the land of Israel—the Aramaeans whose capital city is Damascus, then Hamath, Tyre and Sidon on the coast of Lebanon, ending with Ashkelon, Ekron, Gaza, and Ashdod of the Philistines. Zechariah says that “Yahweh is against” these peoples (v. 1). For example, even though “Tyre built herself a fortress and piled up

silver like dust and gold like the mire of the streets,” thus having become incredibly prosperous through her sea trade, “the Lord will dispossess her and cast her wealth into the sea; and she will be consumed with fire” (vs. 3-4). As a result, the other nations south of Tyre “will see it and be afraid” and “will writhe in great pain,” so that “the king will perish from Gaza, and Ashkelon will not be inhabited” (v. 5). God will also reduce the number of Philistines, and they “will be a remnant for our God...like a clan in Judah” (v. 7).

The question is whether God is speaking of the destruction of these nations by Alexander the Great around 330 B.C., or is He referring to the destruction of people who will be located in the same areas as these nations just before the return of Jesus? There is a parenthetical statement in v. 1 that in the NAS95 reads “the eyes of men, especially of all the tribes of Israel, are toward Yahweh.” However, the Septuagint translates this statement, “because the Lord observes men and all the tribes of Israel.” The Hebrew literally reads, “because to/for Yahweh eyes man and all the tribes of Israel,” so that “eyes” may be those of “Yahweh...[on] man and all the tribes of Israel” or those of “man and all the tribes of Israel towards Yahweh.” If Zechariah’s point is that God sees and knows all that is happening on the earth in regard to every human being, so that nothing occurs apart from His sovereign plans and purposes, then He sees and knows enough in order to bring about the fulfillment of His promises to Abraham, which will involve both the Gentiles as the enemies of the Jews and the Jews as His chosen people. If Zechariah’s point is that both the Gentiles and the Jews of the Middle East are looking to or at God, then it very well may be that He is in the process of fulfilling His promise to Abraham by destroying Israel’s enemies and protecting the Jews in order to make them a “great nation.” The Septuagint interprets the Hebrew along the lines of the first meaning, but either one does seem to fit the context.

Therefore, this is most likely a description of the people in the Middle East before the return of Jesus, because it seems to indicate that not only will God eliminate many of the Jews’ enemies who surround them, but the “remnant” of these people will be “for our God,” because they will “be like a clan in Judah,” meaning that they will acquire genuine faith in Him like the faith of His chosen people, the Jews (v. 7). Thus, there will be people of authentic belief among both the Gentiles and the Jews, which will more likely be the case in the future when there will be Christians in these areas, instead of interpreting God as saying that there will be believers during the time of Alexander the Great.

These verses, then, describe a time when God will destroy Israel’s enemies as part of His fulfilling His promise to Abraham’s descendants to make them a “great nation” according to Genesis 12:2. And I think that the Septuagint is more coherent with v. 8 to the effect that God is “seeing” all that is happening in and around the Jews of the land of Israel, and He will ensure that they receive His protection from their enemies immediately preceding the appearance of the Messiah to establish his kingdom.

Nevertheless, another possibility is that God is speaking of the effects of Alexander the Great in the 4th century B.C. as a way to say that eventually He will eliminate the enemies of the Jews in the surrounding area when the Messiah appears, make at least some of the remaining Gentiles in these areas authentic believers, while also preserving the Jews for the messianic kingdom, because He goes on to say in v. 8,

9:8 But I will camp around My house because of an army,
Because of him who passes by and returns;
And no oppressor will pass over them anymore (עַד),
For now I have seen with My eyes.

God “will camp around [His] house,” i.e., Jerusalem, the temple, and by extrapolation the entire land of Israel and the Jewish people, and He will protect them from “him who passes by and returns.” Certainly, Alexander the Great and his army passed through this area on his way to Egypt, and then returned afterwards. Thus, he spared Jerusalem and continued on his way to Egypt, only to return

later. But we also notice that God says in this verse that “no oppressor will pass over them anymore.” I think that this can refer to only that time when Jesus comes in the future to establish his indestructible and unassailable messianic kingdom, because, after Alexander the Great, the Romans and the Muslims journeyed through the land of Israel and oppressed the Jews, the former in A.D. 70 and 135, and the latter in the 7th century until recently.

And God gives the reason why this will be the case, “For now I have seen with [literally “in”] My eyes.” I think that “in” is the better translation and that God is saying that in the eyes of His mind and heart, He has seen all this take place, so that He has divinely determined that it will happen exactly as He wants it to. And as I mentioned above, this is more coherent with the parenthetical statement in v. 1 that God “sees” every choice that all human beings make, because He is the sovereign ruler over the entire creation and is making sure that everything which He has planned, purposed, and promised comes into existence—whether it is the destruction of Israel’s enemies or the preservation of the Jews as His chosen people.

The rest of chapter 9 and verse 1 of chapter 10 describe a wonderful future for the Jews, which must be when their Messiah appears and rules over them. This begins in v. 9,

9:9 Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!
 Shout in triumph, O daughter of Jerusalem!
 Behold, your king is coming to you;
 He is just and endowed with salvation (צְדִיק וְנוֹשֵׁעַ הוּא),
 Humble, and mounted on a donkey,
 Even on a colt, the foal of a donkey.

God through the prophet exhorts the Jews, the “daughter of Zion” and “of Jerusalem,” to “rejoice” and “shout in triumph.” And the reason is because their “king is coming” with justice and salvation as his goal. He will pay back their enemies with destruction and thereby grant them “salvation” from any who would seek to harm them. However, the king will be “mounted on a donkey, even on a colt, the foal of a donkey” and not on a mighty white stallion befitting a conquering king. This, we know, is what Jesus did in fulfillment of this passage when he entered into Jerusalem the week before his death, because he desired to demonstrate that he was “humble” like this king whom Zechariah describes and was willing to die at the hands of *his* enemies for the sake of fulfilling his role as a *crucified* Messiah (cf. Matthew 21:1-11).

God states His purposes for this king starting in v. 10,

9:10 I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim
 And the horse from Jerusalem;
 And the bow of war will be cut off.
 And He will speak peace to the nations (וְדַבֵּר שָׁלוֹם לְגוֹיִם);
 And His dominion will be from sea to sea (וּמִן־שָׁלוֹן מְיָם עַד־יָם),
 And from the River to the ends of the earth (וּמִן־נָהָר עַד־אַפְסֵי־אֲרֶיץ).

God through the Messiah will render military weapons unnecessary for the Jews on their land after He has destroyed their surrounding enemies, and their king “will speak peace, i.e., *shalom*, to the nations,” because war itself will become obsolete on the whole earth. Plus, “his dominion” and authority “will be from sea to sea and from the river to the ends of the earth.” Whether the “river” is the Jordan, the Nile, or the Euphrates, Israel’s king and Messiah, whom we know to be Jesus who will restore the Kingdom of Israel at his return, will rule over the entire earth and not just over the land of Israel.

And v. 11 mentions something marvelous for God’s people,

9:11 As for you also, because of the blood of My covenant with you (בְּדָם־בְּרִיתִיךָ),

I have set your prisoners free from the waterless pit (מַבְּוֹר אֵין מַיִם בּוֹ).

Assuming that it is to “the daughter of Zion” and “of Jerusalem” to whom God is speaking, He will use “the blood of [His] covenant with” them to “set...free” their prisoners from what He calls “the waterless pit.” I think that He is referring not to the blood of bulls and goats of the Mosaic Covenant, but to the blood of the king who by means of his death fulfills the New Covenant of Jeremiah 31:31-34 in order to set free those Jews (and Gentiles) who have been imprisoned in eternal death because of their sin. Thus, the “waterless pit” of v. 11 refers to eternal destruction, which all sinful human beings deserve. Nevertheless, the Jews of the messianic kingdom will escape this destruction, so that they will enjoy God’s salvation from their earthly enemies during the time of the rule of their Messiah, which will be the time of the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20 after Jesus returns. But it is definitely his blood and death of his own covenant, the New Covenant, which frees them from their own death and destruction, which the Mosaic Covenant cannot—as described in great detail by the author of Hebrews in the New Testament.

God then continues with this theme in vs. 12-13,

- 9:12** Return to the stronghold, O prisoners who have the hope (אֲסִירֵי הַתְּקוּהָה);
This very day (בַּיּוֹם־הַזֶּה) I am declaring that I will restore (אֲשִׁיב) double to you.
- 9:13** For I will bend Judah as My bow,
I will fill the bow with Ephraim.
And I will stir up your sons, O Zion, against your sons, O Greece;
And I will make you like a warrior’s sword.

God urges His Jewish “prisoners who have the hope” of forgiveness and fulfillment of the Abrahamic promise to “return to the stronghold” of His strength, mercy, and faithfulness. In fact, “this very day” in which Zechariah is presenting His message is the one where God is “declaring that [He] will restore double to” them, a somewhat mysterious statement to interpret. But I think that He is affirming His faithfulness to them, that the nation of Israel will receive much, much more than they deserve, because God will be remarkably gracious and kind to them (v. 12).

In addition, God will use the Jews (along with their returning Messiah as we learn from other passages) as a “bow” (and arrow). He will “stir up” the “sons” of the Jews “against” the “sons” of “Greece,” meaning the Gentiles (as “descendants” of sorts of Alexander the Great?). The nation of Israel will become “like a warrior’s sword” in God’s hand to destroy their enemies and to make themselves safe on the land which He has promised to give them when their Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, establishes his kingdom.

The effect will be tremendously great as vs. 14-17 and 10:1 indicate,

- 9:14** Then Yahweh will appear over them,
And His arrow will go forth like lightning;
And Adonai Yahweh will blow the trumpet,
And will march in the storm winds of the south.
- 9:15** Yahweh of hosts will defend them.
And they will devour and trample on the sling stones;
And they will drink and be boisterous as with wine;
And they will be filled like a sacrificial basin,
Drenched like the corners of the altar.
- 9:16** And Yahweh their God will save them in that day (וְהוֹשִׁיעֵם יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיהֶם בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא)
As the flock of His people;
For they are as the stones of a crown,
Sparkling in His land (עַל־אֲדָמָתוֹ).
- 9:17** For what comeliness and beauty will be theirs!
Grain will make the young men flourish, and new wine the virgins.

10:1 Ask rain from Yahweh at the time of the spring rain —
 Yahweh who makes the storm clouds;
 And He will give them showers of rain, vegetation in the field to each man.

God will “appear over” the Jews as their supreme authority, and He will rule them and conquer their enemies once and for all. We know already that this will be by means of the Messiah, when Jesus appears for the second time to restore the Kingdom of Israel. Thus, God’s “arrow [of His armies with the Messiah that includes some of the Jews] will go forth like lightning.” And He “will blow the trumpet,” calling His military forces to battle, so that He “will march forth in the storm winds of the south,” meaning with His hot anger and power to decimate anyone who stands in His way (v. 14). In this way, God “will defend” the Jews. And they will even “devour and trample on the sling stones,” the weapons of their enemies from the Middle East who have attacked them. They will also “drink and be boisterous as with wine” when they see their enemies defeated, and they will experience a kind of fullness that occurs in a “sacrificial basin” and on the “corners of the altar” when the blood of their enemies flows like that of animal offerings and sacrifices to God (v. 15).

All this will occur because “Yahweh their God will save them in that day as the flock of His people,” i.e., in the day of Jesus’ return because it will be the time to fulfill His promise to make them a “great nation” and for Jesus to rule over the whole earth (cf. Genesis 12:2; Psalm 2). As Zechariah goes on to say, the Jews “are the stones of a crown, sparkling in [God’s] hand.” This is how precious they are to Him that He never abandons them completely, even though their history may suggest otherwise, because of all the suffering they have endured at the hands of Gentiles throughout the world (v. 16).

“For what comeliness and beauty will” belong to the nation of Israel when they finally become the kind of people in total which God has commanded and longed for them to be—an entire ethnic group of genuine belief and moral obedience, not morally perfect, but guarding His commandments, even the commandments of the Mosaic Covenant, in their hearts and minds. As a result, “grain will make the young men flourish, and new wine the virgins” (v. 17). There will be plenty of food for God’s chosen people on the land of Israel. And in anticipation of this future era of safety and prosperity, the prophet exhorts his fellow Jews who will be living at that time, “Ask rain from Yahweh at the time of the spring rain — Yahweh who makes the storm clouds.” The effect of their prayers will be that “He will give them showers of rain, vegetation in the field to each man” (10:1).

Again, the Jews of the millennial kingdom, after Jesus returns and restores the Kingdom of Israel, will never experience a lack of food or drink. God will satisfy them to the utmost, and they will enjoy and celebrate His bounty every day as they live in peace and safety with God their King and with the Messiah their King ruling over them. And this will all be in accordance with His fulfilling His promise in the Abrahamic Covenant to make them the most powerful nation in all history.

Zechariah 10:2-12

10:2 For the teraphim speak iniquity,
 And the diviners see lying visions
 And tell false dreams;
 They comfort in vain.
 Therefore the people wander like sheep,
 They are afflicted, because there is no shepherd.

10:3 “My anger is kindled against the shepherds,
 And I will punish the male goats;
 For Yahweh of hosts has visited His flock, the house of Judah,
 And will make them like His majestic horse in battle.

10:4 “From them will come the cornerstone,
 From them the tent peg,
 From them the bow of battle,
 From them every ruler, all of them together.

- 10:5 “They will be as mighty men,
Treading down the enemy in the mire of the streets in battle;
And they will fight, for Yahweh will be with them;
And the riders on horses will be put to shame.
- 10:6 “I will strengthen the house of Judah,
And I will save the house of Joseph (וְאֶת־בֵּית יוֹסֵף אֲשִׁיעַ),
And I will bring them back (וְהוֹשִׁבוֹתִים),
Because I have had compassion on them;
And they will be as though I had not rejected them,
For I am Yahweh their God and I will answer them.
- 10:7 “Ephraim will be like a mighty man,
And their heart will be glad as if from wine;
Indeed, their children will see it and be glad,
Their heart will rejoice in Yahweh.
- 10:8 “I will whistle for them to gather them together (וְאֶקְבָּצֵם),
For I have redeemed them (כִּי פָדִיתִים);
And they will be as numerous as they were before.
- 10:9 “When I scatter them among the peoples,
They will remember Me in far countries,
And they with their children will live and come back (וְשָׁבוּ).
- 10:10 “I will bring them back (וְהוֹשִׁבוֹתִים) from the land of Egypt
And gather them (אֶקְבָּצֵם) from Assyria;
And I will bring them (אֲבִיאֵם) into the land of Gilead and Lebanon
Until no room can be found for them.
- 10:11 “And they will pass through the sea of distress (בַּיָּם צָרָה)
And He will strike the waves in the sea,
So that all the depths of the Nile will dry up;
And the pride of Assyria will be brought down
And the scepter of Egypt will depart.
- 10:12 “And I will strengthen them in Yahweh,
And in His name they will walk,” declares Yahweh.

Following the hopeful statements of the end of chapter 9 and the first verse of chapter 10, God goes on in vs. 2-3a to describe the poor spiritual condition of the Jews before He finally fulfills His promise to them and makes them an inwardly believing people who comprise the “great nation” of Genesis 12:2,

- 10:2 For the teraphim speak iniquity,
And the diviners see lying visions
And tell false dreams;
They comfort in vain.
Therefore the people wander like sheep,
They are afflicted, because there is no shepherd.
- 10:3a “My anger is kindled against the shepherds,
And I will punish the male goats;

The Jews’ small objects of idolatry, their “teraphim,” cannot actually “speak,” but they communicate that the people are more willing to engage in “iniquity” and sin than in obedience to God. Likewise, their “diviners,” who claim to predict the future, “see” only lies in their supposed “visions,” and they “tell false dreams.” As a result, “they comfort” the Jews “in vain,” because there is no truth in what they are saying. “Therefore, the people wander” spiritually and intellectually “like sheep.” They have no real “shepherd,” who is guiding them according to what God says, so that “they

are afflicted,” not only in their hearts and minds, but also in their lives as God disciplines them for their disobedience (v. 2).

In addition, God’s anger “is kindled against the shepherds,” who as leaders of the Jews are misguiding His chosen people. Thus He “will punish the male goats,” those who claim that they know what is best for the nation of Israel, but who are terribly wrong in their assessment of themselves and in their supposed wisdom (v. 3a). Nevertheless, because God is the faithful, transcendent creator, there is hope for Israel, for the Jews as His chosen people, as God and Zechariah go on to explain in vs. 3b-5,

10:3b For Yahweh of hosts has visited His flock, the house of Judah,
And will make them like His majestic horse in battle.

10:4 “From them will come the cornerstone,
From them the tent peg,
From them the bow of battle,
From them every ruler, all of them together.

10:5 “They will be as mighty men,
Treading down the enemy in the mire of the streets in battle;
And they will fight, for Yahweh will be with them;
And the riders on horses will be put to shame.

Even during the time when it would seem that the Jewish people are at their lowest in their spiritual condition and obedience to God, just before Jesus’ return, He as “Yahweh of hosts” will visit “His flock, the house of Judah [and, by extrapolation, the house of Israel, the northern kingdom who were dispersed from the land in the 8th century B.C.], and He “will make them like His majestic horse in battle.” Instead of enduring persecution from their enemies in the midst of their weakness, the Jews will become strong like a mighty “horse in battle” and (with the powerful assistance of God Himself and the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth) conquer their enemies, never to be harmed by them again (v. 3b).

In addition, the Jews will be the source of several things or persons who will be vital to their greatness as a nation. First, “from them will come the cornerstone,” the key person to their success and prosperity. This can be no one other than the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth. Also “from them” will come “the tent peg,” that person who allows them to remain securely on their land with a “tent” over their heads, so that they never leave the land and are dispersed as they were in past times. This, too, can be no one other than the Messiah. And “from them” will come “the bow of battle,” their chief weapon against their enemies, not only to defeat them but also to keep them at bay, who also is their Messiah, Jesus, upon his return. Finally, “from them every ruler, all of them together” will have come into existence (v. 4). If these rulers are Jews, which it seems most likely the best way to interpret this, then they are probably the apostles of Jesus, who says to them, “Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, ruling the twelve tribes of Israel” (Matthew 19:28).

These men who with Jesus will rule the Jews “will be as mighty men, treading down the enemy in the mire of the streets in battle.” In this way “they will fight, for Yahweh will be with them, and the [enemy] riders on horses [or whatever modern soldiers use for transport] will be put to shame.” In other words, these resurrected apostles will join Jesus in fighting against and destroying Israel’s enemies when he returns. There will be no question that they will succeed in their efforts with the Messiah, and the Jews afterwards will experience the *shalom* and safety that God promised them when He said in Genesis 12:2 that they would become a “great nation.”

In vs. 6-12, God continues and finishes the description of His actions towards the Jews at this time in the future,

10:6 “I will strengthen the house of Judah,
And I will save the house of Joseph (וְאֶת־בֵּית יוֹסֵף אוֹשִׁיעַ),
And I will bring them back (וְהוֹשִׁיבֹתֵימָם),

- Because I have had compassion on them;
 And they will be as though I had not rejected them,
 For I am Yahweh their God and I will answer them.
- 10:7 “Ephraim will be like a mighty man,
 And their heart will be glad as if from wine;
 Indeed, their children will see it and be glad,
 Their heart will rejoice in Yahweh.
- 10:8 “I will whistle for them to gather them together (וְאֶקְבָּצֵם),
 For I have redeemed them (כִּי פָדִיתִים);
 And they will be as numerous as they were before.
- 10:9 “When I scatter them among the peoples,
 They will remember Me in far countries,
 And they with their children will live and come back (וְשָׁבוּ).
- 10:10 “I will bring them back (וְהִשִּׁיבוֹתִים) from the land of Egypt
 And gather them (אֶקְבָּצֵם) from Assyria;
 And I will bring them (אֶבְיֵאֵם) into the land of Gilead and Lebanon
 Until no room can be found for them.
- 10:11 “And they will pass through the sea of distress (בַּיָּם הַצָּרָה)
 And He will strike the waves in the sea,
 So that all the depths of the Nile will dry up;
 And the pride of Assyria will be brought down
 And the scepter of Egypt will depart.
- 10:12 “And I will strengthen them in Yahweh,
 And in His name they will walk,” declares Yahweh.

God will “strengthen” and “save” all Israel from all their enemies. This will pertain to the “house of Judah,” the descendants of the southern Kingdom of Judah, and to the “the house of Joseph,” the descendants from the northern Kingdom of Israel. He “will bring them back” spiritually to Himself, because of the “compassion” which He will have “on them.” Indeed, it will be as though God had never abandoned and rejected them (as He did in the 8th and 7th centuries B.C. as well as in the 1st century A.D. and to a degree from then on until the present day), and this will be because God is their God and He “will answer them” when they pray for His salvation from their enemies (v. 6).

And this will mean that “Ephraim [the people who originally comprised the northern Kingdom of Israel, and perhaps by extrapolation all the Jews in this context] will be like a mighty man,” and the Jews’ “heart will be glad as if from wine.” The effect of God’s salvific actions will also be that “their children will see [all that He has done] and be glad,” so that “their heart will rejoice in Yahweh.” Not only will the older generation rejoice in God, but also the younger generation will, too. They will all continue the celebration for the rest of their lives as authentic believers in Jesus and those who have entered into the messianic kingdom (v. 7).

God “will whistle” for all those Jews who are inclined towards Him but who are residing in foreign lands around the world, in order “to gather them together” on the land of Israel, because He will have “redeemed them,” freed them from both eternal condemnation and destruction by their earthly enemies. But this can happen only by the actions of their Messiah Jesus, who was willing to die on the cross for their sins and to become their advocate before God. This will result in their being “as numerous as they were before,” which probably refers to the time when they multiplied in Egypt under the oppression of the Pharaoh and to the time under the rule of David when they experienced a relative amount of freedom and safety in comparison to the messianic kingdom (v. 8).

God also predicts in v. 9 that He will scatter [the Jews] among the” Gentiles again in the future, which we know occurred between A.D. 70 and 135 at the hands of the Romans and continued to happen until the present day. But “they will remember” God in all the foreign lands where they will end up residing, so that “they with their children...will come back” to the land of Israel as God finally fulfills the Abrahamic promise to make them a “great nation” on the land which He has given them. I

think that we have seen in our time the beginning of this process which will be completed when their Messiah appears, i.e., Jesus of Nazareth.

To be specific, God “will bring them back from the land of Egypt.” Also, they will return “from Assyria” in the north, and He will “bring them into the land of Gilead and Lebanon” as part of the land of Israel “until no room can be found for them, because they will be so numerous.” In addition, they will die naturally, but never again at the hands of their enemies (v. 10). Yet, “they will pass through the sea of distress” while they are in these foreign lands, but God “will strike the waves” so that the “sea” becomes flat and allows for their return. It will be as though “the depths of the Nile [River] will dry up,” and “the pride of Assyria will be brought down,” so that these nations (or the peoples who inhabit the same regions of the earth in the future) will no longer rule over the Jews. The latter will return to their land as promised by God and will rule over the Gentile nations (in conjunction with their Messiah) (v. 11).

Then, God “will strengthen them” in Him, and “in His name they will walk,” meaning that all the Jews who are living on the land in the messianic kingdom will be people of genuine faith and obedience. Never again will they have hard and stubborn hearts and rebel against their God. And we know that this will be the case because God will have finally fulfilled His promise to Abraham and made them the most powerful nation in history, which, by definition, requires that they be people of circumcised hearts and authentic belief.

Zechariah 12:1-13:6

- 12:1** The burden of the word of Yahweh concerning Israel. Thus declares Yahweh who stretches out the heavens, lays the foundation of the earth, and forms the spirit of man within him,
- 12:2** “Behold, I am going to make Jerusalem a cup that causes reeling to all the peoples around; and when the siege is against Jerusalem, it will also be against Judah.
- 12:3** “It will come about in that day (בַּיּוֹם־הַהוּא) that I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the peoples; all who lift it will be severely injured. And all the nations of the earth will be gathered against it (וְנִאֲסְפוּ עָלֶיהָ כָּל־גּוֹיֵי הָאָרֶץ).
- 12:4** “In that day (בַּיּוֹם־הַהוּא),” declares Yahweh, “I will strike every horse with bewilderment and his rider with madness. But I will watch over the house of Judah, while I strike every horse of the peoples with blindness.
- 12:5** “Then the clans of Judah will say in their hearts, ‘A strong support for us are the inhabitants of Jerusalem through Yahweh of hosts, their God.’
- 12:6** “In that day (בַּיּוֹם־הַהוּא) I will make the clans of Judah like a firepot among pieces of wood and a flaming torch among sheaves, so they will consume on the right hand and on the left all the surrounding peoples, while the inhabitants of Jerusalem again dwell on their own sites in Jerusalem.
- 12:7** “Yahweh also will save the tents of Judah first, so that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem will not be magnified above Judah.
- 12:8** “In that day (בַּיּוֹם־הַהוּא) Yahweh will defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the one who is feeble among them in that day (בַּיּוֹם־הַהוּא) will be like David, and the house of David will be like God, like the angel of Yahweh before them.
- 12:9** “And in that day (בַּיּוֹם־הַהוּא) I will set about to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.
- 12:10** “I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn.
- 12:11** “In that day (בַּיּוֹם־הַהוּא) there will be great mourning in Jerusalem, like the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the plain of Megiddo.

- 12:12 “The land (הָאָרֶץ) will mourn, every family by itself;
the family of the house of David by itself and their wives by themselves;
the family of the house of Nathan by itself and their wives by themselves;
12:13 the family of the house of Levi by itself and their wives by themselves;
the family of the Shimeites by itself and their wives by themselves;
12:14 all the families that remain, every family by itself and their wives by themselves.
13:1 “In that day (בְּיוֹם־הַהוּא) a fountain will be opened for the house of David
and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for impurity.
13:2 “It will come about in that day (בְּיוֹם־הַהוּא),” declares Yahweh of hosts,
“that I will cut off the names of the idols from the land (מִן־הָאָרֶץ),
and they will no longer be remembered;
and I will also remove the prophets and the unclean spirit from the land (מִן־הָאָרֶץ).
13:3 “And if anyone still prophesies, then his father and mother
who gave birth to him will say to him, ‘You shall not live, for you have spoken
falsely in the name of Yahweh’; and his father and mother
who gave birth to him will pierce him through when he prophesies.
13:4 “Also it will come about in that day (בְּיוֹם־הַהוּא)
that the prophets will each be ashamed of his vision when he prophesies,
and they will not put on a hairy robe in order to deceive;
13:5 but he will say, ‘I am not a prophet; I am a tiller of the ground,
for a man sold me as a slave in my youth.’
13:6 “And one will say to him, ‘What are these wounds between your arms?’
Then he will say, ‘Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.’

Here is another message from God regarding an event which is in the far distant future of Zechariah and his contemporary Jews. Indeed, this event also must be the return of Jesus as the Messiah, along with the destruction of Israel’s enemies at the very beginning of the messianic kingdom when God fulfills the promise of the Abrahamic Covenant to make the Jews as “great nation” on the land of Israel. This message begins in v. 1 with a description of God,

- 12:1 The burden of the word of Yahweh concerning Israel. Thus declares Yahweh
who stretches out the heavens, lays the foundation of the earth,
and forms the spirit of man within him,

The prophet first declares that he is presenting “the burden [or oral statement] of the word of Yahweh concerning Israel.” God has a message specific to His chosen people, the Jews. And “thus” He “declares” it through Zechariah. And who is this God? He is the one “who stretches out the heavens,” who has created and keeps in existence the vast universe in which our miniscule planet resides, a universe where it is calculated that at least two hundred billion galaxies exist. And if we think of the even greater number of stars and potential planetary solar systems of which all these galaxies comprise, it is hard for our relatively tiny brains to fathom just how vast is the creation which God has made. And in addition, God transcends the gargantuan universe.

Plus, this God is the one “who lays the foundation of the earth,” which means that He has established this planet on which we live and made it exactly the way He wants, with its internal structure of many layers and its outward appearance of both land and seas in the exact proportion which He desires. There is no more land than what God wants, and there are no more seas and bodies of water than what He desires. The God of Zechariah and the Jews is also the one who “forms the spirit of man within him,” who has made each and every human being exactly as He chooses in order that every individual live out the story which He has planned for him from before He brought the universe into existence. Thus, Zechariah is announcing the “word” or message of the person who not only has created everything that exists, but also has designed each human being to play an important

role in the story which He is telling, which we know from the Bible is mainly about Himself and His Messiah, the king of Israel, Jesus of Nazareth.

And here are the first two verses of God's message,

- 12:2 "Behold, I am going to make Jerusalem a cup that causes reeling to all the peoples around; and when the siege is against Jerusalem, it will also be against Judah.
 12:3 "It will come about in that day (בַּיּוֹם־הַהוּא) that I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the peoples; all who lift it will be severely injured. And all the nations of the earth will be gathered against it (וְנִאֲסְפוּ עָלֶיהָ כָּל־גּוֹיֵי הָאָרֶץ)."

The city of Jerusalem is going to become the center of the world's attention, especially of those who live close "around" it in the Middle East. It will be like "a cup that causes reeling," a cup filled with wine that makes people drunk. But the drunkenness of the surrounding Gentile nations will initially be one of excitement and enthusiasm to invade Israel, lay "siege" to Jerusalem, and "be against Judah" and all the Jews in order to destroy them (v. 2).

However, things will not turn out well for the Jews' enemies. "It will come about in that day" that God "will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the peoples" who invade the land of Israel. Indeed, the stone will be too heavy to lift for the Gentile armies, because "all who lift it will be severely injured," to the point that the invaders will be destroyed. Yet "all the nations of the earth will be gathered against" the Jews, either physically (the Middle East countries) or just emotionally, psychologically, spiritually, and politically (the rest of the world). The whole world will be against the Jews. The whole world will be anti-Semitic. The whole world will hope for the final eradication of the Jews from the earth (v. 3).

However, in vs. 4-6 God goes on to say,

- 12:4 "In that day (בַּיּוֹם־הַהוּא)," declares Yahweh, "I will strike every horse with bewilderment and his rider with madness. But I will watch over the house of Judah, while I strike every horse of the peoples with blindness.
 12:5 "Then the clans of Judah will say in their hearts, 'A strong support for us are the inhabitants of Jerusalem through Yahweh of hosts, their God.'
 12:6 "In that day (בַּיּוֹם־הַהוּא) I will make the clans of Judah like a firepot among pieces of wood and a flaming torch among sheaves, so they will consume on the right hand and on the left all the surrounding peoples, while the inhabitants of Jerusalem again dwell on their own sites in Jerusalem."

God will spread confusion among the invading armies while He "will watch over the house of Judah" and protect the Jews from the evil intent of these armies (v. 4). In fact, all the Jews who live in areas around Jerusalem "will say in their hearts" with authentic belief that "the inhabitants of Jerusalem," who are surviving the attacks of the Gentiles, are like "a strong support" for them, because God is protecting not only those in the city, but also those outside it (v. 5). Plus, "in that day" God will cause the Jews to be "like a firepot among pieces of wood and a flaming torch among sheaves," so that they will fight against and defeat the Gentile armies to the extent that the latter are completely decimated. And this will be "while the inhabitants of Jerusalem again dwell" in their homes in the city without experiencing any damage to them (v. 6).

In vs. 7-9 God continues the description of what He will do on behalf of the Jews,

- 12:7 "Yahweh also will save the tents of Judah first, so that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem will not be magnified above Judah.
 12:8 "In that day (בַּיּוֹם־הַהוּא) Yahweh will defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the one who is feeble among them in that day (בַּיּוֹם־הַהוּא) will be like David,

and the house of David will be like God, like the angel of Yahweh (בְּמִלְאָךְ יְהוָה) before them.
12:9 “And in that day (בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא) I will set about to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.”

God will “save the tents of Judah first, so that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem will not be magnified above Judah.” God will be faithful to all the surviving Jews, so that even their king “of the house of David,” whose “glory” will be in fact tremendous, will not outshine the glory which God will cause all the Jews to experience (v.7). All human history has been proceeding towards the moment when the Jews’ Messiah, the final king of the line of David, will finally establish his permanent kingdom on earth, and his glory and awesomeness will be his people’s glory and awesomeness. Everyone will stand in wonder and awe of him and of the Jews who now have become the greatest nation in history. This is what the apostle Paul prays that the Ephesian Christians may understand when he says in Ephesians 1:18,

Ephesians 1:18 I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of [God’s] calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.

The “glory” of God’s “inheritance” is the glory which His people, both Jews and Gentiles, will enjoy when Jesus returns and inaugurates the first stage of the Kingdom of God on earth by ruling over the Jews and the entire rest of the world. Jesus will experience his glory predestined glory. The Jews (whether mortal and believers or immortal and transformed into morally perfect beings) on the land of Israel will experience this same glory. And the Gentiles (whether mortal and believers or immortal and transformed into morally perfect beings) either on the land of Israel or throughout the rest of the world will also do so. Thus, Jesus will share his glory with his brethren who will spend eternity with him in the Kingdom of God.

Paul speaks of the same thing in Colossians 3:4,

Colossian 3:4 When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with him in glory.

The “glory” and magnificence of Jesus as the Messiah will also be the “glory” and magnificence of those who “will be revealed with him,” because they all will either at the moment or eventually share his immortality and moral perfection.

God goes on in Zechariah 12:8 to say that “in that day,” when He destroys Israel’s enemies and begins the messianic kingdom, that He will definitely “defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem.” No one will harm them to annihilate them according to the Gentiles’ intent. In fact, the Jew “who is feeble” will be “like David,” strong and courageous, capable of fighting against and killing the Goliaths of the Gentile armies who lay siege to Jerusalem. Plus, “the house of David will be like God, like the angel of Yahweh before them,” because the Messiah, the final Davidic king, will have appeared and will fight as God’s proxy on earth, which, as we saw, is an important detail of the Davidic Covenant of 2 Samuel 7, Psalm 2 and Psalm 89. The apostle Paul even says in 2 Thessalonians 1:7-8 that there will be theophanies of God, His “mighty angels,” who will fight with the Messiah,

2 Thessalonians 1:7 ...when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with [God’s] mighty angels in flaming fire, **1:8** dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.

I think that the “mighty angels” here are like the burning bush of Exodus 3, manifestations of the transcendent God who will fight alongside the Messiah in order to protect the Jewish people. Then, God’s final word in Zechariah 12:7-9 is that “in that day [He] will set about to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.” It will not pay then and it never has paid for people to oppose God’s

chosen people, the Jews. It is theologically and biblically impossible to remain unscathed by willfully hating and seeking to harm of the nation of Israel. God will carry out His vengeance on those who oppose both Him and His people. Thus, here through the prophet Zechariah, He warns anyone who may think otherwise.

In vs. 10-14, God describes the Jews' reaction to Jesus and what he experienced during his first appearance,

12:10 "I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn.

12:11 "In that day (בְּיוֹם-הַהוּא) there will be great mourning in Jerusalem, like the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the plain of Megiddo.

12:12 "The land (הָאָרֶץ) will mourn, every family by itself; the family of the house of David by itself and their wives by themselves; the family of the house of Nathan by itself and their wives by themselves;

12:13 the family of the house of Levi by itself and their wives by themselves; the family of the Shimeites by itself and their wives by themselves;

12:14 all the families that remain, every family by itself and their wives by themselves."

There is one member of the "house of David" who will become the final king of Israel. He is the Messiah, whom we now know to be Jesus of Nazareth. Yet, there will be other members of David's future descendants who will never achieve this status and role, but who will exist at the time of Jesus' return. God will "pour out" on them "and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication." He will circumcise and change their hearts so that they all become authentic believers. They will also seek God's mercy, but it will not be through offering bulls and goats as prescribed by the Mosaic Covenant (even though we find out from other passages that they will finally obey the Mosaic Covenant properly, even bringing their sacrifices to the rebuilt temple in Jerusalem). Instead, the forgiveness of their sins comes about by looking "on [the one] whom they have pierced," whom they (or really their ancestors in collusion with the Romans) killed as a common criminal on a cross, because they firmly believed that he was falsely claiming to be their Messiah (v. 10).

Indeed, the Jews "will mourn" for Jesus "as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn." And I think that their mourning when Jesus returns will be because they finally realize as an entire nation of God's chosen people that it was the greatest sin in all human history which their forefathers committed when they crucified Jesus, and that they would have willingly participated in putting him to death as a result of the depth of their own sin (v. 10).

God continues in v. 11 to describe the heartfelt remorse of these end times Jews, that "in that day there will be great mourning in Jerusalem, like the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the plain of Megiddo." It is not entirely clear how to interpret the "mourning of Hadadrimmon in the plain of Megiddo," but because it is likened to weeping over the death of the final Davidic king Jesus, the Jews' grieving the death of their Davidic king Josiah by Neco, king of Egypt, in 609 B.C., approximately ninety years before Zechariah, as recorded in 2 Chronicles 35:20-25, makes the most sense to me,

2 Chronicles 35:20 After all this, when Josiah had set the temple in order, Neco king of Egypt came up to make war at Carchemish on the Euphrates, and Josiah went out to engage him.

35:21 But Neco sent messengers to him, saying, "What have we to do with each other, O King of Judah? I am not coming against you today but against the house with which I am at war, and God has ordered me to hurry. Stop for your own sake from interfering with God who is with me, so that He will not destroy you."

- 35:22 However, Josiah would not turn away from him, but disguised himself in order to make war with him; nor did he listen to the words of Neco from the mouth of God, but came to make war on the plain of Megiddo.
- 35:23 The archers shot King Josiah, and the king said to his servants, "Take me away, for I am badly wounded."
- 35:24 So his servants took him out of the chariot and carried him in the second chariot which he had, and brought him to Jerusalem where he died and was buried in the tombs of his fathers. All Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah.
- 35:25 Then Jeremiah chanted a lament for Josiah. And all the male and female singers speak about Josiah in their lamentations to this day. And they made them an ordinance in Israel; behold, they are also written in the Lamentations.

Then, Zechariah 12:12-14 speak of all the various people among the Jews who will mourn the death of Jesus,

- 12:12 "The land (הָאָרֶץ) will mourn, every family by itself;
the family of the house of David by itself and their wives by themselves;
the family of the house of Nathan by itself and their wives by themselves;
- 12:13 the family of the house of Levi by itself and their wives by themselves;
the family of the Shimeites by itself and their wives by themselves;
- 12:14 all the families that remain, every family by itself and their wives by themselves.

This is a national as well as an individual grieving which will take place. Therefore, "every family by itself," such as the families of various ancestors, David and the prophet Nathan for example, "and their wives by themselves," along with Levi and his grandson Shimei "and their wives by themselves," and "all the families that remain" will grieve over the death of their Messiah which occurred many years earlier at his first appearance. However, there will be more to the Jews' sadness as intimated by the first two verses of chapter 13,

- 13:1 "In that day (בְּיוֹם הַהוּא) a fountain will be opened for the house of David
and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for impurity.
- 13:2 "It will come about in that day (בְּיוֹם הַהוּא)," declares Yahweh of hosts,
"that I will cut off the names of the idols from the land (מִן־הָאָרֶץ),
and they will no longer be remembered;
and I will also remove the prophets and the unclean spirit from the land (מִן־הָאָרֶץ).

The people's sin will be included as a focal point of their sadness, which we know from other passages and the New Testament is the reason for Jesus' death. He obeyed God the Father by willingly going to the cross in order to qualify to become the eternal advocate of sinners (cf. Hebrews). He will intercede before God the Father on their behalf at the final judgment and obtain His mercy, salvation, and eternal life for them. Therefore, "in that day [when Jesus returns] a fountain will be opened" not only for "the house of David" and his ancestors, but also "for the inhabitants of Jerusalem," all the other Jews in this important city and on the land of Israel. The purpose of this "fountain" will be "for sin and for impurity," which is to say, in order to provide legal cleansing and forgiveness of sin for God's chosen people, who will all finally become circumcised of heart. They will all genuinely repent of their sins and obey God from their hearts. And this will include their own individual belief in Jesus as their Messiah (v. 1).

The effect in v. 2 of the people's repentance "in that day" will be as if God eliminates all idolatry from the people, and He will "also remove" all the false "prophets" and the "spirit" of rebellion and disobedience "from the land." For the first time in history, the entire nation of Israel will be living on the land which God promised them in the Abrahamic Covenant with each of them having a changed heart that manifests itself in authentic belief and obedience to God.

Thus, God continues in 13:3-6,

- 13:3 “And if anyone still prophesies, then his father and mother who gave birth to him will say to him, ‘You shall not live, for you have spoken falsely in the name of Yahweh’; and his father and mother who gave birth to him will pierce him through when he prophesies.
- 13:4 “Also it will come about in that day (בַּיּוֹם-הַהוּא) that the prophets will each be ashamed of his vision when he prophesies, and they will not put on a hairy robe in order to deceive;
- 13:5 but he will say, ‘I am not a prophet; I am a tiller of the ground, for a man sold me as a slave in my youth.’
- 13:6 “And one will say to him, ‘What are these wounds between your arms?’ Then he will say, ‘Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.’

I think that vs. 3-6 are hypothetical. If the point of Jesus’ return and restoring the Kingdom of Israel is to bring about the fulfillment of God’s promise in Genesis 12 to make the Jews a “great nation” so that each of them has a genuine heart of belief, then there will be no more false prophets on the land. Therefore, these verses are intended to describe in hyperbole just how committed the Jews will become to God and His Messiah, Jesus as their king and high priest. Their dedication and loyalty to God will be of such a magnificent quality and quantity that, if a son were to present a false message in regard to God, his own parents would be willing to put him to death themselves in accordance with Deuteronomy 13:6-11,

- Deuteronomy 13:6 “If your brother, your mother’s son, or your son or daughter, or the wife you cherish, or your friend who is as your own soul, entice you secretly, saying, ‘Let us go and serve other gods’ (whom neither you nor your fathers have known,
- 13:7 of the gods of the peoples who are around you, near you or far from you, from one end of the earth to the other end),
- 13:8 you shall not yield to him or listen to him; and your eye shall not pity him, nor shall you spare or conceal him.
- 13:9 “But you shall surely kill him; your hand shall be first against him to put him to death, and afterwards the hand of all the people.
- 13:10 “So you shall stone him to death because he has sought to seduce you from Yahweh your God who brought you out from the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.
- 13:11 “Then all Israel will hear and be afraid, and will never again do such a wicked thing among you.”

If anyone had at some earlier part of his life believed in and spread lies about God, he will “be ashamed” and humbly claim that he has given up all his false beliefs and youthful, sinful pursuits. He will no longer dress like a prophet by putting on “a hairy robe to deceive.” And whatever cuts on his arms he may have made in order to present himself as fully committed to his message he will say that his “friends” urged him to make them, thus indicating that they mean nothing to him now in his new condition of having a changed heart and authentic faith.

Again, all this which God presents in Zechariah 12:1-13:6 is a prediction of a time in the far distant future relative to the prophet when He will fulfill His Abrahamic promises to specifically the Jewish people, and even their willful and rebellious rejection of their Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, will not stop Him from doing so.

Zechariah 13:7-9

- 13:7 “Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd,
And against the man, My Associate [the man of My community],”
Declares Yahweh of hosts.

“Strike the Shepherd that the sheep may be scattered;
And I will turn My hand against the little ones.

13:8 “It will come about in all the land (בְּכָל-הָאָרֶץ),”
Declares Yahweh,
“That two parts in it will be cut off and perish;
But the third will be left in it.

13:9 “And I will bring the third part through the fire,
Refine them as silver is refined,
And test them as gold is tested.
They will call on My name,
And I will answer them;
I will say, ‘They are My people,’
And they will say, ‘Yahweh is my God.’”

This short passage describes the major issues involving Jesus’ two appearances. In v. 1, God declares that He is bringing a “sword” against His “Shepherd,” the chief pastor of His people, the Jews. He calls him “My associate” in the NAS95, which could also be translated “the man of My community,” which I think makes more sense. The Messiah is the man who stands out in God’s community, His chosen people the Jews. And God issues a command to “strike the Shepherd that the sheep may be scattered.” And He also says of these sheep that He “will turn [His] hand against the little ones.”

Thus, Jesus was struck by his own people and the Romans when they put him to death on the cross. And as a result, God scattered the Jews from the land of Israel after their two defeats by the Romans in A.D. 70 and 135, so that hardly a Jew was present on the land for approximately 1,900 years. It was only after the Zionist movement began in the late 19th century that significant numbers of Jews found their way back to Israel. In this way, God turned against His own people because they rejected their Messiah and the New Covenant, just as He turned against them during the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities of the 8th and 6th centuries B.C. because they had rejected Moses and the Mosaic Covenant.

Jesus quotes v. 7 in Matthew 26:31,

Matthew 26:31 Then Jesus said to [his apostles], “You will all fall away because of me this night, for it is written, ‘I will strike down the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered.’”

Jesus’ point is that, just as God will scatter the Jews after they reject him as their Messiah, his apostles will flee him after his arrest and during his crucifixion. Nevertheless, he goes on to say in the next verse that they will meet up with him again after his resurrection. In this way, the apostles’ leaving Jesus briefly as a result of his arrest and death is a foreshadowing of all the Jews being driven from their land by the Romans over a century later until God brings them back to fulfill His promise to Abraham.

God refers to this promise in Zechariah 13:8-9 above, that most of the Jews, indeed “two parts” of them, “will be cut off and perish,” thus experiencing God’s judgment and destruction on earth—like the Jews of the Assyrian and Babylonian invasions. However, “the third part” will continue to exist, and God “will bring [them] through fire, refine them as silver as refined, and test them as gold as tested” during the long period of time between A.D. 135 and Jesus’ return. Most of the Jews will continue to reject Jesus as the Messiah, but those who are refined and tested with a positive outcome will embrace him as their king and priest who died for them. And the final result of God’s preserving and testing them will be that a remnant will be the first generation of the messianic kingdom when Jesus returns, so that God will say of them, “They are My people.” And these believing Jews, the 144,000 symbolically of the book of Revelation, will say of Him, “Yahweh is my God.”

With this short passage, God summarizes the first and second appearances of Jesus as the Jewish Messiah as a way to say that He will be faithful to His promises in the Abrahamic Covenant to make them a “great nation.”

Zechariah 14

- 14:1 Behold, a day is coming for Yahweh when the spoil taken from you will be divided among you.
- 14:2 For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem (אֶת־כָּל־הַגּוֹיִם אֶל־יְרוּשָׁלַם) to battle, and the city will be captured, the houses plundered, the women ravished and half of the city exiled, but the rest of the people will not be cut off from the city.
- 14:3 Then Yahweh will go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fights on a day of battle.
- 14:4 In that day (בַּיּוֹם־הַהוּא) His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west by a very large valley, so that half of the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south.
- 14:5 You will flee by the valley of My mountains, for the valley of the mountains will reach to Azel; yes, you will flee just as you fled before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then Yahweh, my God, will come, and all the holy ones with Him (כָּל־קְדוֹשִׁים עִמָּוְךָ)!
- 14:6 In that day (בַּיּוֹם־הַהוּא) there will be no light; the luminaries will dwindle.
- 14:7 For it will be a unique day which is known to Yahweh, neither day nor night, but it will come about that at evening time there will be light.
- 14:8 And in that day (בַּיּוֹם־הַהוּא) 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.
- 14:9 And Yahweh will be king over all the earth (עַל־כָּל־הָאָרֶץ); in that day (בַּיּוֹם־הַהוּא) Yahweh will be the only one, and His name the only one.
- 14:10 All the land (כָּל־הָאָרֶץ) will be changed into a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem; but Jerusalem will rise and remain on its site from Benjamin's Gate as far as the place of the First Gate to the Corner Gate, and from the Tower of Hananel to the king's wine presses.
- 14:11 People will live in it, and there will no longer be a curse, for Jerusalem will dwell in security (וַיִּשְׁבְּהָ יְרוּשָׁלַם לְבִטָּחָה).
- 14:12 Now this will be the plague with which Yahweh will strike all the peoples who have gone to war against Jerusalem; 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.
- 14:13 It will come about in that day (בַּיּוֹם־הַהוּא) that a great panic from Yahweh will fall on them; and they will seize one another's hand, and the hand of one will be lifted against the hand of another.
- 14:14 Judah also will fight at Jerusalem; and the wealth of all the surrounding nations will be gathered, gold and silver and garments in great abundance.
- 14:15 So also like this plague will be the plague on the horse, the mule, the camel, the donkey and all the cattle that will be in those camps.
- 14:16 Then it will come about that any who are left of all the nations (מִכָּל־הַגּוֹיִם) that went against Jerusalem will go up from year to year to worship (לְהִשְׁתַּחֲוֹת) the King, Yahweh of hosts, and to celebrate the Feast of Booths (וּלְחַג אֶת־תֵּג הַסֻּכּוֹת).
- 14:17 And it will be that whichever of the families of the earth (מֵאַתַּת מִשְׁפְּחוֹת הָאָרֶץ) does not go up to Jerusalem to worship the (לְהִשְׁתַּחֲוֹת) King, Yahweh of hosts, there will be no rain on them.
- 14:18 If the family of Egypt (וְאִם־מִשְׁפַּחַת מִצְרַיִם) does not go up or enter,

then no rain will fall on them; it will be the plague with which Yahweh smites the nations who do not go up to celebrate the Feast of Booths.

14:19 This will be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all the nations who do not go up to celebrate the Feast of Booths.

14:20 In that day (בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא) there will be inscribed on the bells of the horses, “HOLY TO THE LORD (קֹדֶשׁ לַיהוָה).” And the cooking pots in Yahweh’s house will be like the bowls before the altar.

14:21 Every cooking pot in Jerusalem and in Judah will be holy to Yahweh of hosts; and all who sacrifice will come and take of them and boil in them. And there will no longer be a Canaanite in the house of Yahweh of hosts in that day (בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא).

In this, the last chapter of Zechariah, God goes into more detail on what will happen when He judges and disciplines the nation of Israel for the last time, restores the Kingdom of Israel, and thus establishes the messianic kingdom over the whole earth. The prophet begins his explanation in v. 1,

14:1 Behold, a day is coming for Yahweh when the spoil taken from you will be divided among you.

If this is “the spoil taken from” the Jews, which seems most likely in the context, and which will afterwards “be divided among” them, then their land has already been invaded and conquered, and they themselves have lost many of their possessions to their captors. This is what God goes on to describe in vs. 2-3,

14:2 For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem (וְאִסַּפְתִּי אֶת־כָּל־הַגּוֹיִם אֶל־יְרוּשָׁלַם) to battle, and the city will be captured, the houses plundered, the women ravished and half of the city exiled, but the rest of the people will not be cut off from the city.

14:3 Then Yahweh will go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fights on a day of battle.

The picture of devastation for Jerusalem and the Jews is obviously very bleak—the city “captured, the houses plundered, the women ravished and half the city exiled.” Israel’s enemies will bring about a major disaster for the Jewish people. Nevertheless, God declares that “the rest of the people will not be cut off from the city,” meaning that He will preserve the other half of the inhabitants of Jerusalem and rescue them from any harm that the invading armies will bring to the rest of the people (v. 2).

Plus, God “will go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fights on a day of battle” (v. 3). He will not hold back in any way and will absolutely crush Israel’s enemies. Certainly, no one has the strength and power to defeat God as these Gentile armies will quickly discover. In vs. 4-5 the description of God’s rescuing the Jewish people continues,

14:4 In that day (בַּיּוֹם־הַהוּא) His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west by a very large valley, so that half of the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south.

14:5 You will flee by the valley of My mountains, for the valley of the mountains will reach to Azel; yes, you will flee just as you fled before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then Yahweh, my God, will come, and all the holy ones with Him (כָּל־קְדוֹשִׁים עִמָּךְ)!

“In that day” when God battles the enemies of the Jews, “His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east.” Is this a metaphorical description, or does it refer to a theophany of Yahweh like the burning bush of Exodus 3, or could this be a special representation

of God on the earth? I think that it is the last option and describes the return of Jesus as the Messiah. It will be he as God's proxy on earth according to the Davidic Covenant and he as the "icon of God" according to the apostle Paul 2 Corinthians 4:4 and Colossians 1:15, who will reappear as Israel's champion and savior, descending onto the earth on the top of the mountain that is just east of the city of Jerusalem. This is the Mount of Olives, on the other side of the Kidron Valley across from the Temple Mount, which is the same mountain from which Jesus ascended and left the earth as recorded in Acts 1:9-12,

- Acts 1:9** And after [Jesus] had said these things, he was lifted up while [his disciples] were looking on, and a cloud received him out of their sight.
- 1:10** And as they were gazing intently into the sky while he was going, behold, two men in white clothing stood beside them.
- 1:11** They also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into the sky? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in just the same way as you have watched Him go into heaven."

Zechariah goes on to say that when Jesus returns, "the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west by a very large valley, so that half the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south" (v. 4). God will cause this major geological and topographical change in area east of Jerusalem, so that half of the inhabitants of the city "will flee by the valley" created by these two new mountains. And this "valley...will reach to Azel," whose location is unknown but must also be located east of the mountains (v. 5). God likens this fleeing by the Jews' from their enemies to their escaping Jerusalem during a devastating earthquake when King Uzziah reigned around 760 B.C.

Zechariah ends v. 5 with the statement that, while the inhabitants of Jerusalem are escaping through this newly formed valley after their Messiah has touched down on the top of the Mount of Olives when he returns, "Yahweh, my God, will come, and all the holy ones with Him." In other words, there will be others who are "holy" and set apart who will accompany Yahweh and who will be accompanying Jesus in order to fight against and destroy the invaders who are Israel's enemies. This sounds like the apostle Paul's description in 2 Thessalonians 1:7b-8,

- 2 Thessalonians 1:7b** ...when the Lord Jesus will be revealed from heaven with [God's] mighty angels in flaming fire,
- 1:8** dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus.
- 1:9** These will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his power,
- 1:10** when he comes to be glorified in his saints on that day, and to be marveled at among all who have believed — for our testimony to you was believed.

Thus, when Jesus reappears, he does so "with God's mighty angels in flaming fire," which I suggested above in the explanation of Zechariah 12 are most likely manifestations of the transcendent God in the creation who are arrayed in their most powerful military might to do battle with Israel's enemies and to defeat them. But Jesus will also "be glorified in his saints," meaning that he will be accompanied by all those who have been authentic believers in God and him down through the years, whether God resurrects them from the dead or simply raises them off the earth if they are alive when Jesus returns (cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

Next Zechariah says in vs. 6-7,

- 14:6** In that day (בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא) there will be no light; the luminaries will dwindle.
- 14:7** For it will be a unique day which is known to Yahweh, neither day nor night, but it will come about that at evening time there will be light.

“In that day” God will also cause some sort of major astronomic event which will prevent the sun and moon from shining as brightly as they normally do. Indeed, “the luminaries will dwindle,” and it will be “a unique day which is known to Yahweh” only. There will be “neither day nor night” as they normally occur with the sun, moon, and stars shining as they do. Nevertheless, “it will come about that at evening time there will be light,” because God will reverse what has been happening naturally.

Therefore, the Jews will enter the bleak and miserable night of their existence on the land of Israel, but God will soon thereafter bring back to them the bright and wonderful day. As He goes on to say in vs. 8-11,

- 14:8 And in that day (בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא) 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.
- 14:9 And Yahweh will be king over all the earth (עַל-כָּל-הָאָרֶץ); in that day (בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא) Yahweh will be the only one, and His name the only one.
- 14:10 All the land (כָּל-הָאָרֶץ) will be changed into a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem; but Jerusalem will rise and remain on its site from Benjamin’s Gate as far as the place of the First Gate to the Corner Gate, and from the Tower of Hananel to the king’s wine presses.
- 14:11 People will live in it, and there will no longer be a curse, for Jerusalem will dwell in security (וַיֵּשְׁבוּ וַיִּשְׁקְטוּ לְבִטָּחָה).

Again, “in that day” there will be “living waters,” which are probably a single stream that flows out of the ground in the middle of Jerusalem when the Mount of Olives is split. And this stream “will flow out of Jerusalem” toward both “the eastern sea” and “the western sea,” the Dead Sea and the Mediterranean Sea respectively. And unlike the arid and hot summers when most of the rivers and streams in Israel dry up, these waters from below the ground “will be in summer as well as in winter” (v. 8). As a result, I think that this stream will be a metaphor for God who has brought about the messianic kingdom with all its fullness, including the constant, physical sustenance of the Jewish people, who will drink this stream’s water at all times of the year.

Plus, “Yahweh will be king over all the earth,” where the Hebrew word *eretz* (אֶרֶץ) does more likely means “earth” as in the whole world and not just “land” as in the land of Israel. God will establish His rule through Jesus the Messiah over the whole earth, both over the Jewish people on the land of Israel and over the Gentiles in other nations around the globe. Thus, “in that day Yahweh will be the only one, and His name the only one” (v. 9). There will be no other gods permitted by God for peopled, Jews and Gentiles, to worship. Pagan idolatry and other religions will completely disappear from the earth, whether or not some (if not most) of the Gentiles have changed hearts. Even if they do not, God and Jesus will not allow them to continue practicing their false religions. They will probably stop worshipping false gods grudgingly, but they will still have to do it.

God will bring about additional topographical changes to the land of Israel as “all the land will be changed into a plain..., but Jerusalem will rise and remain on its site” (v. 10). Thus, He will demonstrate by the two elevations, Jerusalem as high and the rest of the land of Israel as low, that He rules from this city and has finally fulfilled His promise to Abraham to make his descendants a “great nation.” And as a result, “people will live” in the city of Jerusalem and “will dwell in security,” for “there will no longer be any curse” or threat of judgment hanging over the Jewish people (v. 11). From this time on, each and every Jew will be a sinner of changed heart and authentic belief, so that they will never again incur God’s judgment and discipline as they did during the time of the Assyrian, Babylonian, and Roman invasions in the past.

When God fights against these last enemies of the Jews when Jesus returns, His weapon of choice will be something quite unusual as described in vs. 12-15,

- 14:12 Now this will be the plague with which Yahweh will strike all the peoples who have gone to war against Jerusalem; 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.
- 14:13 It will come about in that day (בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא) that a great panic from Yahweh will fall on them; and they will seize one another's hand, and the hand of one will be lifted against the hand of another.
- 14:14 Judah also will fight at Jerusalem; and the wealth of all the surrounding nations will be gathered, gold and silver and garments in great abundance.
- 14:15 So also like this plague will be the plague on the horse, the mule, the camel, the donkey and all the cattle that will be in those camps.

As God did in Egypt at the time of Moses, He will force a plague on the armies who have invaded His chosen people's land and who are bringing great devastation in Jerusalem as described above in v. 2. As for this plague in the midst of the Gentile armies, "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" (v. 12). In other words, their bodies will decompose even as they stand alive in readiness to continue to attack the Jews. Will this be caused by an atomic or nuclear bomb, or is this just the miraculous work of God in the normal course of events? I think that it is the latter, so that the only thing that is harmed and destroyed is each individual soldier who comprises Israel's enemies.

Also, "it will come about in that day that a great panic from Yahweh will fall on them; and they will seize one another's hand, and the hand of one will be lifted against the hand of another" (v. 13). Before their flesh begins to decompose, God will cause these armies to fight against one another. Plus, "Judah will also fight at Jerusalem" (v. 14). In other words, God will somehow bring the Jewish people into the battle so that they will participate in the destruction of their enemies. And while these armies lie dead on the ground, "the wealth of all the surrounding nations [of these soldiers] will be gathered, gold and silver and garments in great abundance" (v. 14). The implication is that all this great wealth that perhaps has come from Israel will end up back in Israel and in the possession of the Jews.

Then v. 15 adds that the same plague which comes upon the soldiers will affect their military gear, their transportation vehicles, and their food. Everything that comprised this army as a viable military machine God will miraculously destroy while rescuing His chosen people, the Jews. Nevertheless, in vs. 16-19, God will also require something special of the remaining people in the surrounding Gentile nations after their armies are destroyed on the land of Israel,

- 14:16 Then it will come about that any who are left of all the nations (מִכָּל-הַגּוֹיִם) that went against Jerusalem will go up from year to year to worship (לְהִשְׁתַּחֲוֹת) the King, Yahweh of hosts, and to celebrate the Feast of Booths (וּלְחַג אֶת-חַג הַסֻּכּוֹת).
- 14:17 And it will be that whichever of the families of the earth (מֵאֵת מְשֻׁפְחוֹת הָאָרֶץ) does not go up to Jerusalem to worship the (לְהִשְׁתַּחֲוֹת) King, Yahweh of hosts, there will be no rain on them.
- 14:18 If the family of Egypt (וְאֵם-מִשְׁפַּחַת מִצְרַיִם) does not go up or enter, then no rain will fall on them; it will be the plague with which Yahweh smites the nations who do not go up to celebrate the Feast of Booths.
- 14:19 This will be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all the nations who do not go up to celebrate the Feast of Booths.

Instead of attacking the Jews, people from "the nations that went against Jerusalem will go up from year to year to worship the King, Yahweh of hosts," and obviously His proxy, the Messiah, Jesus of Nazareth, who has returned and restored the Kingdom of Israel. These Gentiles (or at least a delegation of believers from these countries) will also travel to Jerusalem "to celebrate the Feast of

Booths,” the feast which God stipulated for the Jews to celebrate in memory of His maintaining their existence in the midst of the harsh conditions of the Sinai Desert after He rescued them from slavery in Egypt under the leadership of Moses (v. 16).

In fact, if the Gentile nations do not send believing representatives from their populations during this feast, then “there will be no rain on them,” and they will die of starvation. This will be an additional “plague with which Yahweh smites the nations who do not go up to celebrate the Feast of Booths” (v. 18). This will be their “punishment” if they ignore God’s commandment, but He seems to imply here that the Gentile nations surrounding Israel will definitely obey this requirement, because fortunately there will be authentic believers among them who will have a fundamental desire to carry out God’s commandment from hearts which God’s Spirit has changed (v. 19). This, too, will be part of what it means for Jesus to set up his messianic kingdom over the entire earth and rule with “a rod of iron” as Psalm 2:9 indicates. Plus, even the unbelievers will not want to go against God and His proxy, Jesus, so as to incur their wrath.

Zechariah ends his book with vs. 20-21,

14:20 In that day (בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא) there will be inscribed on the bells of the horses, “HOLY TO YAHWEH (קֹדֶשׁ לַיהוָה).” And the cooking pots in Yahweh’s house will be like the bowls before the altar.

14:21 Every cooking pot in Jerusalem and in Judah will be holy to Yahweh of hosts; and all who sacrifice will come and take of them and boil in them. And there will no longer be a Canaanite in the house of Yahweh of hosts in that day (בַּיּוֹם הַהוּא).

The phrase “Holy to Yahweh” is first used in Exodus 28:36 for a plate of pure gold that was attached to the turban of the high priest,

Exodus 28:36 “You shall also make a plate of pure gold and shall engrave on it, like the engravings of a seal, ‘Holy to Yahweh.’”

However, when Jesus returns and establishes the messianic kingdom, not only will the high priest be sanctified and holy to God, but even the most average and mundane things will also. The “bells on the horses,” who are beasts of burden, will be “inscribed” with these words. All cooking pots, whether those which cook the offerings and sacrifices of the Jews in the temple or those which they use to prepare their daily meals will be “like the bowls before the altar” (v. 20). All the Jewish people, too, will be considered as sacred and holy to God, set apart by virtue of their changed hearts, authentic belief, and moral lives (not morally perfect, but finally oriented towards and pursuing biblical morality) (v. 21). “There will no longer be a Canaanite in the house of Yahweh of hosts in that day.” Zechariah does not mean a literal “Canaanite,” a member of the original Gentiles who lived on the land of Israel during the time of Abraham and Moses. He means that there will never again be an unbelieving Jew with an uncircumcised heart who enters in the new temple of the messianic kingdom. According to Deuteronomy 10:16 and 30:6, God will have fulfilled His promise in the Abrahamic Covenant to make the descendants of the first Jew, Abraham, a “great nation” of genuine believers and worshipers of God.

Malachi 1:1-5

1:1 The pronouncement of the word of Yahweh to Israel through Malachi.

1:2 “I have loved you,” says Yahweh. But you say, “How have You loved us?” “Was not Esau Jacob’s brother?” declares Yahweh. “Yet I have loved Jacob;

1:3 but I have hated Esau, and I have made his mountains a desolation and appointed his inheritance for the jackals of the wilderness.”

1:4 Though Edom says, “We have been beaten down, but we will return and build up the ruins”; thus says Yahweh of hosts, “They may build, but I will tear down; and men will call them the wicked territory, and the people toward whom Yahweh is indignant forever.”

1:5 Your eyes will see this and you will say, “Yahweh be magnified beyond the border of Israel!”

Malachi was the last prophet of God before He went silent until Jesus appeared. He probably presented his message, which the first verse of the book identifies as “the pronouncement of the word of Yahweh to Israel through Malachi,” around 500 B.C. The exiles have returned from Babylon. They have rebuilt the temple, which is a mere shadow of its former glory, and will remain such until Herod the Great builds it again in the time of Jesus and it becomes one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. Yet, Herod’s magnificent edifice will come tumbling down when the Romans attack Jerusalem in A.D. 70 as punishment for the Jews’ rebellion against them.

Malachi begins in v. 2 with a direct statement from Yahweh to the nation of Israel, “I have loved you.” However, God anticipates their response, “How have You loved us?” This question most likely arises out of their continuing to be much less than the “great nation” which God promised they would be in the Abrahamic Covenant of Genesis 12-22, even after they suffered through what they hoped would be His final discipline of the Assyrian and Babylonian invasions two centuries or so earlier. God’s answer is first, “Was not Esau Jacob’s brother? Yet I have loved Jacob; but I have hated Esau, and I have made his mountains a desolation and appointed his inheritance for the jackals of the wilderness.”

With these words God is inviting the Jews to consider the difference in the present circumstances of the two sons of Isaac, both of whom had the possibility of becoming the heir of the Abrahamic promises to make the Jewish people the most powerful nation in history and to grant eternal life to Abraham and those with faith like him. Yet, it is not Esau through whom these promises will be fulfilled. It is Jacob. Indeed, God points out that the land where Esau’s descendants settled is now a “desolation” and a home to “the jackals of the wilderness.” In contrast, the fact that the Jews have returned to what was previously a desolate land after the Babylonian invasion one hundred years earlier, the land of Israel, so that it is now inhabited and providing them with food and sustenance does provide them with an important message from God. He is still faithful to them.

And this is because God has “loved Jacob,” their ancestor by blood, and “hated Esau,” Jacob’s brother. The promises of Abraham are continuing down through the generations of Jacob, while Esau and his descendants are ethnically outside the community of these promises. It is not as though God so “hated” Esau that neither he nor his physical descendants could possibly ever obtain eternal life. There may very well (and it is certainly most probable) that God has chosen and predestined some of them to obtain his salvation and membership in the eternal Kingdom of God. However, when it comes to which ethnic group will be blessed with the power and status of the greatest nation in human history, it is Jacob’s descendants and not Esau’s who will acquire this blessing. And God is saying through Malachi that a clear indication of this is that the land of Esau is desolate while the land of Jacob/Israel is not—in spite of the fact that the Assyrians and Babylonians had done tremendous damage two hundred and one hundred years earlier respectively. No matter how much God may judge and discipline the Jews as shown by the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple in 586 B.C. (and then again in A.D. 70), their land never suffers permanent “desolation” as is the case with Esau’s descendants and their land.

Then, in v. 4, God presents a hypothetical situation. “Though Edom says, ‘We have been beaten down, but we will return and build up the ruins,’ thus says Yahweh of hosts, ‘They may build, but I will tear down; and men will call them the wicked territory and the people toward whom Yahweh is indignant forever.’” Edom is another name for Esau, first used in Genesis 25:30 when the author makes the editorial comment that Esau was also called Edom, meaning red, because he asked his brother Jacob to share with him some stew that was red in color when he was so hungry that he sold his birthright to his younger brother for the food.

In Malachi 1:4, God considers the possibility that Esau's descendants, the Edomites, will plan to return to their land and rebuild their cities and villages. However, God categorically states that He is "indignant forever" with them for their hostility towards the nation of Israel, so that even if they succeed in rebuilding their dwellings, God "will tear them down." The key element here is that God never says this of Israel and the Jews. In spite of their persistently losing their cities and their land and being scattered among the Gentile nations, eventually they will return, build all that they need to sustain their lives, and become the most powerful country in all history according to God's Abrahamic promise.

God ends this passage in v. 5, "Your eyes will see this and you will say, 'Yahweh be magnified beyond the border of Israel!'" The Jews will eventually observe with their own eyes God's keeping His word and making sure that the land of Esau/Edom remains desolate. As a result, the people of Israel will praise God for glorifying Himself by exercising His justice through the punishment and destruction of sinful people. The Edomites will be a prime example of His unwavering justice, and this is the first of four references to God's glory extending beyond the borders of Israel, which I think will happen when the Messiah returns and rules over the entire earth. The other three references to His glory are in Malachi 1:11,14 & 3:12,

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 Yahweh of hosts (emphasis mine).

Malachi 1:14 "But cursed be the swindler who has a male in his flock and vows it, but sacrifices a blemished animal to the Lord, for I am a great King," says Yahweh of hosts, "**and My name is feared among the nations**" (emphasis mine).

Malachi 3:12 "**All the nations will call you blessed,** for you shall be a delightful land," says Yahweh of hosts (emphasis mine).

The time to which these verses refer is the messianic kingdom when Jesus returns, which is the same as the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20. This is also the time of God's fulfilling His promise to Abraham to make his descendants a "great nation" (cf. Genesis 12:2). "All the nations" will acknowledge God's greatness and for the most part fear him, because the Messiah will rule the earth so that no one will outwardly oppose him and many people will join the Jews in worshiping Him.

Malachi 3-4

- 3:1** "Behold, I am going to send My messenger (מַלְאָכִי), and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant (וְיִמְלֵאךָ הַבְּרִיתָה), in whom you delight, behold, He is coming," says Yahweh of hosts.
- 3:2** "But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire and like fullers' soap.
- 3:3** "He will sit as a smelter and purifier of silver, and He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, so that they may present to Yahweh offerings in righteousness.
- 3:4** "Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to Yahweh as in the days of old and as in former years.
- 3:5** "Then I will draw near to you for judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers and against the adulterers and against those who swear falsely, and against those who oppress the wage earner in his wages, the widow and the orphan, and those who turn aside the alien and do not fear Me," says Yahweh of hosts.
- 3:6** "For I, Yahweh, do not change; therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed.

- 3:7 “From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from My statutes and have not kept them (וְלֹא שָׁמַרְתֶּם). Return to Me, and I will return to you (שׁוּבוּ אֵלַי וְאֶשׁוּבָה אֲלֵיכֶם),” says Yahweh of hosts. “But you say, ‘How shall we return?’
- 3:8 “Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing Me! But you say, ‘How have we robbed You?’ In tithes and offerings.
- 3:9 “You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing Me, the whole nation of you!
- 3:10 “Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this,” says Yahweh of hosts, “if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows.
- 3:11 “Then I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of the ground; nor will your vine in the field cast its grapes,” says Yahweh of hosts.
- 3:12 “All the nations will call you blessed, for you shall be a delightful land (אֶרֶץ חֻפְזִין),” says Yahweh of hosts.
- 3:13 “Your words have been arrogant against Me,” says Yahweh. “Yet you say, ‘What have we spoken against You?’
- 3:14 “You have said, ‘It is vain to serve God; and what profit is it that we have kept His charge (שָׁמַרְנוּ מִשְׁמֵרָתוֹ), and that we have walked in mourning before Yahweh of hosts?’
- 3:15 “So now we call the arrogant blessed; not only are the doers of wickedness built up but they also test God and escape.”
- 3:16 Then those who feared Yahweh spoke to one another, and Yahweh gave attention and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear Yahweh and who esteem His name.
- 3:17 “They will be Mine,” says Yahweh of hosts, “on the day that I prepare My own possession (סִגְלָה), and I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him.”
- 3:18 So you will again distinguish between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve Him.
- 4:1 “For behold, the day is coming, burning like a furnace; and all the arrogant and every evildoer will be chaff; and the day that is coming will set them ablaze,” says Yahweh of hosts, “so that it will leave them neither root nor branch.”
- 4:2 “But for you who fear My name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings; and you will go forth and skip about like calves from the stall.
- 4:3 “You will tread down the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day which I am preparing,” says Yahweh of hosts.
- 4:4 “Remember the law of Moses My servant, even the statutes and ordinances which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel.
- 4:5 “Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of Yahweh (לִפְנֵי בּוֹא יוֹם יְהוָה הַגָּדוֹל וְהַיּוֹרָא).”
- 4:6 “He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse (פְּנִי אָבוֹא וְהִכִּיתִי אֶת־הָאָרֶץ תְּרָם).”

These last two chapters of Malachi and the Old Testament present a wonderful summary of what God is going to do with the Messiah for His people Israel. God begins in v. 1,

- 3:1 “Behold, I am going to send My messenger (מַלְאָכִי), and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple; and the messenger of the covenant (וּמַלְאָךְ הַבְּרִית), in whom you delight, behold, He is coming,” says Yahweh of hosts.

God will send His “messenger” to “clear the way” for Him. The word “messenger” can also be translated “angel” (ἄγγελός, *angelos* in the Greek Septuagint). It is used in the Old Testament to refer to one of three different kinds of beings—1) a theophany, that is, a visible manifestation of God such as the burning bush in Exodus 3:2ff., or 2) a conventional angel, that is, a created being who is not normally a part of this visible reality on earth and who acts as a spokesman for God, such as the angel in Zechariah 2:3 who speaks with the prophet, or 3) a human being who acts as a spokesman for someone, such as the messenger from Joab to king David in 2 Samuel 11:19ff. Here I think that the meaning is the third option since Jesus identifies this person as John the Baptist when he quotes this verse in Matthew,

Matthew 11:10 “This [John the Baptist] is the one about whom it is written, ‘Behold, I send My messenger ahead of you, who will prepare your way before you.’”

Notice that Jesus says, “before you” instead of “before Me” as in Malachi 3:1. This is because he is indicating that he is “the Lord” of this verse. He is the ruler of Israel, “whom [they] seek,” and he “will suddenly come to His temple” as the very icon of God. He will also be the second “messenger” mentioned in Malachi 3:1, “the messenger of the covenant.” By this I think God means the one who not only communicates but who also is the very embodiment of the New Covenant, which will provide complete forgiveness of sins for the nation of Israel as described in Jeremiah 31:31-34. It will be in him, the “messenger of the covenant,” that (eventually) the Jews will “delight” because of all that he will do for them—rescuing them from God’s eternal wrath and condemnation and destroying their enemies. We have seen that this is when Jesus as the Messiah returns and restores the Kingdom of Israel on the land which God has promised Abraham’s physical descendants.

God also declares explicitly, “Behold, he is coming.” Thus He assures the Jews, even in Malachi’s day, that they need not worry. He will fulfill His plans for them, yet, with both justice and mercy as vs. 2-6 say,

3:2 “But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner’s fire and like fullers’ soap.

3:3 “He will sit as a smelter and purifier of silver, and He will purify the sons of Levi and refine them like gold and silver, so that they may present to Yahweh offerings in righteousness.

3:4 “Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem will be pleasing to Yahweh as in the days of old and as in former years.

3:5 “Then I will draw near to you for judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers and against the adulterers and against those who swear falsely, and against those who oppress the wage earner in his wages, the widow and the orphan, and those who turn aside the alien and do not fear Me,” says Yahweh of hosts.

3:6 “For I, Yahweh, do not change; therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed.”

God poses an important question to the Jews, “But who can endure” the Messiah’s “coming,” and “who can stand when he appears,” because he will be “like a refiner’s fire and like fuller’s soap?” (v. 2). The Messiah’s appearance is intended to clean the last vestiges of unbelief out of Israel and to eliminate all those who have remained committed to rebelling against God. Similarly, “he will sit as a smelter and purifier of silver,” so that “he will purify the sons of Levi,” the priests who will carry out their responsibility in the final, rebuilt temple of Jerusalem. Indeed, God through the appearance of the Messiah will “refine them like gold and silver,” meaning that he will ensure that the only priests who exist during the messianic kingdom will have changed hearts and be men of authentic faith. Therefore, “they [will] present to Yahweh offerings in righteousness,” i.e., with genuine belief, from all the Jews who bring their offerings and sacrifices to the temple (v. 3).

As a result, “the offering of Judah and Jerusalem,” which is to say of all the people of Israel, “will be pleasing to Yahweh, as in the days of old and as in former years” (v. 4). Whenever there had been at least some members of the nation of Israel who had circumcised hearts and genuine faith, it will once again be like that when the Messiah comes. However, it will also be that God “will draw near to [Israel] for judgment.” He “will be a swift witness against the sorcerers and against the adulterers and against those who swear falsely, and against those who oppress the wage earner in his wages, the widow and the orphan, and those who turn aside the alien and do not fear Me” (v. 5). God is going to clear the land of Jews who have remained in a condition where their hearts are in complete rebellion against Him. As a result, only those Jews with changed hearts that exhibit authentic belief and obedience in God will remain when the Messiah appears.

But, again, unlike God’s actions toward other ethnic groups whom He has had no problem judging and causing to become extinct, He does “not change” with respect to Abraham’s descendants. “Therefore,” they “are not consumed.” They will never cease to exist as a distinct ethnic group (v. 6). And we know this to be the case because of God’s *hesed*, His faithful and loyal love and commitment to His promises to Abraham’s physical descendants. Nevertheless, according to vs. 7-9, the history of the people of Israel has not been one of glowing righteousness and obedience to God. Nor is it such during the days of Malachi,

3:7 “From the days of your fathers you have turned aside from My statutes and have not kept them (וְלֹא שָׁמַרְתֶּם).
Return to Me, and I will return to you (שׁוּבוּ אֵלַי וְאֶשׁוּבָה אֲלֵיכֶם),”
says Yahweh of hosts. “But you say, ‘How shall we return?’

3:8 “Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing Me! But you say, ‘How have we robbed You?’ In tithes and offerings.

3:9 “You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing Me, the whole nation of you!”

The ancestors of Malachi’s contemporaries were definitely not obedient to God. Instead, they “turned aside” from His “statues” in the Mosaic Covenant, so that rather than guard them with their hearts and minds, they flagrantly violated them. The inference that Malachi’s listeners are supposed to draw is that they are not any different from their forefathers. As a result, God says to them, “Return to Me, and I will return to you.” He is calling them to repent of their rebellious ways of life and become authentic in both their faith and their obedience. However, they are blind to their sin and ask God, “How shall we return” (v. 7)?

God then cites the example of their “tithes and offerings” which He has required according to the Mosaic Covenant. The fact is that they “are robbing” God by not bringing their tithes and offerings as they should to the temple in Jerusalem (v. 8). They are holding back on how they should *physically* worship God, but this must be also because they lack the proper inwardness and changed hearts. Therefore, in the midst of their unbelief, they stand before God as those who “are cursed with a curse.” And God says that it is “the whole nation” of them who are acting this way. There may be a few Jews of authentic belief at the time of Malachi, and certainly the prophet is one of these. But most of them lack the kind of circumcised heart that the Mosaic Covenant requires, so that it might as well be “the whole nation” who are shirking their responsibility to obey God properly. Thus, He goes on to exhort and assure the Jews in vs. 10-12,

3:10 “Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this,” says Yahweh of hosts,
“if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows.

3:11 “Then I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of the ground; nor will your vine in the field cast its grapes,” says Yahweh of hosts.

3:12 “All the nations will call you blessed, for you shall be a

delightful land (אֶרֶץ תְּשׁוּבָה),” says Yahweh of hosts.

God wants them to bring all that is required of them to the temple, which is His “house” in Jerusalem, so that there is plenty of “food” metaphorically for Him to eat. According to the Mosaic Covenant, the Jews are obligated to bring a tenth, a tithe, of their produce to the temple as a thank offering to Him and as actual food for the Levitical priests. Perhaps the Jews of Malachi’s day are partially obeying this command, but they must be selfishly withholding some of the tithe for themselves. This is why God orders them to “bring the *whole* tithe” to Him (emphasis mine). He says that by doing so, they will “test” Him, because the Mosaic Covenant is clear also that God will bless the nation of Israel if they appropriately obey Him from their hearts (cf. Deuteronomy 26-28).

If Malachi’s fellow Jews will do what God requires, then He “will open for [them] the windows of heaven and pour out for [them] a blessing until it overflows” (v. 10). In other words, God will make sure that Israel has not only plenty of rain for their crops, but also crops for their food, indeed more food than they need. He will also “rebuke the devourer . . . , so that it will not destroy the fruits of the ground,” whether God means their human enemies who have stolen their food from them or insects such as locusts, who are common in the Middle East and feast on the crops. Neither “will [their] vine in the field cast its grapes” onto the ground, so that they become unusable (v. 11). Thus, God will ensure that the Jews have more than enough food and wine as a result of their obeying Him and His covenant from their hearts.

God ends this paragraph by promising His chosen people that “all the nations will call you blessed, for you shall be a delightful land” (v. 12). Again, this will be the case when all the Jews living on the land of Israel are bona fide believers in God (and in His Messiah), which will happen only when God fulfills His promise to Abraham to make them a “great nation” after Jesus returns and restores the Kingdom of Israel according to all the Old Testament prophetic passages, the Olivet Discourse of Matthew 24, and the book of Revelation.

Then, in Malachi 3:13-15, God continues explaining why His people are not currently experiencing the kind of blessing which He has been describing,

3:13 “Your words have been arrogant against Me,” says Yahweh.

“Yet you say, ‘What have we spoken against You?’

3:14 “You have said, ‘It is vain to serve God; and what profit is it that we have kept His charge (שָׁמַרְנָה מִשְׁמֶרֶתוֹ), and that we have walked in mourning before Yahweh of hosts?’

3:15 ‘So now we call the arrogant blessed; not only are the doers of wickedness built up but they also test God and escape.’”

The Jews in their arrogance have considered it worthless to obey and worship God, because they “have walked in mourning” instead of in happiness and joy (vs. 13-14). They are probably referring to what happened a hundred years earlier when the Babylonians destroyed the southern Kingdom of Judah and took the people into exile. But they may also be thinking of life as it has been since their return seventy years later. Even though they again are living on the land of Israel in relative security, their experience is not what God described as His ultimate blessing when He fulfills the promise He made to Abraham.

The result has been that the Jews of Malachi’s day “call the arrogant blessed,” because at least they are prospering, even if they have obtained their wealth, power, and status by oppressing their fellow Jews. These proud and selfish people are “doers of wickedness” who are “built up” in their riches and power. In addition, “they also test God and escape,” which is to say that they are currently getting away with their arrogance and wickedness. But their beneficial circumstances will not last forever.

Then, in v. 16, Malachi tells us about how certain Jews at his time are responding to all these statements by God,

3:16 Then those who feared Yahweh spoke to one another, and Yahweh gave attention and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear Yahweh and who esteem His name.

These must be the remnant within Israel during Malachi's day. They are authentic believers and not like the arrogant of vs. 13-15. They fear God, and they gather together to encourage one another in their faith, which God sees and hears. "And a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear" Him and "esteem His name." I think this "book of remembrance" is God's way of saying that He will never forget their genuine belief and obedience so that eventually they will experience His full blessing of participating in the final Kingdom of Israel on this earth and in eternal life on the next earth (cf. Revelation 20,21).

As God says in Malachi 3:17-4:3,

3:17 "They will be Mine," says Yahweh of hosts, "on the day that I prepare My own possession (יָהוָה), and I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him."

3:18 So you will again distinguish between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve Him.

4:1 "For behold, the day is coming, burning like a furnace; and all the arrogant and every evildoer will be chaff; and the day that is coming will set them ablaze," says Yahweh of hosts, "so that it will leave them neither root nor branch."

4:2 "But for you who fear My name, the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings; and you will go forth and skip about like calves from the stall.

4:3 "You will tread down the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of your feet on the day which I am preparing," says Yahweh of hosts.

Indeed, the Jews of genuine belief "will be Mine," God says, and this will be "on the day" that He prepares His "own possession." I think that this preparation of the people of Israel is for the final, messianic kingdom when God will bless them above all other peoples of the earth. Therefore, their being God's property and possession means that He "will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him" (3:17). And from what will God spare these particular Jews? From complete annihilation and destruction. First, He says in 3:18 that the people of Israel "will again distinguish between the righteous and the wicked, between the one who serves God and one who does not serve Him," meaning that it will be highly important that the people be aware of the distinction between those of genuine belief among them and those who lack belief. Why?

"For behold the day is coming, burning like a furnace; and all the arrogant and every evildoer will be chaff; and the day that is coming will set them ablaze,...so that it will leave them neither root nor branch" (4:1). God is declaring in no uncertain terms that those Jews who remain proud, arrogant, and disobedient towards Him by ignoring His moral commandments will find themselves facing destruction on a certain "day." God will no longer allow them to get away with rebelling against Him. And when is this "day?" I suggest that it is when Jesus returns to destroy Israel's enemies. However, God will also destroy any Jews on their land and around the world who are still unwilling to believe all that He has told them and required of them through the various covenants of the Old Testament and through the New Covenant as inaugurated by Jesus as their Messiah. They will also lose any opportunity to become rooted on the land and to produce future generations of God's chosen people when He makes the Jews a "great nation" according to Genesis 12.

In contrast, "for you who fear My Name," God says, "the sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings; and you will go forth and skip about like calves from the stall" (4:2). Those Jews who are inclined to obey God will find themselves fully circumcised of heart, pursuing righteousness and moral goodness, and living with gusto and joy on the land which God had promised them. In

addition, they “will tread down the wicked, for they will be ashes under the soles of [their] feet on the day” which God “is preparing” (4:3). Thus, when Jesus returns, God will defeat the Jews’ enemies who have invaded their land and make them like “ashes” so that they can “tread” on them. In other words, the armies which will invade Israel to destroy them will simply no longer exist.

God’s final exhortation to His chosen people is in vs. 4-6 of chapter 4,

4:4 “Remember the law of Moses My servant, even the statutes and ordinances which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel.

4:5 “Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of Yahweh (לְפָנַי בּוֹא יוֹם יְהוָה הַגָּדוֹל וְהַיּוֹרָא).

4:6 “He will restore the hearts of the fathers to their children and the hearts of the children to their fathers, so that I will not come and smite the land with a curse (וְהָיָה וְהָיָה אֶת־הָאָרֶץ תְּרַם).”

The clarion cry of “Remember the law of Moses” is for the Jews a little like “Remember the Alamo” for Texans. The formative moment for the nation of Israel was God’s bringing them out of slavery in Egypt and giving them the Mosaic Covenant with its 613 commandments at Mt. “Horeb,” which is also Mt. Sinai (4:4). In spite of some rather strange “statues and ordinances,” this covenant is the means by which God manifests the special status of the Jews as His chosen people. It indeed makes them peculiar among all the other ethnic groups in the world. And God has required that the Jews observe His covenant throughout their history, and I suggest that it will be an important part of how they demonstrate their authentic faith in Him from changed hearts when He fulfills His Abrahamic promise to make them the most powerful nation in human history—when Jesus returns to restore the Kingdom of Israel (cf. Acts 1:6-8).

God also says in Malachi 4:5 that He is “going to send [them] Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of Yahweh.” This awesome and awful day for the Jews is most likely the return of Jesus when God will put to death all the Jews who have remained primarily inclined towards disobeying Him. And who is the Elijah of this verse?

In order to answer this questions, we should consider Matthew 11:13-14, 17:10-13; Mark 9:11-13; and Luke 1:13-17. And we should also do so in the light of Malachi 3:1ff. above.

Matthew 11:13 “For all the prophets and the Law prophesied until John. **11:14** “And if you are willing to accept it, John himself is Elijah who was to come. **11:15** “He who has ears to hear, let him hear.”

Matthew 17:10 And his disciples asked him, “Why then do the scribes say that Elijah must come first?”

17:11 And he answered and said, “Elijah is coming and will restore all things; **17:12** but I say to you that Elijah already came, and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they wished. So also the Son of Man is going to suffer at their hands.”

17:13 Then the disciples understood that he had spoken to them about John the Baptist.

Mark 9:11 They asked him, saying, “Why is it that the scribes say that Elijah must come first?”

9:12 And he said to them, “Elijah does first come and restore all things. And yet how is it written of the Son of Man that he will suffer many things and be treated with contempt? **9:13** “But I say to you that Elijah has indeed come, and they did to him whatever they wished, just as it is written of him.”

Luke 1:13 But the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your petition has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will give him the name John. **1:14** “You will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. **1:15** “For he will be great in the sight of the Lord; and he will drink no wine or liquor, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit while yet in his mother’s womb. **1:16** “And he will turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God.

1:17 “It is he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”

These passages from the New Testament show us clearly that in one way or another John the Baptist can be associated with the Elijah of Malachi 4:5. The angel Gabriel in Luke 1:16-17 tells John’s father Zacharias that he “will go as a forerunner before [God] in the spirit and power of Elijah.” He also alludes to Malachi 4:6, that John will “turn the hearts of the fathers back to the children, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous [a key clue!], so as to make a people prepared for the Lord.” Thus, “he will turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God.” Therefore, we know that, by the inward work of the Holy Spirit, the effect of John the Baptist and his ministry was to produce additional Jews who were genuine believers in God.

In Matthew 11:14, Jesus says unequivocally that “John himself is Elijah who was to come.” But he also says, “He who has ears to hear, let him hear,” probably meaning that John the Baptist is *like* the Elijah of Malachi 4:5, even if he is not *the* exact Elijah of this verse. In other words, John is the analog of the final Elijah. We also see in Matthew 17:11 that Jesus says that “Elijah is coming and will restore all things,” referring to a future time when this person will appear. Yet, he includes in v. 12 what he had said in Matthew 11:14 that “Elijah already came.” Then Matthew says that the disciples understood him to be referring to John the Baptist (v. 13). Therefore, John the Baptist was “Elijah,” and yet there is another “Elijah” coming in the future. Mark 9:11-13 says the same thing.

But who is this future Elijah who “will restore all things?” I think that it is Jesus himself. The name Elijah means “Yahweh is my God.” Who better to say this when he exists on earth than Jesus, the Messiah, the Son of God, who refers to God as his Father just as much as He is the Father of sinners? Therefore, I think that ultimately Jesus is the Elijah of Malachi 4:5, who, according to the next verse, will “restore the hearts of the fathers to their children,” meaning that Jesus will bring about a change of heart, which demonstrates the same genuine belief and obedience of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, for their descendants, the Jews of the messianic kingdom. Indeed, every living Jew during the time of the millennial kingdom of Revelation 20 will have a circumcised heart and will exhibit authentic obedience to God during the entire course of their lives. This is part of what it will mean for them to be a “great nation” according to God’s promise in Genesis 12:2. And this will be “so that [God] will not come and smite the land with a curse” (cf. Malachi 4:6). God will never again have to judge and discipline His chosen people, the nation of Israel, because of their unbelief and disobedience by bringing their enemies down on their heads to destroy them and disperse them from their land. From the moment of the Messiah’s second appearance, they will consistently and continuously be people of true faith and genuine worship of their God, Yahweh.

Nevertheless, at the time of Jesus’ first appearance, John the Baptist, “in the spirit and power of Elijah,” thus played the role of the final Elijah (“Yahweh is my God”) as the “messenger” of Malachi 3:1, so that many Jews who heard him did genuinely repent of their sins and proclaim Jesus as the Messiah who was present in Israel at that time. They became authentic believers of changed hearts like their future descendants of the messianic kingdom when Jesus returns. This then became a sign that God would not “smite the land with a curse” such that He would destroy all the Jews when they as a nation overall rejected Jesus as their Messiah. It is certainly true that the Romans invaded the land with their armies, destroyed Jerusalem and the temple in A.D. 70, and expelled all the Jews from the land of Israel in A.D. 132-135. But the presence of authentic believers as a result of John the Baptist’s work and during the time of Jesus meant that God was in the process of sparing His chosen people from complete annihilation.¹

¹ Probably **הָרַחֵם** (*herem*, which could be translated “devoted”; ἄρδην in the Greek Septuagint, meaning completely, entirely, utterly) is a key word here. If John the Baptist was a kind of “Elijah,” then fortunately he started the process of the Jews’ genuinely repenting as a result of their changed hearts in Jesus’ day. Otherwise, God could have been justified in completely destroying them from the land when they rejected Jesus as the Messiah, just as He commanded the Israelites under Joshua’s leadership to destroy entirely, *herem*, the indigenous Canaanites when they entered into the land (cf. Joshua 6:7). As I have said,

Thus, God is saying through the prophet Malachi that He will remain faithful to His promise to Abraham to make his descendants the most powerful nation in history under the rule of their Messiah, who we know to be Jesus of Nazareth and who will return to complete his task of being the very instrument by which God brings the Jews forgiveness for the sins and a king who rules them with righteousness and justice while they all rule the world together.

it is certainly not as though devastating events did not occur for the Jews in A.D. 70 and A.D. 132 specifically when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem and drove the people from the land. But with the appearance of John the Baptist whom God used to bring some of the Jews to authentic belief, He withheld their complete destruction for the sake of His promises to the nation of Israel through Abraham. And we know from Christian history that this process of a few Jews' becoming believers in Jesus as their Messiah continued from that point on to this day.