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THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE BATTLE SEQUENCES IN ZECHARIAH 12 THROUGH 14

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To my wife, Kerry

And

My Parents, Daniel and Susan Haley

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ABSTRACT

The relationship of the battle sequences in Zechariah 12-14 has divided scholars for centuries. Jerusalem, besieged by the nations, will be the location of both battles. The nations will be defeated by a divine plague in both battles. Finally, the battles will both result in the establishment of Yahweh's kingdom. There are several important differences between the battle sequences. Zechariah 14 specifically identifies the day of the conflict as the "Day of the Lord." Chapters 12-13 do not. Chapter 14 describes the judgment of Jerusalem while chapters 12-13 do not. Finally, chapter 14 presents a thorough description of the battle while narrating the events of the conflict. In contrast, chapters 12-13 use a series of similes establishing the power of Yahweh while mostly ignoring the action of the battle.

The dispensational position associated the fulfillment of these battles with Armageddon and the establishment of the Millennial Reign. Dispensational scholars like Charles Feinberg and George Klein therefore suggest that Zechariah 12-14 is describing identical battles in consecutive sequences. It is difficult, however, to find investigation of any length actually linking the battles within a dispensational framework while also explaining the differences between the sequences.

This thesis affirms the dispensational position that Zechariah 12-14 is prophesying about the same conflict in consecutive sequences after (1) a study of the historical setting and the apocalyptic genre; (2) an exegesis of chapters 12-14 and the three important motifs established through the exegesis: Zion and its related theology, the "Day of the Lord," and Yahweh as the Divine Warrior; and (3) an examination of the differing judgment focus of each conflict and its impact on understanding the differences between the battles.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	1
Chapter 1 – Historical Background and Genre	6
Chapter 2 – Exegesis of Zechariah 12-14	20
Chapter 3 – Key Motifs in Zechariah 12-14	30
Chapter 4 – The Differing Judgment Focus of Zechariah 12-14	49
Chapter 5 – Summary	56
BIBLIOGRAPHY	62

Introduction

The relationship of the battle sequences in Zechariah 12-14 has divided scholars for centuries. The dispensational position has suggested that Zechariah 12-14 is prophesying about identical battles and has associated the fulfillment of these chapters with “the establishment of God’s kingdom ‘on that day’.”¹ Charles Feinberg commented, “Chapter 12 [deals] with events before the reign of the Messiah when Israel shall be besieged by the nations for their final death blow against God’s people.”² Feinberg observed that this siege is identical to that of chapter 14. He asserted that both chapters are prophesying about the battle of Armageddon.³ Merrill Unger suggested that Zechariah 11 represents the final half of the tribulation while chapter 12 describes God’s victory in Revelation 16-21.⁴ Chapter 14 for Unger represents the same events from a different “point of view.”⁵ Recently, George Klein proposed that Zechariah 14 is a summary of themes present in the book as a whole.⁶ Klein argued that both battle sequences are the same event with different functional emphases.

The reformed position on Zechariah 12-14 has generally rejected the idea that these chapters are prophesying about identical battles.⁷ John Calvin asserted that chapters 12-14 reference the age beginning with the return from Exile and conclude with the New Testament period.⁸ For example, Zechariah 12:1-9 might be a reference to events that transpired during the prophet’s ministry while Zechariah 12:10 could have been fulfilled by Christ “when his side was

¹ Homer Heater, *Zechariah* (Grand Rapids, MI: Lamplighter Books, 1987), 73.

² Charles Lee Feinberg, *The Minor Prophets* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1990), 330.

³ *Ibid.*, 140.

⁴ Merrill Unger, *Zechariah: Prophet of Messiah’s Glory* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1976), 206.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 240.

⁶ George L. Klein *Zechariah*, *The New American Commentary*, no. 21b (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2008), 395.

⁷ The Reformed tradition may broadly be associated with the theology of Calvin and Zwingli although many different types of Reformed theologies have developed over the last 400 years. For a discussion on the development of the Reformed tradition note: W.S Reid, “Reformed Tradition,” *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter Elwell. (Grand Rapids MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 997-999.

⁸ Al Wolters, “Zechariah 14: A Dialogue with the History of Interpretation,” *Mid-America Journal of Theology*, no. 13 (2002): 46.

pierced by a spear” (John 14:37).⁹ Additionally, Zechariah 14:14 may have been fulfilled when Antiochus battled against Jerusalem during the Maccabean period.¹⁰ Herbert Leupold also suggested that Zechariah 12-14 is a reference to the period beginning with the return from Exile but proposed that chapter 14 will not be fulfilled until the 2nd Coming of Christ.¹¹ The events of chapter 12, according to Leupold, might refer to “penitence” in the day of Zechariah, the onlookers at the Crucifixion, or the Day of Pentecost.¹² Zechariah 14, in contrast, “portrays spiritual realities and indicates the ultimate exaltation and strength of the Church of the living God.”¹³ Leupold’s argument is based on the view that Jerusalem in Zechariah 14 is a metaphorical image of the New Testament age Church.¹⁴

The reformed position on Zechariah 12-14 demonstrates why the relationship between the battles is important. At stake is the dispensational theology that God still has a plan for the nation of Israel. Are the battles metaphors for the suffering of the Church or are they prophetic passages that refer to the battle of Armageddon? Is the result of the conflict in each sequence a metaphor for the victory of the Church through Christ or a prophecy concerning the establishment of the Millennial Reign in Jerusalem? The problem is that while dispensational scholarship has generally settled on an interpretation for these sequences, it is difficult to find investigation of any length actually linking the battles within the dispensational tradition and offering a reason why Zechariah would describe the same battle consecutively. The following investigation then will explore whether there is enough evidence to suggest that Zechariah 12-14 is prophesying about identical battles in consecutive sequences.

⁹ John Calvin, *Calvin’s Commentaries Volume XV* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker, 1979), 364-365.

¹⁰ Ibid. Calvin also interpreted Zechariah 12 as a metaphor for the Church. Instead of Jerusalem being made like an intoxicating cup for the nations in 12:2, it is the Church which continues to be an intoxicating cup for those “devising schemes” (Ibid., 342-343).

¹¹ Herbert Leupold, *Exposition of Zechariah* (Columbus OH: The Wartburg Press, 1956), 234.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ibid., 268.

¹⁴ Ibid., 234.

Research Overview

In five chapters this study will ask if there is enough evidence to suggest that these battle sequences are identical. Chapter one will offer an overview of the date authorship, and unity of Zechariah highlighting some of the critical and dispensational positions. This chapter will also offer a discussion on Zechariah's historical setting. Finally, chapter one will investigate the question of genre.

Chapter two will present an exegesis of chapters 12-14, focusing on the narrative of the battles and important textual issues that might help inform an interpretation of the sequences. This chapter will also highlight some of the events and motifs that suggest a connection between the sequences.

Chapter three will discuss three important motifs found within the battle sequences. First, the divine protection of Jerusalem is established in both battles. Before the Exile, there was an assumption among Israelites that Yahweh would protect Jerusalem because of his presence in the Temple. However, according to the Mosaic Covenant, this divine protection was conditional, requiring obedience to Yahweh.¹⁵ When the people of Israel and Judah acted against Yahweh's commandments judgment was required. The Exile was the ultimate judgment. However, Zechariah, prophesying in the post-Exilic period, promised that this divine protection would return. In the future, when the nations come against the city, Yahweh will unconditionally fight for and protect Jerusalem.

The second linking motif is the phrase יום יהוה (Day of the Lord). The use of this phrase in the Old Testament most often represents the intervention of Yahweh (whether directly or indirectly) in human affairs. This intervention in human affairs is often associated with divine

¹⁵ Note Exodus 19-23. Yahweh promised to establish a great nation for Israel (23:31) but in return he required obedience (19:3-6, 23:24).

judgment. Yahweh's intervention in Zechariah 14 heralds the judgment of Judah, Jerusalem, and the nations. Most importantly, the phrase **בְּיִום־הַהוּא** (on that day) might be a reference to the events occurring on the "Day of the Lord." Chapters 12-14 use the phrase "on that day" to mark the acts of Yahweh during and after the conflict.

Yahweh as the Divine Warrior is the third and final motif that will be discussed in chapter three. The Divine Warrior motif offers a strong connection between the sequences. Five aspects of the Divine Warrior motif have been identified within the Old Testament.¹⁶ The first three of these can be found in chapters 12-14. The first and second step in divine Holy War is the warfare itself. Yahweh will bring the nations to war against Jerusalem in both battle sequences and Yahweh will use a plague to defeat the nations in both battles. And the third step is kingship. Zechariah 14:9 declares, "The Lord will be king over the whole earth. On that day there will be one Lord, and his name the only name."

Chapter four will offer a discussion on two important differences between the battle sequences. First, Zechariah prophesies that Jerusalem will be judged in chapter 14. He does not however mention this judgment in chapter 12. And second, the prophet seems to use a more vivid description of the events of the battle in chapter 14 than he does in chapter 12.

Finally, chapter five will offer a summary and conclusion of the investigation.

Definition of Terms

The use of the term "battle sequence" is meant to offer not only the battle itself but also the results of the conflict. Both sequences include a description of Yahweh's return and the

¹⁶ Tremper Longman and Daniel G. Reid, *God is a Warrior* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 83-85.

establishment of his Kingdom. The first sequence is described in Zechariah 12:1-13:6.¹⁷ The second sequence is described in 14:1-21.

Unger has suggested that Zechariah composed chapters 9-14 in the later part of his ministry after it had become evident that the return from Exile was not all that Judah had hoped it would be.¹⁸ The use of the term “date of composition” then refers to the early 5th century B.C.

The term “dispensational” is used in the broadest sense possible. This term has, in general, referred to the theological position that rejects supercessionism while also embracing premillennialism.¹⁹ While there are many forms of dispensational thought, this paper will not differentiate between them.²⁰

Finally, critical biblical scholarship is useful for and practiced by both conservative and liberal scholars. However, when the term is used in this paper, it is meant to refer generally to liberal scholarship.

¹⁷ Zechariah 13:7-9 describes the fall of the wayward Shepherd and the refinement of Yahweh’s people. This passage may be describing events that will take place on the day of battle but may also be prophesying about events that will occur prior to the battle. For a discussion on this passage please note: Homer Heater, *Zechariah*, 109-110.

¹⁸ Unger, *Zechariah: Prophet of Messiah’s Glory*, 13.

¹⁹ C. Blaising, “Dispensation, Dispensationalist,” *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter Elwell. (Grand Rapids MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 343.

²⁰ These forms include classical, revised, progressive, and ultra among others.

Chapter 1

Historical Background and Genre

Zechariah prophesied during one of the most turbulent periods in Judah's history. Those returning from Exile lacked a place of worship, an independent Davidic king to rule them, and sovereignty over a homeland. This chapter will explore the history of Zechariah's prophecy in three parts. The first will discuss the history of interpretation with respect to the authorship, date, and unity of Zechariah. The second section will review the events that influenced Zechariah's ministry. And the final section will briefly discuss the genre of Zechariah 12-14.

History of Interpretation

The majority of modern biblical scholars have accepted the early date of composition, perhaps the late 6th century B.C., for Zechariah 1-8.²¹ However, the date of composition for chapters 9-14 has been disputed.²² The problem is that Zechariah often employs a different literary style and genre in chapters 9-14 than in chapters 1-8. As a result, critical scholarship has presented the view that chapters 9-14 are the product of unknown writers or redactors who added the collection of oracles between the 4th and 2nd centuries B.C. comprising Zechariah 9-14.

Critical View

The second half of the 20th century witnessed the critical interpreters of Zechariah continue to defend multiple authors and redactors in chapters 9-14. Steven Portnoy and David

²¹ Carol and Eric Meyers, *Zechariah 9-14: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 16.

²² *Ibid.*, 15.

Petersen²³ suggested that there were multiple redactions of Zechariah which they based on statistical grounds.²⁴ Portnoy and Petersen argued that Zechariah should be divided into three sections, 1-8, 9-11, and 12-14.²⁵ Since each of these sections was compiled by a different redactor, they concluded that Zechariah 12-14 must have been written later than 480 B.C.²⁶

Michael Floyd claimed that the structure of Zechariah is responsible for the differences between the first and second part of the book. Floyd proposed, in his “form-critical study of Nahum through Malachi...that Zechariah begins with an introduction, 1:1-6, followed by the ‘main body’ of the book, 1:7–14:21, which includes two reports of revelations...and two prophecies.”²⁷ Similarly, Marvin Sweeney argued that “Zechariah 9–14 is an extension of the discourse covering 7:9–8:23 which spells out the process whereby Yahweh’s and Israel’s reconciliation with the nations, promised in 8:20-23, will be achieved.”²⁸ Despite their dual authorship points of view, Floyd and Sweeney attempted “to read Zechariah in a more holistic literary fashion,” finding unity in the redacted elements of the book.²⁹

Mark Boda, a reformed critical scholar who has contributed a great deal to the study of Zechariah, commented that “Zechariah 9-14...is clearly comprised of disparate oracular

²³ For a critical exegesis of Zechariah 12-14 note: David L. Petersen. *Zechariah 9-14 and Malachi*. Louisville, KY: John Knox Press, 1995.

²⁴ David Petersen and Steven Portnoy, “Biblical Text and Statistical Analysis: Zechariah and Beyond,” *JBL* 103, no. 1 (1984): 12.

²⁵ Portnoy and Petersen’s analysis depends on three steps. First, “numerical measures” are used “to reflect the unique style” of an author. Second, “a statistical model for the distribution of these measures over the collection of all works by an author is introduced.” And third, the distribution over the work in question is compared to the distribution over the body of work to determine if the work is similar. Portnoy and Petersen, using this method, estimate that there are about 1,750 words in Zechariah 1-8 belonging to the prophet, an insufficient amount to reach a conclusion. However, by analyzing form and style, they contest this small sample yields consistent results.

²⁶ Lester Grabbe has also argued in favor of a later composition of Zechariah 9-14. He suggested that most scripture was composed in the Persian period and completed in Greek. Note: Grabbe, Lester. *A History of the Jews and Judaism in the Second Temple Period*. New York: T&T Clark International, 2004. Paul Hanson also suggested chapters 9-14 were completed in the Greek period or later. He argued that the prophet’s use of apocalyptic language is consistent with the 3rd-1st century B.C. Note: Hanson, Paul. *Dawn of the Apocalyptic*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1975.

²⁷ Serge Frolov, “Is the Narrator also among the Prophets? Reading Zechariah without Presuppositions,” *Biblical Interpretation* 13, no. 1 (2005): 14.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 14-15.

²⁹ Klein, *Zechariah*, 24.

materials.”³⁰ He noted that this material is “drawn together into a whole, unified by redactional pieces containing the *leitmotif* of sheep and shepherd.”³¹ He concluded that Zechariah 9-14 may have been redacted by the author of Malachi, based on transitional similarities with Malachi 1:1 and 3:1. He suggested that Zechariah 9-14 was likely added after chapters 1-8 to enhance Haggai and Malachi’s authority as messengers of Yahweh.³²

Dispensational View

Charles Feinberg, in the latter half of the 20th century, argued for unity in Zechariah because “the oldest translation of the [Greek] Old Testament...and...Jewish canon” support unity in the book.³³ “Chapters 1-8 refer in the main...to Zechariah’s own time” as he dealt with Persian authority.³⁴ Chapters 9-11 deal with future events, primarily with the occupations of Greece and Rome. Finally, chapters 12-14 conclude the book by encouraging Judah with predictions of restoration and judgment against the nations that had caused it to suffer.³⁵ The promise of judgment in Zechariah 12-14 naturally follows the occupations of Greece and Rome in chapters 9-11 which are a continuation of Persian occupation in 1-8.³⁶ Feinberg suggested unity in the structure of the book as it moved from present to future events.

Merrill Unger, a contemporary of Feinberg’s, explained that the stylistic differences in Zechariah might be the result of the book’s changing prophetic focus. Zechariah 1-8 generally reports a series of visions while chapters 9-14 focus on the eschatological “burdens” of 9:1 and

³⁰ Mark Boda, “Messengers of Hope in Haggai-Malachi,” *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 32.1 (2007): 118.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² *Ibid.*, 127.

³³ Feinberg, *The Minor Prophets*, 314.

³⁴ *Ibid.*

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 330.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 314-315.

12:1.³⁷ The visions of 1-8 required Zechariah to report what he saw perhaps limiting his literary imagination. In chapters 9-14, because Zechariah “was predicting events yet to occur, he was at least free on the human plane to use imagination.”³⁸ Unger also addressed issues of chronology. He suggested that chapters 9-14 were written many years after chapters 1-8 when Zechariah was an older man.

Several contemporary dispensational scholars have also offered rebuttals to the multiple redactor hypothesis position. Klein observed that there are “profound similarities among the motifs found in chapters 1-8 as compared to chapters 9-14.”³⁹ Klein pointed to three shared motifs: “the covenant formula (8:8; 13:9), the divine protection of Jerusalem (2:5, 8-10; 14:11), and the return of the Exiles (8:7; 10:9-12).”⁴⁰ Finally, “the climax of the second part of Zechariah is similar to that of the first: the inclusion of the gentiles in the Jerusalem worship of the Lord.”⁴¹ The battle sequence in Zechariah 14 concludes with the restoration of Judah and the invitation of the nations to worship in Zion which is similar to Zechariah 8:20-23.

Robert Chisholm argued against the idea that the mention of Greece in Zechariah 9:13 was proof of a later composition for the book. The conflict between Greece and Israel has been associated with “the Maccabean-Seleucid hostilities of the second century B.C.”⁴² It is likely, however, that the mention of Greece was meant to be synonymous with “distant nations.”⁴³ Chisholm also noted that while Persia was the most powerful nation of Zechariah’s time, the

³⁷ Unger, *Zechariah: Prophet of Messiah’s Glory*, 13.

³⁸ *Ibid.*

³⁹ Klein, *Zechariah*, 32.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ *Ibid.*

⁴² Robert Chisholm, *Interpreting the Minor Prophets* (Grand Rapids, MI: Academie Books, 1990), 232.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 232-233.

political prowess of Greece was on the rise. It would not have been difficult for Zechariah or other contemporary observers to imagine Greece as posing a future threat.⁴⁴

Eugene Merrill suggested that the genealogy of Nehemiah 12:10-16 might support the idea of Zechariah writing chapters 9-14 as many as 30 to 40 years after chapters 1-8. This timeline suggests Zechariah 9-14 could have been written as late as 480 B.C. or even as late as “the reign of...Artaxerxes I (465-424 B.C.)” helping to account for some of the difference in style between the first and second part of the book.⁴⁵ This passing of time might also explain “the allegedly later historical references (such as to Greece in 9:13) and the clearly more eschatological perspective of the last six chapters.”⁴⁶

Summary

Zechariah scholarship has focused, to some degree, on the authorship, date, and unity of the book. Over the last century, this critical focus has continued to separate Zechariah into at least 3 distinct sections, each with its own historical influences, when offering an interpretation of the text. The recent movement of critical scholarship however has been to view the book in a more “holistic literary fashion,” even as critical scholars continue to accept redaction in the composition of Zechariah.⁴⁷ The focus of scholars like Boda has been to better understand the book’s overall message especially in light of its impact on later canonical development. Matthew, for example, alluded “to the prophet at least 8 times” while John referenced Zechariah in the book of Revelation at least 11 times.⁴⁸ Attempts to read the book of Zechariah as a

⁴⁴ Chisholm, *Interpreting the Minor Prophets*, 233.

⁴⁵ Eugene Merrill, “An Exegetical Commentary: Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi,” (2003), Biblical Studies Press. <http://bible.org/users/eugene-h-merrill/track>, 67.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Klein, *Zechariah*, 23.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 62-63.

collection of fragments gathered together undermines “the function of developing a prophetic picture of the end time” that the New Testament writers took for granted.⁴⁹ For this reason, regardless of early redactions, a holistic reading of Zechariah is preferred.⁵⁰

Historical Setting 5th Century B.C.

Zechariah’s ministry, in the early post-Exilic period, was defined by the struggle of Judah to rebuild the Temple, by economic and political difficulties, and by the failure of the Davidic line to materialize as the people had expected. The events leading to the necessity for Zechariah’s ministry began nearly two hundred years before the prophet’s birth. Hezekiah, son of Ahaz, inherited the throne in Judah in 715 B.C.⁵¹ He ruled over one of the greatest periods of growth in Jerusalem’s history as thousands of Israelites sought refuge from Assyrian aggression in the city.⁵² The growth of the city was stalled however when the invading Assyrians destroyed the fortified city Lachish and besieged Jerusalem. A desperate Hezekiah prayed to Yahweh for deliverance.⁵³ Yahweh responded by destroying the seemingly invincible Assyrian army and Jerusalem was delivered.⁵⁴

⁴⁹ Klein, *Zechariah*, 33.

⁵⁰ Several other non-dispensational scholars have developed positions which underlined the connecting motifs of the final form of Zechariah. Meredith Kline proposed that the book was “a diptych hinging upon Zechariah 6:9-15” with two major sections “separated by ‘hinge points’ [in 3:1-10 and 11:1-17] with each element of the overall composition thematically mirroring its structural counterpart” (Frolov, “Is the Narrator also among the Prophets? Reading Zechariah without Presuppositions,” 14). He believed this structure best explains the differences in style in Zechariah. Edgar Conrad similarly suggested that Zechariah’s change in style is the result of “three main elements, 1:1-6, 1:7–6:15, and 7:1–14:21” (Ibid). Conrad viewed “Zechariah as a ‘collage’ ...of preexisting fragments, and implicitly juxtaposed the sequence of two ‘oracles’ in chapters 9–14 to that of nine ‘scenes’ in 1:7–8:23” (Ibid., 15). Conrad believed that the oracles are directly “associated with chapters 7–8” and therefore belong to the first book of Zechariah (Ibid).

⁵¹ A. K. Jenkins, “Hezekiah’s Fourteenth Year,” *Vetus Testamentum* XXVI, no. 3 (1976): 286.

⁵² Nadav Na’aman, “When and How Did Jerusalem Become a Great City? The Rise of Jerusalem as Judah’s Premier City in the Eighth-Seventh Centuries B.C.E.,” *Hebrew in Zion* 71 (2006): 14.

⁵³ Note 2 Kings 19:14-19.

⁵⁴ Note 2 Chronicles 32:1-23.

The people of Judah became arrogant in their victory over Assyria.⁵⁵ They believed that the victory had affirmed their conviction that Jerusalem, because of covenant election, was invincible.⁵⁶ This arrogance however caused a rift in Judah's relationship with Yahweh. As a result, a century later, Jerusalem was destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar who had been anointed by Yahweh to judge Judah.⁵⁷ Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the Temple, the center of Zion and the seat of Yahweh's power, and brutally humiliated the Davidic king and his heirs.⁵⁸ The impact of the Exile on the theology of Judaism was profound. The Exile forced Judaism, without a Temple or Davidic heir, to transform. "It was in the crucible of that era that the remnant of Judah learned to pray without a temple, collected [scripture] for the sake of posterity" and learned to adapt to foreign occupation.⁵⁹ The people of the Exile, by necessity, had become religious survivalists.

Zechariah's ministry began in about 520 B.C. after a decree by the Persian monarch Cyrus⁶⁰ to return all exiled peoples to their homelands.⁶¹ Continuing this policy, Darius provided the financing to rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple.⁶² In 522 B.C., Darius began awarding regional leadership positions to those who had been faithful to him. Judah benefited from this reorganization with the appointment of Zerubbabel, a direct descendant of David. As governor, Zerubbabel was not only given political control of Yehud but also influence in its religious development.⁶³ "The legal foundation" given to Yehud by Persia allowed for Judaic law to play a

⁵⁵ Isaiah prophesies that Judah's victory against Assyria should have been interpreted as a warning (10:28-34). For further discussion note: G.C.I. Wong, "Deliverance or Destruction? Isaiah 10:33-34 in the Final Form of Isaiah 10-11," *Vetus Testamentum* 53, no. 4 (2003): 546.

⁵⁶ Peter Machinist, "The Rab Saqeh at the Wall of Jerusalem: Israelite Interpretation in the Face of the Assyrian Other," *Hebrew Studies* 41 (2000): 153.

⁵⁷J. Roberts, *The Bible and the Ancient Near East* (Ann Arbor, MI: Eisenbrauns, 2002), 376.

⁵⁸ 2 Kings 25:7.

⁵⁹ Meyers, *Zechariah 9-14: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 16.

⁶⁰ Note Ezra 6:3-5.

⁶¹ Joseph Fleishman, "An Echo of Optimism in Ezra 6:19-22," *Hebrew Union College Annual* 69 (1998): 15.

⁶² John Bright, *A History of Israel*, 4th ed. (Louisville: John Knox Press, 2000), 361.

⁶³ Meyers, *Zechariah 9-14: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 17.

vital role.⁶⁴ Most importantly, the Pentateuch was established as the central law of Yehud. Davidic governors also played an important role in the rebuilding of Jerusalem, establishing regional stability, and creating confidence in Darius and Achaemenid policy.⁶⁵

During this period the Temple was also rebuilt and dedicated but not without significant delays.⁶⁶ Zechariah 2:4, imagining the full glory of the restoration, prophesies, “Jerusalem will be a city without walls because of the great number of men and livestock in it.” Jerusalem was never a big city even before the Exile and most of the Exiles, having established themselves in Babylon, did not return to Judah.⁶⁷ The lack of repopulation slowed the civil and economic development of Jerusalem but especially progress on the Temple project. The Temple, located at the heart of Jerusalem, “[signified] to Israel crucial aspects” of the Mosaic Covenant and their relationship with Yahweh.⁶⁸ The Temple represented Yahweh’s election of Israel, the unity of the people, the holiness of the priesthood, and Yahweh’s kingship.⁶⁹ However, Darius’ order to rebuild the Temple was almost certainly made for politically “strategic” reasons rather than religious.⁷⁰ The Persians likely used the Temple to establish a regional center of “imperial administration.”⁷¹ The political motivation behind the Temple’s reconstruction might be one reason why Judean’s were reluctant to finish.

⁶⁴ Mark Boda, “Majoring on the Minors: Recent Research on Haggai and Zechariah,” *Currents in Biblical Research* 2.1 (2003): 37.

⁶⁵ Bright, *A History of Israel*, 362.

⁶⁶ 515 B.C.

⁶⁷ Klein, *Zechariah*, 416.

⁶⁸ S.F Noll, “Tabernacle, Temple,” *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter Elwell. (Grand Rapids MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 1166.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ James Trotter, “Was the Second Jerusalem Temple a Primarily Persian Project?” *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 15, no. 2 (2001): 293.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*

Feinberg enlists the help of Haggai to explain why the Temple project had stalled. “Haggai begins with a rebuke of the people’s indifference.”⁷² The prophet ignores the excuses of timing and circumstance and attacks Judah’s dedication to Yahweh. “Is it a time for you yourselves to be living in your paneled houses, while this house remains a ruin” (1:4)? The impact of the Exile on Judaism and the political motivation of Persia in ordering the rebuilding of the Temple were insufficient reasons for the Temple to remain unfinished. Haggai writes, “Give careful thought to your ways. You have planted much, but have harvested little... You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it” (1:5-6).

Zechariah faced other challenges during his ministry. Palestine was an important area in the Middle East, connecting the eastern powers with Egypt and the Mediterranean. During Zechariah’s ministry, the area was the focus of intense military and political movement. Those Judeans returning from Exile would have wanted assurance that Yahweh was going to keep them safe while Jerusalem was being rebuilt. Meanwhile, Achaemenid rule in the region and across the Mediterranean was being challenged by Greek forces.⁷³ The Greco-Persian wars began in earnest in 499 B.C. when the Greek cities of Athens, Ionia, and Cyprus rebelled against the same system of government that had given Yehud “its relative independence within the overall structure of Achaemenid imperial rule.”⁷⁴ When Darius died in 486 B.C., his son Xerxes was left to deal with the Greek revolt. Xerxes eventually withdrew the Persian military from Greece. His reign was punctuated by political failure brought on by the Greek rebellion which slowly began to destabilize Achaemenid authority throughout the Empire. The greatest loss was Babylon, which gained “a much greater degree of independence for its respective territory” by 481 B.C.⁷⁵

⁷² Feinberg, *The Minor Prophets*, 238.

⁷³ Bright, *A History of Israel*, 19.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 18.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 20.

Babylon's political revolt had far reaching implications especially for Yehud. Judeans may have attempted to re-establish the Davidic monarchy even as they enjoyed political stability under Achaemenid rule. "Morgenstern suggested that the first effect in Yehud was an attempt to install a new Judean king on the throne."⁷⁶ Xerxes, witnessing the unraveling of his empire, may have "urged surrounding nations to form a coalition and attack Jerusalem."⁷⁷ This argument is based in part on the fact that historian Pompeius Trogus wrote that "the first who conquered the Jews was Xerxes, King of Persia."⁷⁸ Morgenstern believed that during this attack Jerusalem and the new Temple were destroyed and Meyers and Meyers⁷⁹ proposed that this chain of events might better explain why Ezra, a religious reformer, and Nehemiah, a political reformer, were sent to the region.⁸⁰

Zechariah's Jerusalem also faced significant economic disadvantages. The city was located too far inland to be strategic economically. Before the Exile, Jerusalem's population had swelled due mainly to refugees coming from Assyrian occupied Israel.⁸¹ After the return from Exile however, Jerusalem's population ranged anywhere from 500 in the early post-Exilic period to 1,750 in the late post-Exilic period.⁸² In fact, only about 11 percent of "all hill-country sites" during the Persian occupation were located in Judah or Benjamin.⁸³ Because of "the failure of Yehud to recover quickly, population and material gains...were seen in the disparity between the

⁷⁶ Meyers, *Zechariah 9-14: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 20.

⁷⁷ Ibid.

⁷⁸ Sidney G. Sowers, "Did Xerxes Wage War on Jerusalem?" *Hebrew Union College Annual* 67 (1996): 43.

⁷⁹ This chain of events might offer one reason why Ezra and Nehemiah were called to Yehud. Scripture however does not describe these events. Theories like Morgenstern's however do help to demonstrate the political instability of Zechariah's historical context.

⁸⁰ Meyers, *Zechariah 9-14: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 20.

⁸¹ Na'aman, "When and How Did Jerusalem Become a Great City? The Rise of Jerusalem as Judah's Premier City in the Eighth-Seventh Centuries B.C.E.," 14.

⁸² Meyers, *Zechariah 9-14: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 24.

⁸³ Ibid.

types of sites in Yehud in comparison with those in adjacent regions.”⁸⁴ Philistnian cites like Ashdod in the Shephelah territory benefited from being strategically placed on the Mediterranean coast. These cities maintained a healthy economy throughout the occupation and continued to flourish during Greek control.⁸⁵ Yehud on the other hand took longer to achieve the economic success that other Persian territories had experienced.

Summary

Following the Exile, Judeans struggled to rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple. The reconstruction of both was hampered by political difficulties stemming in part from the failure of the Davidic line to materialize. Despite this, the Davidic governors, empowered by Achaemenid authority, would play an important part in the ultimate reconstruction of the Temple. However, Judeans likely struggled with predictions of restoration as it became more apparent that the royal line was not going to be re-established. The best the people of Yehud could hope for would be to remain a functional part of Persia both politically and economically.

Why is the historical setting of Zechariah 12-14 important for establishing a relationship between the battle sequences? Understanding the difficulties Zechariah’s generation faced following the return from Exile helps to put the events of the battle sequences in perspective. Zechariah’s prophetic response to these difficulties is similar in both battle sequences. Zechariah promises that someday the nations that had oppressed Judah and Jerusalem will be defeated and then judged by Yahweh (12:4, 9 and 14:12-19). Specifically, Yahweh will judge the nations to the right and the left (12:6) including Egypt (14:18). Zechariah promises that Jerusalem, a defenseless city in the prophet’s day, will be made secure by Yahweh (12:8, 14:11). He promises

⁸⁴ Meyers, *Zechariah 9-14: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 24.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 25.

that Jerusalem, despite the struggles of Judeans to rebuild the Temple, will be re-established by Yahweh as a center of worship free from idolatry and false prophecy (13:1-6, 14:14). Zechariah also prophesies that Jerusalem will become a city of wealth even though the city struggled economically following the return from Exile. Finally, Zechariah prophesies that Jerusalem will have a king even though a Davidic monarch failed to materialize after the Exile. Zechariah promises that Yahweh, while directing the restoration of both Judah and Jerusalem, will assume the throne as King over all the people of the Earth (14:9). The historical events of Zechariah's ministry are clearly reflected in the prophecy of chapters 12-14 and therefore have an important impact on an understanding of the relationship of the battle sequences.

Genre

The term "apocalyptic," which is derived from the word *apocalypse* (unveiling),⁸⁶ was not coined by scholars until 1832 when it was identified by Frederick Lucke.⁸⁷ This definition has now been applied "by modern scholars" to certain Old Testament prophecies, such as those found in Zechariah, "containing real or alleged revelations of heavenly secrets of the events that will attend the end of the world and the inauguration of the kingdom of God."⁸⁸ Apocalyptic literature takes "readers on a fascinating journey" into "a whole world of imagination," differing from other types of prophecy in its prediction of a future time when good will permanently triumph over evil and God will rule forever.⁸⁹ This genre of prophecy was especially important during the Exile and continuing into the intertestamental period because of its focus on hope in the future.

⁸⁶ G.E. Ladd and J.A. Patterson, "Apocalyptic," *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter Elwell. (Grand Rapids MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 75. Note Revelation 1:1.

⁸⁷ Longman and Reid, *God is a Warrior*, 62.

⁸⁸ Ladd and Patterson, "Apocalyptic," 76.

⁸⁹ D. Brent Sandy, *Plowshares and Pruning Hooks* (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Press, 2002), 108.

The book of Zechariah “mirrors apocalyptic concepts found elsewhere in the Old Testament although the whole book does not equally reflect apocalyptic interests.”⁹⁰ Several apocalyptic motifs however do “appear” in chapters 12-14 suggesting that these chapters may be apocalyptic.⁹¹ These apocalyptic motifs are defined by D. Brent Sandy.⁹² The first is unusual descriptions of rivers and mountains that jump off the page. Zechariah 14:4-5 describes the splitting of the Mount of Olives. The second motif is natural catastrophes producing cosmic chaos and judgment. Zechariah 14:6-7 declares, “On that day there will be no light, no cold or frost.” The natural process of day and night will be disrupted. Third, disruptive evil resulting in crisis produces hopelessness. Zechariah 14:2 describes the crisis resulting from the siege and exile of Jerusalem. The fourth motif is Yahweh’s control over the destiny of humanity. Zechariah 14:2 prophesies that it is Yahweh who will “gather all the nations to Jerusalem to fight against it.” Yahweh is clearly in control of Jerusalem’s destiny, the siege of Jerusalem according to his plan.

The fifth motif according to Sandy is visions of celestial scenes and beings. Zechariah 12:10 describes the appearance of “the one they have pierced” following the conflict in 12:1-9. A sixth motif is the categorizing perspective that emphasizes duality. Zechariah 14 is replete with duality most notably the righteousness and power of Yahweh against the unworthy nations (14:3-8, 10-19, 21). Finally, apocalyptic prophecy emphasizes a restoration in the last days. Yahweh’s

⁹⁰ Klein, *Zechariah*, 44.

⁹¹ Ibid. Apocalyptic prophecy is the *vehicle* for the message of the prophecy and not the message itself. The message of this type of prophecy however may be difficult to identify given the challenge of interpreting apocalyptic language. Fortunately, the New Testament occasionally offers an interpretation of an Old Testament apocalyptic message. In the case of Zechariah 9-14, the book of Revelation offers an end time interpretation, associating Zechariah 14 with the New Jerusalem (Ibid., 63). For further discussion on interacting with apocalyptic literature note: John H. Walton, Victor H. Matthews, and Mark W. Chavalas, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000), 798.

⁹² Sandy, *Plowshares and Pruning Hooks*, 108-109.

power is synonymous with the expectation that Judah will be restored in the last days in 12:1, the creator of the universe empowering Judah to victory.⁹³

The apocalyptic genre of Zechariah 12-14 helps to establish a relationship between the battle sequences because it demonstrates the importance of the power of Yahweh in both conflicts. Judah and Jerusalem faced numerous challenges during Zechariah's ministry. The prophet answered these challenges by encouraging the people to place their hope in Yahweh. Yahweh will direct the restoration while maintaining complete control over the process. Apocalyptic prophecy predicts a future time when good will triumph over evil and God will rule forever.⁹⁴ Chapters 12-14 offer this ultimate message of hope through the power of Yahweh. The importance of apocalyptic prophecy in helping to establish a relationship between the battles then is the message of hope in Yahweh central to each battle sequence.

⁹³ The apocalyptic motifs offer several connections between the battles that may help offer an interpretation for the sequences. While each motif is not present in both sequences, the authority of Yahweh over the battles, his intervention on behalf of Jerusalem, the restoration of Judah, and the chronology in both sequences provide a strong link between chapters 12 and 14.

⁹⁴ Sandy, *Plowshares and Pruning Hooks*, 108.

Chapter Two

Exegesis of Zechariah 12-14

The following chapter will present an exegesis of Zechariah 12-14 and will highlight several important motifs and events as they relate to offering an interpretation of the battle sequences. Zechariah 12-14 represents the second oracle of chapters 9-14. This oracle is introduced by the word **מִשָּׁא** which has commonly been translated as “burden” or “oracle.”⁹⁵ The word **מִשָּׁא** (burden) may be attributed to divine judgment, helping to set the stage for the judgment of Judah, Jerusalem, and the nations that follows.⁹⁶ Additionally, Zechariah uses “the [term] ‘Word of the Lord’” to designate the source of the oracle as Yahweh (12:1).⁹⁷

Zechariah 12:2 equates the power of Yahweh’s word with the power of creation.⁹⁸ The act of Holy War described throughout chapters 12-14 will be perpetrated by the greatest power in the universe. The use of the word **יָצַר** (forms) may also link the God of creation not just with his judgment but also with his salvation.⁹⁹ The word **יָצַר** (forms) is used of the potter’s fashioning in Jeremiah 18:4.¹⁰⁰ Isaiah utilizes this image in 43:1, “he who created you...he who formed you...Fear not, for I have redeemed you.” Zechariah leans on Isaiah to link the power behind the coming restoration to the God who created everything. The focus of this passage on Yahweh is an important motif and sets the stage for the remainder of the oracle.

Jerusalem is the geographic center of the oracle. Zechariah 12:2 prophesies that the city will be besieged by the nations. And while chapter 12 does not include a description of the siege

⁹⁵ Warren Baker and Eugene Carpenter, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament* (Chattanooga, TN: AMG Publishers, 2003), 674.

⁹⁶ Also found in Isaiah 14:28, 15:1, 17:1; Ezekiel 12:10; and Nahum 1:1.

⁹⁷ Unger, *Zechariah: Prophet of Messiah’s Glory*, 207.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 208.

⁹⁹ Klein, *Zechariah*, 351.

¹⁰⁰ Francis Brown, *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), 428.

the battle sequence does indicate that Judah will be attacked as well as Jerusalem (12:2). Yahweh will fight for all his people with both Judah and Jerusalem equally becoming a tool of divine judgment against the nations.

Zechariah 12:2-7 describes the sequence of events in which Yahweh will lead Judah and Jerusalem to victory over the nations.¹⁰¹ Zechariah uses four images in these verses “to describe the triumph of Jerusalem and Judah.”¹⁰² First, “Jerusalem is identified as a ‘cup that sends...reeling’ (12:2).”¹⁰³ The cup will be full of “strong wine” that will overpower its users who will then stagger as if they were drunk.¹⁰⁴ Jerusalem will also be like a stone that will injure all who try to move it (12:3).¹⁰⁵ “Those who lift the stone shall tear themselves to pieces, do themselves irreparable injury.”¹⁰⁶ Third, a powerful plague will render the charging cavalry useless (12:4).¹⁰⁷ And finally, Judah will be like a consuming fire and the nations the wood for the fire (12:6).¹⁰⁸

The phrase “they will consume right and left all the surrounding peoples” in 12:6 may refer to the nations from the east and the west or, within Zechariah’s historical context, Babylon and Egypt.¹⁰⁹ While Zechariah does not specifically mention Egypt in chapter 12, he does employ the use of the verb *נָסַח* (smite) in reference to Yahweh striking the attacking nations with

¹⁰¹ Zechariah identifies his subject as Israel and not Judah despite the Judean context of the oracle. Meyers and Meyers (Meyers, *Zechariah 9-14: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 309-310) note that 1 and 2 Chronicles uses the proper noun “Israel” to refer to Judah or Judah and Benjamin. However, the use of “Israel” in reference to the Northern Kingdom is only referenced in contrast to Judah. By this time the Northern Kingdom was no longer in existence. Thus, Zechariah is likely using the noun “Israel” as a reference to Judah.

¹⁰² Mark Boda, *Haggai and Zechariah*, The NIV Application Commentary (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 483.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Unger, *Zechariah: Prophet of Messiah’s Glory*, 209.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Zechariah was likely recalling the curses of Deuteronomy 28:28.

¹⁰⁸ Unger, *Zechariah: Prophet of Messiah’s Glory*, 209.

¹⁰⁹ Klein, *Zechariah*, 357.

a plague (12:4).¹¹⁰ Moses uses this verb three times in the context of the Egyptian plagues in Exodus 7-12 drawing a parallel with Zechariah's reference to Egypt in 14:18.¹¹¹

Yahweh's role in the sequence as the Divine Warrior is central. Zechariah 12:8 offers three similes which help to define this role.¹¹² Each of these "express hyperbole" that Zechariah uses to "strengthen...God's astounding provisions for all of Judah," establishing the source of Judah's victory.¹¹³ First, even the feeblest of Judah will be like David, a reiteration of 12:5. Second, Zechariah boldly declares that "the house of David will be like that of God."¹¹⁴ This declaration does not mean that these people will become gods but that rather they will possess god-like power.¹¹⁵ Only the power of Yahweh will be sufficient for victory. And third, "the house of David will become 'like the angel of the Lord.'"¹¹⁶ This transformation may mean "that the future leaders of Judah will borrow strength...from the angel of the Lord."¹¹⁷ While some have interpreted the angel of the Lord "as a being who is less than God," this usage is meant to be understood in parallel with the previous simile, the power of Yahweh and the power of the angel of the Lord strengthening Judah.¹¹⁸

Following the battle, Judah's transformation will be achieved through the power of Yahweh's Spirit. Zechariah "12:10-14 describes the impact of God's Spirit on the community," with the people mourning for the one they "pierced" as part of the healing process.¹¹⁹ This image of mourning may be connected with the "Israelite [response] to" the death of a first born son or

¹¹⁰ Klein, *Zechariah*, 355.

¹¹¹ Exodus 7:25, 9:15, and 12:13.

¹¹² Klein, *Zechariah*, 360.

¹¹³ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 330.

¹¹⁵ Boda, *Haggai and Zechariah*, 361.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.* Judges 6:11-16 relates a similar use of this simile. When the angel of the Lord appears to Gideon he promises Gideon that he will go into battle with him (6:16). For a discussion on the angel of the Lord note: T.E McComiskey, "Angel of the Lord," *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology*, ed. Walter Elwell. (Grand Rapids MI: Baker Academic, 2001), 61-62.

¹¹⁹ Boda, *Haggai and Zechariah*, 485.

an only child.¹²⁰ Traditionally, dispensational scholars have offered an Christological interpretation of this passage linking 12:10-14 with the piercing of Christ in John 19:37 and Revelation 1:7-13.¹²¹

Zechariah 13:1-6, like 14:6-11, offers an account of Yahweh's actions following the conflict with the nations. Both passages describe the cleansing fountain that will flow from Jerusalem that will purify the people of their sin (13:1 and 14:8). Unlike the "laver of the Temple and Tabernacle," this fountain will flow forever.¹²² Zechariah uses the phrase לְחַטָּאת (for sin of) to define Judah's transgression.¹²³ This word is "one of the most frequent words used to denote sin...in the Old Testament."¹²⁴ However, Zechariah also uses the phrase וְלִנְדָה (and for impurity) with the focus being on the separation that sin caused between a person and God. When a sinner was impure, he was "unfit to sacrifice or even come near the Temple."¹²⁵ The fountain will enable worshipers, including the nations, to be cleansed from impurity. Yahweh will change the believer in a way that Temple worship alone could not accomplish.¹²⁶

The abolishment of idolatry and false prophecy is another important motif. Zechariah 13:2-3 focuses on Yahweh's "judgment [of] idolatry and false prophets."¹²⁷ An idolatrous Judah was "cut off" and "unclean" (13:1). Zechariah is likely drawing on the "ritual impurity" as defined in Leviticus 7:20-21.¹²⁸ Numbers 19:13 declares that contact with the dead would result in uncleanness. Zechariah uses that same analogy in 13:2 with impurity occurring from contact

¹²⁰ Klein, *Zechariah*, 369.

¹²¹ Merrill, "An Exegetical Commentary: Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi," 316.

¹²² Feinberg, *The Minor Prophets*, 130.

¹²³ Baker and Carpenter, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament*, 674.

¹²⁴ Klein, *Zechariah*, 373.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, 373-374.

¹²⁶ Compare 13:1 with Jeremiah 31:33-34 and Ezekiel 36:26.

¹²⁷ Boda, *Haggai and Zechariah*, 490.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*

with idolatry.¹²⁹ Zechariah 13:4-6 continues with the judgment of false prophets. “On that day every prophet will be ashamed of his prophetic vision.”¹³⁰ After the Spirit of Yahweh is given to Judah the fountain that flows from Zion will remove “false prophecy from the land.”¹³¹ This judgment of idolatry may be equal to a “complete extermination.”¹³²

False prophecy is related to idolatry in Deuteronomy 13 with Moses condemning both.¹³³ The relationship of these two sins is also a theme in the New Testament. Matthew 24:4-5, II Thessalonians 2:2-4, and Revelation 13:4-15 relate these sins “as signs of the end of the age.”¹³⁴ Zechariah describes the abolition of these sins in relationship to the flowing fountain that will forever cleanse the people. Zechariah paints a picture of the end, not just of an age, but of these sins. This end is important for both battle sequences.

Zechariah 13:7-9 describes “the process of purification” that Judah [will] endure after the scattering of the sheep.¹³⁵ Before the sheep are scattered, the worthless Shepherd, whose role is more fully addressed in chapter 11, is struck by Yahweh’s sword.¹³⁶ While chapter 11 notes two competing Shepherds, Zechariah 13:7 seems to focus on the Shepherd responsible for the chaos in 11:16. In the apocalyptic context of Zechariah 13, this Shepherd might be an anointed future “wayward” person guilty “of some offence.”¹³⁷ After the Shepherd is killed, the flock will scatter. Yahweh will then turn against the scattered flock, specifically the little ones, in order to purify them. Zechariah 13:9 concludes this section with a renewal of Yahweh’s covenant with Judah, “I will say, ‘They are my people,’ and they will say, ‘The Lord is our God.’”

¹²⁹ Boda, *Haggai and Zechariah*, 490.

¹³⁰ Zechariah 13:4.

¹³¹ Boda, *Haggai and Zechariah*, 494.

¹³² Unger, *Zechariah: Prophet of Messiah’s Glory*, 224.

¹³³ John Cumming, *Deuteronomy* (Minneapolis: Klock & Klock Christian Publishers, 1982), 219-223.

¹³⁴ Klein, *Zechariah*, 375.

¹³⁵ Boda, *Haggai and Zechariah*, 513.

¹³⁶ *Ibid.*

¹³⁷ *Ibid.*

Zechariah 14 begins with a declaration: “[Behold], a day of the Lord is coming.” The word הִנֵּה (behold) may have served “to intensify the immediacy of” the subsequent battle sequence.¹³⁸ The phrase also declares Yahweh’s immediate purpose within the eschatological context of the chapter.¹³⁹ The prophet’s use of יוֹם יְהוָה (Day of the Lord) implies that this day will “belong to ‘the Lord.’”¹⁴⁰ Therefore, it seems Yahweh’s victory as Divine Warrior is established in 14:1 through the use of this phrase even before the narration of the conflict.

Beginning in Zechariah 14:4, Zechariah makes use of the phrase בְּיוֹם יְהוָה (on that day) as a reference to events that will occur on the “Day of Lord” in much the same way as he does in 12:1-13:6, offering a connection between the battle sequences. These events will include half of the population being taken, “the houses ransacked, and the women raped.”¹⁴¹ The imminence of the attack is further established by the use of the word שָׁלַל (loot or spoil) which refers “to what is taken by force or violence usually in war.”¹⁴² The city will be stripped of all its valuables. This will be a “terrible and desperate” time in Jerusalem.¹⁴³ Interestingly, Zechariah does not include a reason for the conflict.¹⁴⁴ Perhaps the capture of Jerusalem will be the result of “the misdeeds of the people in the city.”¹⁴⁵ However, Zechariah does not specifically explain what this conflict will signify or where the exiles will be sent.¹⁴⁶ What is clear is that Jerusalem will be attacked by an enemy so powerful that the city will be helpless against the siege.

¹³⁸ Boda, *Haggai and Zechariah*, 513.

¹³⁹ Note a similar use of this phrase in Joel 1:15 and 2:1.

¹⁴⁰ Boda, *Haggai and Zechariah*, 513.

¹⁴¹ Zechariah 14:1.

¹⁴² Baker and Carpenter, *The Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament*, 1151.

¹⁴³ Unger, *Zechariah: Prophet of Messiah’s Glory*, 241.

¹⁴⁴ Boda, *Haggai and Zechariah*, 523.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Klein, *Zechariah*, 401.

The word גוֹיִם (nations) in the context of Zechariah 14:2, probably refers to the nations not in a covenant relationship with Yahweh.¹⁴⁷ Of course, not all the nations will gather against Jerusalem.¹⁴⁸ Rather it is likely that 14:2 uses this hyperbole to portray that Jerusalem will be completely and hopelessly outnumbered.¹⁴⁹ The people will need to rely on Yahweh's power to deliver them. Not only will Yahweh fight against the nations but will ally "with his people to fight their mutual foes."¹⁵⁰

The nations (similar to Zechariah 12:2) will have little time to enjoy their victory. Following the destruction of Jerusalem, Yahweh will enter the conflict (14:3). His presence will "signal a reversal of fortune" for the nations who will become the judgment focus of the Divine Warrior.¹⁵¹ When Yahweh appears in the Old Testament, his power is often associated with mountains.¹⁵² The Mount of Olives is used by Zechariah as an image of Yahweh's power. Ezekiel's vision (43:1-5) of Yahweh's "abandonment...and return to Jerusalem" incorporates the Mount of Olives in its route. Zechariah is perhaps drawing a comparison with Ezekiel's vision.¹⁵³ Idolatry is the reason for Yahweh's judgment in Ezekiel's vision and it may be that Yahweh's judgment of the nations in Zechariah 14 is due to idolatrous behavior.¹⁵⁴ In any case, "the newly created valley will serve two purposes."¹⁵⁵ First, "it will be an escape route for those who" are left in the city (14:2).¹⁵⁶ And second, it will be "a path" for Yahweh's return and for the return of those who are exiled from the city.¹⁵⁷

¹⁴⁷ Klein, *Zechariah*, 400.

¹⁴⁸ Unger, *Zechariah: Prophet of Messiah's Glory*, 242.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Klein, *Zechariah*, 402.

¹⁵¹ Boda, *Haggai and Zechariah*, 523.

¹⁵² Ibid. Note Isaiah 2:2-5.

¹⁵³ Ibid., 523-524.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid.

Zechariah's use of language in 14:6-10 is likely meant to be reminiscent of the creation story, a theme introduced in 12:2. Yahweh will establish Jerusalem as the source of life and will express "his subjugation of the cosmos and nations."¹⁵⁸ Yahweh's judgment of the nations will produce darkness. Amos warns against anticipating this day.¹⁵⁹ Amos writes, "Woe to you who long for the day of the Lord! Why do you long for the day of the Lord? That day will be darkness, not light" (5:18).¹⁶⁰ However, in Zechariah's eschatological vision, Yahweh's victory will also defeat darkness. The sun and moon will be "congealed...and will no longer emanate light" (14:6).¹⁶¹ After Yahweh's victory, there will be "perpetual light," which is "a regular feature of apocalyptic literature."¹⁶² This feature is also important in Amos' vision in 8:9, although in Amos the light yields to darkness at midday.¹⁶³ Similar to the fountain in 13:1, "a perpetual source of water for the entire land" will spring from Jerusalem in 14:8. Zechariah may be drawing on "the description of Eden in Genesis 2:10-14" in 14:8.¹⁶⁴ Finally, in Zechariah 14:10, Yahweh will flatten the land surrounding Jerusalem, from Geba to Rimmon, allowing Jerusalem to "tower over the land," the city becoming the focal point of the region and seat of Yahweh's power.¹⁶⁵

Zechariah 14:12-19 provide a description of the battle between Jerusalem and the nations that includes more detail than the sequence in 12:2-7.¹⁶⁶ Yahweh will afflict the attacking army with a plague which will instantly rot their eyes and tongues. Zechariah 14:14 describes Judah as

¹⁵⁸ Boda, *Haggai and Zechariah*, 526.

¹⁵⁹ Meyers, *Zechariah 9-14: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 407.

¹⁶⁰ The "Day of the Lord" in Amos 5:18 is a reference to the Assyrian invasion. However, despite the differing historical contexts, the motif's focus is likely the same as Zechariah 14:1 - divine judgment.

¹⁶¹ Boda, *Haggai and Zechariah*, 525.

¹⁶² *Ibid.*

¹⁶³ Charles H. Wright, *Zechariah and His Prophecies*, (Minneapolis: Klock and Klock Christian Publishers, 1980), 486.

¹⁶⁴ Boda, *Haggai and Zechariah*, 526.

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 527.

¹⁶⁶ The invincibility of Jerusalem continues in Zechariah 14 but only after the city is besieged and ransacked.

joining the conflict and the nation claiming victory over its adversaries. Zechariah 14:16 details the nations worshiping in Jerusalem after the conflict. Zechariah specifically refers to Egypt in this verse. Yahweh's salvation will be universal and he will invite all willing nations to take part in Temple worship.¹⁶⁷ However, in 14:19, Zechariah warns that any nations refusing to worship will be judged.¹⁶⁸

Zechariah concludes the oracle with a powerful declaration, writing in 14:21, "And on that day there will no longer be a Canaanite in the house of the Lord Almighty." This verse has been interpreted in a number of different ways. Zechariah may be referring to the fact that traders will no longer be able to sell merchandise "in the house of the sanctuary."¹⁶⁹ Zechariah may have been referring to the merchant Phoenicians who "were known for their ungodly ways."¹⁷⁰ The verse might also imply that there will be no more ungodliness.¹⁷¹ Whatever the case, Yahweh's judgment of the nations will be complete, his sovereignty forever established.

Summary

The exegesis of Zechariah 12-14 has revealed several similarities between the battle sequences. First, 12:2 describes Jerusalem besieged by the nations before the ensuing battle. Zechariah 14:2 also describes the nations as besieging the city. Second, Zechariah 12:4 predicts a plague will strike both the enemy soldiers and their horses during the conflict. Zechariah 14:12-15 also notes the plague and its impact against the attacking riders. Third, Zechariah prophesies that Egypt will be required to worship Yahweh in Jerusalem (14:18).¹⁷² And while chapter 12

¹⁶⁷ Meyers, *Zechariah 9-14: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 540.

¹⁶⁸ Heater suggests that, despite the redemption of Israel, "there will [still] be ceremonial cleanness" even for Israel. Note: Homer Heater, *Notes on the Prophets* (Lanham, MD: Capital Bible Seminary, 2008), 276.

¹⁶⁹ Wright, *Zechariah and His Prophecies*, 515.

¹⁷⁰ Feinberg, *The Minor Prophets*, 147.

¹⁷¹ Unger, *Zechariah: Prophet of Messiah's Glory*, 270.

¹⁷² Meyers, *Zechariah 9-14: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 474-476.

does not specifically mention Egypt, the use of the phrase “will consume right and left all the surrounding peoples” in 12:6 may be a reference to the east and west or Babylon and Egypt.¹⁷³

Fourth, Zechariah 13:1-6 offers an account of Yahweh’s actions following the battle. A cleansing fountain will flow from Jerusalem that will purify the people of their sin. Zechariah 14:8 also describes this fountain, “living water” flowing from Jerusalem to the Dead Sea and the Mediterranean. And finally, Zechariah links both passages through the creation motif. “The Lord, who stretches out the heavens, who lays the foundation of the earth, and who forms the human spirit within a person” (12:2) will recreate the landscape of Judah (14:10), lifting Jerusalem “from the Benjamin Gate to the site of the First Gate, to the Corner Gate, and from the Tower of Hananel to the royal winepresses.”¹⁷⁴

In addition to the similarities noted above, there are three major motifs that offer a connection between the battle sequences that will be explored further in the next chapter: Zion’s ultimate invincibility, the phrase “Day of the Lord,” and Yahweh’s presence as the Divine Warrior in both conflicts.

¹⁷³ Klein, *Zechariah*, 402.

¹⁷⁴ This exegesis also noted three important similes in chapter 12 that are not found in Zechariah 14. First, Jerusalem will become a “cup that sends” the nations reeling (12:2). The cup will intoxicate the nations. Jerusalem will also be like a stone that will injure all who try to move it (12:3). And finally, Judah will be a fire consuming the attacking nations (12:6).

Chapter 3

Key Motifs in Zechariah 12-14

The exegesis of Zechariah 12-14 revealed three important motifs: the ultimate invincibility of Zion, the phrase “Day of the Lord,” and Yahweh as the Divine Warrior. Zechariah uses these motifs throughout chapters 12-14 to enhance Yahweh’s promise of restoration. Most importantly, these motifs may offer a connection between the battle sequences which suggest a unity of the events portrayed in each.

Zion Theology

Zion Theology, which places Jerusalem at the heart of divine activity on Earth, plays a vital role in Zechariah’s oracle. Jerusalem is the geographic center of the oracle and the seat of Yahweh’s power. As a result of this status position, the city is invincible before the nations (12:3). The idea of an invincible Zion developed long before the Exile. Israel generally believed that Yahweh would protect Zion because his dwelling place on Earth was in the Temple. Zion was thought to be a city divinely “protected and unconquerable by any enemy.”¹⁷⁵ However, Yahweh’s protection of Jerusalem was not without condition. “The Zion tradition did not merely call for faith in Yahweh; it demanded exclusive trust in Yahweh alone for security and deliverance.”¹⁷⁶ Yahweh’s protection of Zion was therefore conditional and when the people’s faith waned, the security of Zion was threatened.

Zion Theology is evident in other Old Testament books. The Book of Psalms played an important role in the development of this motif. The Psalms declare that Yahweh’s resting place

¹⁷⁵ John H. Hayes, “The Tradition of Zion’s Inviolability,” *Journal of Biblical Literature* 82, no. 4 (Dec 1963): 423.

¹⁷⁶ Gary E. Yates, “Isaiah’s Promise of the Restoration of Zion and Its Canonical Development” (2009), *Faculty Publications and Presentations*, Paper 231, http://digitalcommons.liberty.edu/lts_fac_pubs/231, 6.

is in Jerusalem. Zion is “the dwelling place of Yahweh,” and the tribe of Judah the chosen people to occupy Zion (74:2, 78:68).¹⁷⁷ Zion is a holy mountain and the home of Yahweh’s “holy house” (2:6, 5:7, 87:1).¹⁷⁸ Zion is “is the height of Zaphon, the highest mountain as the dwelling place of Yahweh (Ps 48:3-4).”¹⁷⁹ Zion is also “the source of the river(s) of paradise,” which in Zechariah represents one of the sources of Yahweh’s salvation (46:5).¹⁸⁰ The Psalms also generally conclude that Jerusalem will benefit from Yahweh’s presence when faced with danger. Zion is the place “of Yahweh’s triumph over the waters of chaos” (46:3).¹⁸¹ Zion, through the power of Yahweh, is a “fortress” (46:7). And Zion is the place where Yahweh defeats the nations (46:7, 48:5-7, and 76:4, 6-7).¹⁸² In the Psalms, Yahweh is the undisputed protector of Zion. Yahweh is the “strength and safety” of Zion (46:2-4).¹⁸³ Yahweh “protects his possession” from the nations (46:7-10). And Yahweh is the redeemer of Zion (46:11).¹⁸⁴ However, Yahweh’s continued presence in Zion required “faith and response” (48:10-15).¹⁸⁵ “The Psalms reflect the idea that worshippers at Jerusalem were to form a community of faith that entrusted its security and well-being to Yahweh’s protection.”¹⁸⁶

The conditional nature of the promises of protection and blessing of Zion noted in the Psalms are further developed in Isaiah. The prophet Isaiah warns Judah that Yahweh’s protection and blessing of Jerusalem required “Israel to reciprocate Yahweh’s act by turning back to him.”¹⁸⁷ Isaiah prophesies that Zion’s security is threatened because of the people’s lack of faith

¹⁷⁷ Hayes, “The Tradition of Zion’s Inviolability,” 422.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Yates, “Isaiah’s Promise of the Restoration of Zion and Its Canonical Development,” 5.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid.

¹⁸¹ Ibid.

¹⁸² Ibid.

¹⁸³ Hayes, “The Tradition of Zion’s Inviolability,” 422.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Yates, “Isaiah’s Promise of the Restoration of Zion and Its Canonical Development,” 6.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., 7.

in Yahweh (7:13-17). Israel and Judah's faith "in human resources and military might" would ultimately betray Yahweh's trust and result in unimaginable judgment.¹⁸⁸ Amos warned that this judgment was coming as a result of Israel's election.¹⁸⁹ Election meant that Israel and Judah would be held to a higher standard. But election was not a guarantor of success. In fact, it was Israel's election which enabled its severe judgment through the Exile (Amos 3:2).¹⁹⁰

Zechariah, following the Exile, continued the tradition of affirming Zion as the center of Yahweh's activity. Zion Theology in Zechariah's prophetic context includes four themes: Yahweh's empowerment of Jerusalem, the divine protection of Jerusalem, Jerusalem as the center of national restoration, and the future invincibility of the city. First, the Book of Zechariah links the power of Yahweh with Zion. 12:2 and 14:2 describe the siege of Jerusalem by the nations.¹⁹¹ In each instance, it is Yahweh who comes to the city's defense. Yahweh will bring "about victory in a twofold way: first, He [will] overpower and deprive the enemies of their strength, and then He [will] empower and fortify His people to resist and conquer their foes. The prophet makes it plain that the victory will be supernatural."¹⁹² The power of Zion during the battles will come from Yahweh.

The second important theme is Yahweh's protection of Jerusalem. Because Jerusalem's population is decimated following defeat in battle, the city is unable to offer any resistance against the nations (14:2). With the city on the brink of annihilation, it is Yahweh who steps in not only to fight the nations, but to protect Zion from further destruction. Zechariah prophesies that Zion will be secure once Yahweh offers his protection (14:11).¹⁹³ This theme is also

¹⁸⁸ Yates, "Isaiah's Promise of the Restoration of Zion and Its Canonical Development," 6.

¹⁸⁹ Robin Routledge, *Old Testament Theology* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2008), 264.

¹⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁹¹ Feinberg, *The Minor Prophets*, 330.

¹⁹² Unger, *Zechariah: Prophet of Messiah's Glory*, 331.

¹⁹³ *Ibid.*, 261.

prevalent in chapter 12. While Zechariah 12 does not describe the result of the conflict in the same detail as chapter 14, chapter 12 does point to assured victory in virtually every verse in 12:2-9 culminating in the destruction of the nations in verse 9. In the context of chapter 12, Zion is secure.

Third, Zechariah prophesies that the future restoration will establish Zion as the center of worship. While Zechariah does not specifically mention the Temple in chapters 9-14, he does reference Jerusalem as the center of worship 10 times in chapters 12-14 alone creating a strong link between the battle sequences. The most significant of these references are 13:1 and 14:8. In these important verses, Zion will be the location of the cleansing water. This fountain will serve as a symbol of Yahweh's salvation act. Zion will also be Yahweh's throne (14:9, 16) and the place of universal worship (14:16). Additionally, the city will continue to host the Feast of Tabernacles as a time of universal gathering (14:16). This feast was one of three that "required a pilgrimage to Jerusalem" and demonstrates the absolute necessity of Temple worship in the battle sequences and Zion's place as the center of worship.¹⁹⁴

The fourth theme of Zion Theology in Zechariah 12-14 is the promise that Zion will never again be destroyed. Zechariah uses the word **הָרַס** which has been translated as "destruction" (14:11). This word was used to describe the destruction of Jericho in Joshua 6:17-18 demonstrating the finality of the action. When Zechariah says that Jerusalem will never again be destroyed, he means that the "city will finally enjoy the security it has always craved" while the nations will be at the mercy of Yahweh.¹⁹⁵ Chapter 12 promises the future security of Zion through the use of the phrase "he will protect" in 12:8. Yahweh will seek to exterminate the attacking nations.

¹⁹⁴ Klein, *Zechariah*, 422.

¹⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

Zechariah offers a connection between the battle sequences in chapters 12-14 through Zion Theology in four ways. First, in both he focuses on Zion's victory over the nations (12:9; 14:12-15) and the power of Yahweh behind Judah and Jerusalem's victory (12:2; 14:12). Only Yahweh will be able to defeat Judah and Jerusalem's enemies.¹⁹⁶ Second, Zechariah promises that Yahweh will forever protect Jerusalem. Third, he establishes Zion as the center of worship in the future Kingdom ten times including in 13:1 and 14:8. And fourth, Zechariah promises that Zion will never again be destroyed (12:9, 14:11). Zion Theology is firmly established in chapters 12-14 through these four themes.

The Day of the Lord

The second important connecting motif in chapters 12-14 is the phrase the "Day of the Lord." Zechariah 14 begins with a declaration: "A day of the Lord is coming." This eschatological phrase "has its own special significance in the Israelite view of history."¹⁹⁷ This day may be defined as a day in which Yahweh acts or intervenes in human affairs presuming "a connection between God's activity and the unfolding of history."¹⁹⁸ It is "a day on which the Lord reveals himself in some way."¹⁹⁹ This "*parousia* event" marked important days within Yahweh's relationship with Israel.²⁰⁰ Klein commented:

There may have been an annual celebration of Yahweh's reign, possibly commemorating bringing the Ark to Jerusalem, which looked back at his mighty works on behalf of his people and anticipated his future victory and coming in glory and power, and that would have helped to keep hope alive during times of national crisis. It is likely

¹⁹⁶ Specifically, Zechariah mentions the subjugation of Egypt twice. These two references are important because they directly relate Zechariah's prophecy to the events of his day. The political restlessness in Egypt was part of the reason for the increased military presence of Persia in Yehud (14:18-19). As a result, Egypt was an unpopular neighbor during the period of Zechariah's ministry.

¹⁹⁷ Meyers, *Zechariah 9-14: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 409.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁹ Kenneth Mulzac, "Amos 5:18-20 in its Exegetical and Theological Context," *Asia Journal of Theology* (2003): 286.

²⁰⁰ Klein, *Zechariah*, 192.

that such an event would have recalled traditions associated with the Exodus at the time when God took Israel as his own people, and that the “Day of the Lord” is to be linked with the battles associated with the Exodus and the conquest, when God fought on behalf of his people.²⁰¹

The evolution of the idea of the “Day of the Lord” began “with the hope of deliverance from a particular threat.”²⁰² The Song of Deborah is an early example of this anticipated deliverance (Judges 5:4-5).²⁰³ David believed that Yahweh would deliver him from distress in Psalms 18. David prayed “in my distress” (18:6) and Yahweh listened because of David’s faithfulness (18:25). Habbakuk asked for Yahweh’s intervention “in the face of a Babylonian invasion of Judah” (3:2).²⁰⁴ Pre-Exilic prophets like Habakkuk understood the intervention of Yahweh as “imminent.”²⁰⁵ This is “because the events of [the impending] Exile and destruction were viewed as the ‘day’ already beginning.”²⁰⁶ Hence, post-Exilic prophets “tended to see ‘the day of Yahweh’ as the ongoing or expected completion of what” the pre-Exilic prophets “initiated.”²⁰⁷

Amos (5:18) and Joel (1:1) were likely the first to use the phrase the “Day of the Lord,” as it is used in Zechariah 14:1,²⁰⁸ with both focusing on Israel.²⁰⁹ “Amos and Joel in particular,” warn the people that the “Day of the Lord” will not necessarily represent “a day of victory and

²⁰¹ Routledge, *Old Testament Theology*, 274.

²⁰² Ibid.

²⁰³ Ibid., 275.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Meyers, *Zechariah 9-14: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 409. Habakkuk does not specifically refer to the יום ה' (Day of the Lord).

²⁰⁶ Ibid.

²⁰⁷ Ibid.

²⁰⁸ Zechariah’s “Day of the Lord” is also distinguished from earlier texts by his use of the verb בוא (in Zechariah’s context this Hebrew word meant *coming*). The noun “day” occurs sixteen times in the later prophets without the preposition in the genitive and only three times with the preposition. Each of these occurs in prophetic texts from Judah or Yehud. However, of these prophets, only Joel, Malachi, and Zechariah attach the Qal participle of the verb בוא (coming). Joel uses the “Day of the Lord” with the verb בוא (coming) in 2:1. Malachi uses the phrase the “Day of the Lord” with the verb בוא (coming) in 3:19. Zechariah also uses this form of the verb to intensify the immediacy of Yahweh’s action in the battle sequences.

²⁰⁹ Mulzac, “Amos 5:18-20 in its Exegetical and Theological Context,” 286.

vindication...rather, a day of defeat and judgment,” a significant change from earlier examples like Psalms 18.²¹⁰ Following Amos, “the essential meaning of the idea was an unveiling of divine wrath and an implementing of judgment on [Judah and] Yahweh’s enemies” (note Zephaniah 1).²¹¹ At the heart of Yahweh’s response, at least in the context of Zechariah 12-14, is human sin, primarily idolatry. Because of this, both Jerusalem and the nations are subject to judgment.²¹² Zechariah predicts judgment for both the invading nations and Jerusalem with the city suffering a catastrophic loss (14:1-2). Zechariah says that Yahweh will call the nations to fight (14:2). As a result Jerusalem will be captured, plundered, and “ransacked” (14:2). The women will be raped and “half of the city will go into exile” (14:2). Only after the nations have had their way with Jerusalem will Yahweh intervene. Yahweh’s judgment of the nations is no less violent with Yahweh inflicting the attacking armies with a plague that will cause their eyes to rot out of their heads.

Zechariah’s description of the battles is highlighted by his use of the phrase **ביום-ההוא** (on that day) in both battle sequences. This phrase is likely a different form or alternate of the phrase **יום יהוה** (Day of the Lord). How is **ביום-ההוא** (on that day) linked to the events of the “Day of the Lord?” A comparison with Joel’s use of the phrase may help provide an answer. The Book of Joel prophesies about events which will be fulfilled on the “Day of the Lord.”²¹³ Joel, like Zechariah, uses different phrases to refer to this day some of which find a parallel in Zechariah 12-14. For example, Joel uses the phrase “day of darkness” to describe the locusts (2:2). Zechariah prophesies that after Yahweh’s victory “on that day” there will only be light (14:6). Joel uses the term “afterward” to connect the darkness of the “Day of the Lord” with

²¹⁰ Routledge, *Old Testament Theology*, 264.

²¹¹ Mulzac, “Amos 5:18-20 in its Exegetical and Theological Context,” 286.

²¹² Note Deuteronomy 27:15.

²¹³ James L. Crenshaw, *Joel* (New York: Doubleday, 1995), 47.

Israel's restoration (3:1).²¹⁴ Zechariah uses **בַּיּוֹם-הַהוּא** (on that day) in 12:9 and 14:6 to connect the battle sequences with Judah's restoration. Joel uses the term "in those days and at that time" in 3:1 to introduce the nations coming to the "Valley of Jehoshaphat" to be judged.²¹⁵ Zechariah uses the phrase **בַּיּוֹם-הַהוּא** (on that day) to introduce the potential judgment of Egypt in 14:19. And finally, Joel uses the phrase **בַּיּוֹם-הַהוּא** (on that day) in 3:18 to reassure that Yahweh will reside in Jerusalem.²¹⁶ Zechariah uses this same phrase to establish Yahweh's presence in 14:4. Zechariah, like Joel, uses secondary phrases to link events with those occurring on the **יּוֹם יְהוָה** (Day of the Lord).

The phrase **בַּיּוֹם-הַהוּא** (on that day) introduces many of Yahweh's actions in battle and afterwards. Jerusalem is made to be an immovable rock (12:3). The enemy horses and riders are struck with blindness from a plague (12:4 and 14:12-15). All the clans of Judah are made "like a firepot in a woodpile, like a flaming torch among sheaves," the clans consuming their enemies (12:6). Jerusalem is shielded and all its inhabitants made "like the angel of the Lord going before them" (12:8). All the nations that attack Jerusalem are engaged in Holy War by Yahweh (12:9 and 14:3). The fountain cleanses the people of their impurities (13:1 and 14:8). Idolatry and false prophecy are forever banished (13:2-3) with the prophets "ashamed of their prophetic vision" (13:4). Yahweh will split the Mount of Olives in two (14:4). There will no longer be day or night (14:6-7). And the plague that Yahweh will inflict on the attacking nations will cause people to turn against each other (14:13).

²¹⁴ Crenshaw, *Joel*, 163.

²¹⁵ Jeremiah uses a similar phrase in 33:15, "take note, days are coming." These days include the judgment of Babylon in Jeremiah 50:4 and 50:20.

²¹⁶ Crenshaw, *Joel*, 198.

The phrase **בְּיוֹם־הַהוּא** (on that day) is also “a significant rhetorical feature” for both battle sequences, offering a strong connection between the two.²¹⁷ Boda observed that “the form of ‘on that day’ found in 12:3, 9; 13:2, 4 [marks] the structural skeleton for the sections as a whole.”²¹⁸ Zechariah 12:2 serves as the introduction to 12:2 - 13:6 with 12:3-8 relating “various aspects of this victory.”²¹⁹ Zechariah 12:9, meanwhile, signals “the end of God’s victory” and transitions to the aftermath of the conflict in 12:10. The structure of Zechariah 14 is more difficult to establish. 14:1 serves as the introduction, 14:4, 6, 7, 13, 20, and 21 relate specific aspects of the victory and aftermath, similar to 13:1, 2, and 4. The phrase “on that day” also introduces the abolition of idolatry and in both battles the redemption of Judah through the life giving water. Structurally, the battle sequences share a common feature through the use of phrase **בְּיוֹם־הַהוּא** (on that day).

The use of the phrases **יּוֹם יְהוָה** (Day of the Lord) and **בְּיוֹם־הַהוּא** (on that day) have several implications for the interpretation of the battle sequences. First, “the cataclysmic events of that ‘day’ must necessarily involve the destruction of Israel’s enemies.”²²⁰ Judgment was one of the most important aspects of the **יּוֹם יְהוָה** (Day of the Lord). Jerusalem is the cup and the immovable rock that will disable the nations in battle (12:3). The cavalry of the nations is stricken with a plague (12:4 and 14:12-15). The nations are equated to kindling for a fire (12:6). Yahweh says he will “set out to destroy all the nations” (12:9) while he declares he will fight them as “on a day of battle” (14:3). Yahweh will judge the nations as a “prelude”²²¹ to Israel’s

²¹⁷ Boda, *Haggai and Zechariah*, 481.

²¹⁸ *Ibid.*

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 481-482.

²²⁰ *Ibid.*

²²¹ *Ibid.*, 410.

restoration.²²² In both of Zechariah's battle sequences the defeat and judgment of the nations is a central theme on the "Day of the Lord."

Second, specific to each instance of **בְּיוֹם-יְהוָה** (on that day) is the contrast established between the divine and the human. Zechariah makes use of this contrast in exalting Yahweh. Zechariah 12:1 declares that Yahweh is the creator while humanity is the created. Zechariah 12:2-9 proclaims that Yahweh the victor while the nations are the defeated. Zechariah 12:10-14 announce Yahweh's gracious sovereignty which is demonstrated by the pouring out the spirit. Zechariah 13:1-6 predicts Yahweh's victory against the false prophecy and the idolatry of humanity. Zechariah 13:7-9 describes Judah's refinement so that Yahweh might say, "They are my people." Zechariah 14:1-15 establishes Yahweh as the victor, the nations the defeated. Finally, Zechariah 14:16-21 offers a contrast between Yahweh as the object of worship and humanity as the worshipper. Yahweh, established through the use of the phrase **בְּיוֹם-יְהוָה** (on that day), in both battle sequences, is the focus of hope. The "Day of the Lord" in association with the phrase "on that day" offers a strong connection between Zechariah's battle sequences.

Yahweh as Divine Warrior

The third motif that impacts the interpretation of the battle sequences in chapters 12-14 is Yahweh as the Divine Warrior. The Divine Warrior is an important Old Testament motif and especially so for Zechariah 12-14, since it is Yahweh who will deliver Jerusalem from the nations. Tremper Longman outlines the five phase biblical development of this motif in his book

²²² However, while Joel and Malachi's "Day of the Lord" includes the judgment of the nations and the restoration of Israel they do not include the restoration of the nations. This is in contrast to Zechariah 14:16-21 which predicts that the nations will partake in worship on the **יוֹם יְהוָה** (Day of the Lord).

God is a Warrior with the first three phases occurring in the Old Testament text.²²³ In phase one, “God fights Israel’s flesh-and-blood enemies.”²²⁴ In phase two, “God fights Israel.”²²⁵ And in phase three, the post-Exilic prophets reveal the truth about “the future divine deliverer.”²²⁶

The biblical development of the Divine Warrior motif began with phase one and the destruction of Pharaoh’s army in the Red Sea. The Song of Moses celebrates the Divine Warrior’s victory over Egypt.²²⁷ Exodus 15:3 declares, “*Yahweh* is a warrior; *Yahweh* is his name.” Moses would go on to describe the tenants of Holy War in Deuteronomy 7. *Yahweh* declares, in 7:1-2, that he will bring Israel into the land and that it is he who will force Israel’s enemies into combat.

Several important features of Holy War are revealed in the early Old Testament period. First, Israel had to be spiritually prepared so that they could approach the Divine Warrior in holiness (Joshua 5).²²⁸ Second, Israel had to ensure “ritual cleanness in the war camp” so that *Yahweh* could move about the camp (Deuteronomy 23:14).²²⁹ During the conflict, Israel marched against its enemies carrying the Ark and singing praises to *Yahweh* as the Divine Warrior (2 Chronicles 20:20-23 and 2 Samuel 11:11). Finally, following the conflict, Israel praised *Yahweh* in song (Exodus 15:1-18) and delivered the plunder to “the Lord’s house” (Joshua 6:24).²³⁰

²²³ Longman and Reid, *God is a Warrior*, 16-17.

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, 17.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, 16-17.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*

²²⁷ *Ibid.*, 31.

²²⁸ *Ibid.*, 34-36.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 36-37.

²³⁰ *Ibid.*, 46

Phase two of the Divine Warrior motif describes Yahweh's "war's against unfaithful Israel."²³¹ The foundation of Yahweh's election of Israel was the covenants that he made with Abraham and Moses. Longman comments:

We see the relationship between the Divine Warrior and covenant blessings and curses of Deuteronomy. On the one hand God promises his obedient covenant people that he will protect them against his enemies... On the other hand, the curses have in view a situation in which Israel is disobedient to its covenant Lord. In this case, "The Lord will cause you to be defeated before your enemies" (Deuteronomy 28:25).²³²

Israel's unfaithfulness to Yahweh marked its history from the anointing of Saul to the split of the Kingdom. Israel and Judah became idolatrous, turning to false gods, defiling Yahweh's presence in the Temple, and seeking protection from hostile powers through allegiances with foreign kings. The Divine Warrior's response to Israel and Judah's unfaithfulness was the Exile. Ezekiel describes Yahweh's presence leaving Judah with "the cherubim-driven" chariot moving to the east and Babylon in chapters 10-11.²³³ Jeremiah, in describing Yahweh's anger, wrote, "He will put them to the sword; he will show them no mercy or pity or compassion" (21:7). Deuteronomy 28 describes Yahweh's anger and the acts he will perpetrate against his covenant people:

The Lord will drive you and the king you set over you to a nation unknown to you or your ancestors. There you will worship other gods, gods of wood and stone. You will become a thing of horror, a byword and an object of ridicule among all the peoples where the LORD will drive you... The Lord will bring a nation against you from far away, from the ends of the earth, like an eagle swooping down, a nation whose language you will not understand, a fierce-looking nation without respect for the old or pity for the young (Deuteronomy 28:36-50).

As a result of Israel's covenant desertion, the Exile would become "the culmination and most fearsome expression of" the Divine Warrior's Holy War.²³⁴

²³¹ Longman and Reid, *God is a Warrior*, 48.

²³² *Ibid.*, 49.

²³³ *Ibid.*, 53.

²³⁴ *Ibid.*, 55.

Holy War is the subject of Zechariah 12-14 as the Divine Warrior causes the nations to lay siege to Judah and Jerusalem (12:2-3 and 14:2). But as Judah and Jerusalem are besieged it is the Divine Warrior who acts to deliver his people. Zechariah uses two figures of speech to enhance the actions of the Divine Warrior as he fights for his people. First, he prophesies in 12:2 that Jerusalem will be like “a cup that sends all the surrounding peoples reeling.” While “cup” was sometimes used in the Hebrew as a metaphor for life or salvation,²³⁵ it was also used as a metaphor for judgment.²³⁶ Isaiah 51:17 identifies the cup of Yahweh’s wrath while Jeremiah prophesies that the nations will be forced to drink from this cup (25:17). The cup in Zechariah 12:2 is a “cup of reeling” that will make the nations weak.²³⁷ “Those who attack Jerusalem will be rendered incapacitated like a drunkard.”²³⁸

The second simile used by Zechariah in 12:2-3 is that of the “immovable rock.” “The image Zechariah paints in chapter 12” is one of looters wreaking havoc in Jerusalem.²³⁹ Jerusalem relied on Persia for protection during Zechariah’s ministry since the city was unable to raise its own defense. This relative weakness is contrasted with the injury the city will inflict on the nations in the future. Because of the weight of the city, “many of Zion’s enemies will actually hurt themselves because of their own...opposition to God.”²⁴⁰ “The word for ‘injure’ is used in Leviticus 21:5 for cutting oneself.”²⁴¹ The injury suffered by the nations is compared here to “a bloody gash.”²⁴² The Divine Warrior will harshly judge the sin of the nations involved in the siege, leading Jerusalem into battle.

²³⁵ Note Psalms 116:13.

²³⁶ Klein, *Zechariah*, 352.

²³⁷ Ibid.

²³⁸ Boda, *Haggai and Zechariah*, 483.

²³⁹ Klein, *Zechariah*, 354.

²⁴⁰ Ibid.

²⁴¹ Boda, *Haggai and Zechariah*, 483.

²⁴² Ibid.

The Divine Warrior acts on his people's behalf again as the nations prepare to charge Jerusalem (12:4). Jerusalem is unable to offer "any resistance."²⁴³ The city is powerless against the cavalry. Instead, it is Yahweh who must defend Zion. The Divine Warrior strikes the horses "with panic" and the "riders with madness" (12:4a) while his watchful eye is contrasted with the blindness inflicted on the horses (12:4b). "The prophecy envisions a scene of mass confusion" set about by the Divine Warrior.²⁴⁴ He declares "I will strike" and "I will watch." There is no doubt that Yahweh is the warrior and cause of victory.

Yahweh as the Divine Warrior continues his battle against the nations in 12:6.²⁴⁵ Zechariah declares, "I will make the clans of Judah like a firepot in a woodpile, like a flaming torch among sheaves." Fire was a common judgment motif in the Old Testament (note Amos 2:2 and Jeremiah 17:27).²⁴⁶ This "unusual simile" may have been employed to denote that Yahweh's wrath will be all consuming.²⁴⁷ In 12:6, the enemy nations are themselves "the wood and sheaves" for burning.²⁴⁸ The Divine Warrior will use this fire to consume the nations while preserving Jerusalem.²⁴⁹

Zechariah 12:8 uses another common Old Testament metaphor to help develop the Divine Warrior motif. Zechariah writes, "On that day the Lord will shield those who live in Jerusalem." This metaphor was used to describe Yahweh's covenant protection of Abram in Genesis 15:1 with Yahweh as the Divine Warrior becoming Abram's "shield and great reward."

²⁴³ Klein, *Zechariah*, 354.

²⁴⁴ Boda, *Haggai and Zechariah*, 484.

²⁴⁵ Klein, *Zechariah*, 356.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 357.

²⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 356.

²⁴⁸ Boda, *Haggai and Zechariah*, 484.

²⁴⁹ Zechariah's judgment fire may be a reference to Isaiah 9:19-20: "the land will be scorched and the people will be fuel for the fire...on the right they will devour...on the left they will eat." The use of terms "left" and "right" were likely a reference to the east and the west which in Isaiah's context probably referred to Egypt and Babylon. Egypt is also the subject of judgment in 14:18 as Zechariah maybe creating a link between chapters 12 and 14 through this judgment motif.

Similarly, Yahweh will shield Jerusalem in the hour of its greatest need, offering the ultimate protection.

Yahweh as the Divine Warrior in Zechariah 12 provides victory for Judah and Jerusalem over the nations. He makes Jerusalem like a cup that will send the nations “reeling,” and he makes the city like “an immovable rock.” He causes the nation’s horses and riders to go blind and mad. He makes Jerusalem like a fire to consume her enemies. And he pledges to shield the city from any harm. Zechariah 12:9 offers the end of the conflict: “On that day I will set out to destroy all the nations that attack Jerusalem.” The use of the phrase “on that day” offers “a contrast to former days when God sought to invite enemy nations against” his people.²⁵⁰ The battle sequence in chapter 12 begins with the Divine Warrior bringing the nations to Jerusalem to war against the city but concludes with the Divine Warrior in judgment of those same nations.

Zechariah 14 also places the Divine Warrior at the center of the victory. Zechariah 14:1-2 describes the capture and plunder of the city. In this sequence, it is the Divine Warrior who has *caused* the nations to come against Jerusalem. The Divine Warrior motif includes the judgment of Israel for covenant violations. However, in this context Zechariah does not offer any covenant violations. While “no reason is offered...one must assume [the judgment] is linked to the misdeeds of the people.”²⁵¹ In any case, Jerusalem is in a desperate state.

Zechariah 14:3 “introduces God as the Divine Warrior” fighting for Jerusalem.²⁵² Initially, the action of Yahweh in combat in this sequence is not described, rather Zechariah simply states that Yahweh will go out and fight the nations. The text envisions Yahweh standing

²⁵⁰ Unger, *Zechariah: Prophet of Messiah’s Glory*, 213.

²⁵¹ Boda, *Haggai and Zechariah*, 523.

²⁵² Klein, *Zechariah*, 402.

on the Mount of Olives, the Mount split from east to west (14:4). The Divine Warrior's "physical presence" in the conflict will cause the great natural catastrophe of the splitting mountain.²⁵³

Zechariah returns to the conflict in 14:12 and the actions of the Divine Warrior. The plague that Yahweh uses to combat the nations is described in more detail in chapter 14 than in 12. The nations that attacked Jerusalem will be inflicted with a plague that will cause their flesh to rot in an instant, "while they are still standing on their feet." The Divine Warrior will also cause their eyes and tongues to rot. "Zechariah's attention to the 'eye' and the 'tongue' of the people carries symbolic importance."²⁵⁴ Sight is equal to "both mental and spiritual acuity" in Zechariah.²⁵⁵ The plague in 12:4 took the sight of the horses and the same blindness was equal to mental illness. The tongue is also significant because it is used to "lie, deceive, slander, and blaspheme the God who gave" it.²⁵⁶ The Divine Warrior will defend Jerusalem by inhibiting the abilities of the nations to wage war. Zechariah 14:15 describes "a similar plague" which will "strike the horses and mules, the camels and donkeys, and all the animals in those camps." Finally, Yahweh as the Divine Warrior reverses the fortunes of Judah and the nations. Zion becomes a city of wealth after the plunder of the nations is gathered into Jerusalem (14:14).²⁵⁷ This image is consistent with the Divine Warrior motif. Not only does the victory belong to Yahweh but all the spoils of war.

Phase three in Longman's analysis of the Divine Warrior motif includes the description of the "Divine Deliverer."²⁵⁸ This phase of the motif includes not only Yahweh's actions in battle in chapters 12-14 but also the subsequent Shepherd/King passages. Yahweh is revealed as the

²⁵³ Klein, *Zechariah*, 403.

²⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 417.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 418.

²⁵⁷ Meyers, *Zechariah 9-14: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 458.

²⁵⁸ Longman and Reid, *God is a Warrior*, 17.

source of the “spirit of grace and supplication” in 12:10. He is the source of purity in chapter 13, the fountain cleansing “the inhabitants of Jerusalem” of their “sin and impurity” (13:1). And it is Yahweh who will refine his people so that “they will say, ‘The Lord is our God’” (13:7-9). In chapters 12-13, Yahweh not only delivers his people from their enemies but also from their sin as the Divine Deliverer.²⁵⁹ The same is true of Yahweh’s actions as the Divine Deliverer in chapter 14. The purifying water flows from Jerusalem (14:8). Yahweh promises that Jerusalem will be forever secure (14:11). And it is Yahweh who is “king over the whole earth” (14:9). Zechariah not only establishes Yahweh’s victory but also his authority as ruler in chapter 14.

While the Divine Warrior motif seems to embody more than just Holy War in Zechariah 12-14, most notably the mercy of the Shepherd toward the people of Jerusalem (12:10), the warrior aspect of this motif still plays a prominent role in chapters 12-14. Zechariah uses the Divine Warrior motif to describe Yahweh’s judgment of Judah and Jerusalem, Yahweh’s deliverance of Judah and Jerusalem and judgment of the nations, and finally the restoration of Judah, Jerusalem and the nations.

Summary

While there are many connecting motifs in Zechariah 12-14, three in particular offer strong evidence that the battle sequences might be the same. The first of these motifs is Zion Theology. Zion Theology in the battle sequences includes four themes: the divine empowerment of Zion, the divine protection of Zion, Zion as the center of national restoration, and the future invincibility of the city. First, 12:2 and 14:2 describe the siege of Jerusalem by the nations.²⁶⁰ In each instance, it is Yahweh who will come to the city’s defense. Zion’s power will be derived

²⁵⁹ Note Isaiah 59. Yahweh will deliver and redeem his people from their sins (59:20-21).

²⁶⁰ Feinberg, *The Minor Prophets*, 330.

from Yahweh. Second, Yahweh will protect Jerusalem by empowering the people and by inflicting the nations with a terrible plague. Third, Zechariah prophesies that the restoration will be centered in Zion. While the prophet does not specifically mention the Temple in chapters 9-14, he does reference Jerusalem as the center of worship ten times in chapters 12-14 alone creating a strong link between the battle sequences. And finally, Zechariah prophesies that after the restoration, Jerusalem will “never again...be destroyed” (14:11). Zion “will finally enjoy the security it has always craved” while the nations will be at the mercy of Yahweh.²⁶¹

The “Day of the Lord” is the second of these connecting motifs. The phrase “on that day” references events that transpire on the “Day of the Lord.” Several similar events in each sequence occur *ביום-ההוא* (on that day). The attacking riders will be struck with blindness from a plague *ביום-ההוא* (on that day) (12:4 and 14:12-15). All the nations that attack Jerusalem will be engaged in Holy War by Yahweh *ביום-ההוא* (on that day) (12:9 and 14:3). And “a fountain will be opened” in Jerusalem to cleanse the people of their impurities *ביום-ההוא* (on that day) (13:1 and 14:8). This phrase is also “a significant rhetorical feature” for both battle sequences.²⁶² “The form of on that day found in 12:3, 9; 13:2, 4 [marks] the structural skeleton for the passage that” followed.²⁶³ Zechariah 14:4, 6, 7, 13, 20, and 21 relate specific aspects of the victory and aftermath, similar to 13:1, 2, and 4. The phrase also describes the redemption of Judah through the life giving water in both battle sequences (13:1 and 14:8).

The Divine Warrior motif is the third of these connecting motifs. Longman notes five steps in the Divine Warrior motif with the first three found in both chapters 12-14.²⁶⁴ The first

²⁶¹ Meyers, *Zechariah 9-14: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 458.

²⁶² Boda, *Haggai and Zechariah*, 481.

²⁶³ Ibid.

²⁶⁴ Longman and Reid, *God is a Warrior*, 83-85. Longman uses this section to compare the development of Holy War in ancient near eastern literature to that of Old Testament literature. The battle of ANE gods against the

and second step in divine Holy War is the warfare itself. Zechariah 12:2-9 and 14:1-5 and 12-15 narrate the battle sequences. The Divine Warrior brings the nations to war against Jerusalem in both battle sequences and both describe the Divine Warrior's use of a plague to defeat the nations. The third step of the Divine Warrior motif is kingship. Zechariah 14:9 declares, "The Lord will be king over the whole earth. On that day there will be one Lord, and his name the only name."

Zion Theology, the "Day of the Lord," and Yahweh as the Divine Warrior each offer strong evidence of a connection between Zechariah's battle sequences. However, the connection between the battles is threatened by two important differences: the judgment of Jerusalem in chapter 14 in contrast to chapter 12 and the differences in detail between the battle sequences.

forces of chaos, such as the sea, represents part of this focus. In Zechariah 12-14, Yahweh is in complete control of nature.

Chapter 4

The Differing Judgment Focus of Zechariah 12-14

Chapter three of this investigation offered a discussion on three important motifs in Zechariah 12-14: Zion Theology, the “Day of the Lord,” and the Divine Warrior. The prophet’s use of each of these motifs suggests that he is describing the same events in consecutive sequences in chapters 12-14. Despite the evidence for a unity of the sequences through these motifs, there are two important differences between the battles. First, Zechariah prophesies that Jerusalem will be judged by Yahweh through the nations in chapter 14. He does not however mention this judgment in chapter 12. And second, the battle sequence in chapter 14 is described in more detail than the battle in chapter 12.

Yahweh’s judgment of Israel and Judah using another nation as his instrument, a common motif in the prophetic writings, is evidenced in both the prophecy of Isaiah and Jeremiah. Isaiah 7-8 describes the coming judgment of Israel. Isaiah 7:17 prophesies that Yahweh will “bring the king of Assyria” to judge Israel. Isaiah prophesies that Assyria will settle “on all the thornbushes and at all the water holes” while turning the vineyards into thorny fields (7:19-23). Isaiah also compares the king of Assyria to a razor who will shave the heads and cut off the beards of Israel (7:20). Assyria will also plunder Israel’s wealth (8:4). Isaiah predicts that Assyria will come against Israel because it is Yahweh’s will (8:7).

The book of Jeremiah also provides an example of Yahweh’s judgment of Judah through another nation. Jeremiah 1:14 prophesies that “all who live in the land” will be impacted by Yahweh’s judgment. This terrible judgment will be brought on the people through “all the peoples of the northern kingdoms” (1:15). Jeremiah names Babylon as the specific tool of Yahweh’s judgment (20:4). When Zedekiah begs Jeremiah to call on Yahweh for deliverance

from Babylon (21:1), Jeremiah responds with a terrifying prophecy. He predicts that not only will Jerusalem fall but that the city's defeat will be perpetrated by Yahweh (21:5). Jerusalem will suffer from plague, from sword, and from famine and each at the hand of Yahweh through Babylon (21:7).

Isaiah and Jeremiah are both good examples of Yahweh using a nation as a tool of judgment. Zechariah 12 is likely describing a similar method and event. The staff in Zechariah 11:10 may represent “a general covenant that protected Judah from the wiles of her neighbors.”²⁶⁵ This covenant reference in 11:10 may not be to a specific “biblical covenant” but rather to the metaphorical restraint that Yahweh placed on the nations to protect Judah.²⁶⁶ When the staff is broken Yahweh's protection will be lifted. Without Yahweh's protection, the nations will be free to attack Judah. The result may be the siege of Jerusalem in 12:2 with Yahweh using the nations to judge the city. While chapter 12 does not specifically mention this judgment, this chapter does focus on the judgment of the nations by Yahweh (12:4, 9). Zechariah prophesies that it is Yahweh who will call the nations to Jerusalem (12:2-3). And having called the nations to war it is Yahweh who will empower Judah and Jerusalem in battle against the nations.²⁶⁷ Yahweh's empowerment of his people is contrasted with the defeat of the nations in chapter 12. It is likely then that Yahweh will use Judah and Jerusalem to judge the nations in chapter 12.

Zechariah returns to the judgment of Jerusalem through the nations in chapter 14. Yahweh will not offer his protection of the city when the battle begins. Rather, it is Yahweh, in the context of Zechariah 14:1-2, who will call the nations to Jerusalem and it is Yahweh who will allow the nations to besiege the city (14:2). The suffering that Jerusalem will endure will be

²⁶⁵ Klein, *Zechariah*, 334.

²⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

²⁶⁷ The judgment of the nations is similar to the judgment offered in Zechariah 9-10. The difference between chapters 9-10 and 12-14 is that 9-10 appear to be prophesying about events already fulfilled.

directed by Yahweh.²⁶⁸ The judgment of Jerusalem in chapter 14 finds a parallel in 13:7-9.

Zechariah 13:7-9 describes a time when Yahweh will refine Israel. Zechariah predicts that two-thirds of the people in the land “will be struck down” and will die (13:8). The third that remain will be refined until they recognize Yahweh as their Lord (13:9). The connection between 13:7-9 and 14:1-2 is the divine judgment of Judah (noted as “the whole land” in 13:8 which is likely a reference to the “population” of Judah) at the hand of Yahweh.²⁶⁹ It must be noted that Zechariah 13:7-9 does not link the suffering of the people with battle or with Jerusalem specifically and that in 13:7-9, Yahweh does not use the nations as tools of judgment. However, in contrast to chapter 12, Yahweh clearly initiates the judgment of Judah and Jerusalem in both 13:7-9 and 14:2.

Zechariah 13 might also offer a judgment connection with chapter 12. Following the refinement of the people, the survivors will acknowledge that Yahweh is their God (13:9). This acknowledgment is similar to 12:5 and the people’s recognition that Yahweh is their God after he fights for them in battle. If the battle sequences are describing the same event with a different judgment focus then it would be reasonable to expect that the people of Judah will acknowledge Yahweh as their God following the judgment of Jerusalem in both sequences. However, while these passages may share the common theme of recognizing Yahweh as God, there is no direct evidence linking Zechariah 12 with Yahweh’s judgment or evidence that 13:7-9 is describing some future battle.

Why does the judgment focus in Zechariah move from the nations in 12:1-9 to Jerusalem in 14:1-2? The differing description of the events in each battle sequence might lead to an explanation. The description of the events on the day of battle appears to change between the

²⁶⁸ Feinberg, *The Minor Prophets*, 340.

²⁶⁹ Klein, *Zechariah*, 391.

sequences.²⁷⁰ Zechariah 12 paints a broad picture of the conflict while relying on select similes to describe the source of Judah and Jerusalem's victory. Jerusalem will be like a "cup that sends all the surrounding peoples reeling" (12:2). Jerusalem will be like "an immovable rock" (12:3). "The clans of Judah" will be "like a firepot in a woodpile" consuming "all the surrounding peoples" (12:5), and the people of Judah will be like David in the face of adversity (12:8). These metaphors, while helping to visualize the strength that Judah and Jerusalem will have through Yahweh, do not describe the events that will shape the conflict on the day of battle. The detail that chapter 12 does offer is very broad and general. The nations will besiege Jerusalem (12:2). The horses will be struck with panic and their riders with madness (12:4). And the nations that attack Jerusalem will be destroyed (12:9).

Zechariah 14, in contrast to chapter 12, presents a much more detailed account of the conflict including a description of the events that will shape the battle. This additional detail includes an account of the extensive suffering of the people of Jerusalem during the initial siege of the city. "All the nations" will gather to fight Jerusalem (14:2). The city will be captured and its "possessions will be plundered and divided up within" its walls (14:1). Its houses will be ransacked and the women of the city raped (14:2). And half of the people of Jerusalem will be taken into exile (14:2). The additional detail offered in chapter 14 also includes a more complete description of the plague which will disable the attacking nations.²⁷¹ The flesh of the soldiers, including their eyes and tongues, will rot while they are still standing (14:12). The panic brought on by the plague will be so great that it will cause the attacking armies to turn against each other (14:13). And the plague will afflict all the animals in the enemy camp including the horses (14:15).

²⁷⁰ The aftermath of both conflicts are described in detail with both predicting the flowing fountain (13:1 and 14:8) and the restoration of Judah (13:9 and 14:11).

²⁷¹ Klein, *Zechariah*, 418.

Why does Zechariah 12-13, in contrast to chapter 14, use similes to describe the battle? Perhaps the reason is the place of 12:1-13:6 within Zechariah 11-13. Zechariah 12:1-13:6 is bookended by the Shepherd passages in 11:4-17 and 13:7-9. These passages focus on the rise and fall of the wayward Shepherd and his actions towards Israel.²⁷² It seems appropriate then that the sequence in chapters 12 should primarily focus on the impact of the battle on Judah and Jerusalem and not the nations.²⁷³ And while the nations are certainly judged in chapters 12-13, this judgment occurs only as a result of Judah and Jerusalem's victory in battle. The judgment of the nations, while still important, is not the primary focus of chapter 12. The focus is rather the strength of Judah and Jerusalem through the power of Yahweh as communicated through simile.

Chapter 14, in contrast, focuses on the judgment impact of Yahweh on both the nations and Jerusalem. Jerusalem will be victorious in battle but only after it suffers heavy losses at the direction of Yahweh. And the nations will be offered a chance at restoration but only after suffering a devastating loss as a result of Yahweh's judgment. The suffering and restoration of Jerusalem is then contrasted with the suffering and restoration of the nations in chapter 14.²⁷⁴ This judgment focus is enumerated through Zechariah's description of the events of the battle sequence.

Another issue of detail between the battle sequences is Zechariah's use of the phrase *המגפה* (the plague) in 14:12. This phrase does not appear in 12:4 even though 12:4 seems to be describing events similar to 14:12. Zechariah 12:4 prophesies that Yahweh will "strike every horse with panic and its rider with madness" and "will blind all the horses of the nations."

²⁷² Heater, *Zechariah*, 96-97.

²⁷³ The nations are only described in the context of judgment in Zechariah 9-13. Zechariah 8:20-22, however, also describes the restoration of the nations. Note: Heater, *Zechariah*, 69.

²⁷⁴ In the context of Zechariah 12-14, the restoration of Judah and Jerusalem seems unconditional (following judgment in 14:1-2). The nations meanwhile must keep the Feast of Tabernacles or face judgment. The restoration of the nations then seems conditional.

Zechariah 14:12 prophesies that a plague “will strike the nations.” This plague will cause the flesh, eyes, and tongues of the nations who came against Jerusalem to rot (14:12). The plague will also cause people to “be stricken with panic” (14:13). The connection between the plague in 14:12-15 and what appears to be the plague in 12:4 might be the similarity of the Hebrew words used to describe the actions of Yahweh in both battles.²⁷⁵ Zechariah 12:4 uses the word אָכָה (*I will smite*) while 14:12 uses the word יִנָּח (*he shall strike*).²⁷⁶ In both cases Yahweh will cause, by smiting or striking, a calamity to come against the attacking nations that will leave them unable to continue fighting. The fact that Yahweh will cause the nations to be disabled in both 12:4 and 14:12-15 and that both of these passages share similar events is enough to suggest that Zechariah 12:4 is describing the same plague as 14:12-15.

Summary

There are two important differences between the battle sequences. First, the battle in chapter 14 describes the judgment of Jerusalem while the battle in chapter 12 does not. The staff in Zechariah 11:10 may represent a covenant that protected Judah from the nations.²⁷⁷ This covenant reference in 11:10 may not be to a specific “biblical covenant” but rather to the metaphorical restraint that Yahweh placed on the nations to protect Judah.²⁷⁸ When the staff is broken Yahweh’s protection will be lifted. It is possible that the siege of Jerusalem in 12:2 will be a result of this broken covenant. While chapter 12 does not mention the judgment of Jerusalem specifically it does predict that the nations will be judged through Yahweh’s empowerment of Judah and Jerusalem (12:1-9). And just as Yahweh will use Judah and

²⁷⁵ Klein, *Zechariah*, 417.

²⁷⁶ The ESV translates both Hebrew words as *smite* while the NIV translates both words as *strike*.

²⁷⁷ Klein, *Zechariah*, 334.

²⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

Jerusalem as tools of judgment against the nations in chapter 12, he will also use the nations as tools of judgment against Jerusalem in 14:1-2 as the city is besieged and ransacked. It is reasonable to conclude that chapter 12 focuses on the judgment of the nations while chapter 14 focuses on the judgment of Judah and Jerusalem. The reason that Zechariah 14 mentions the judgment of Jerusalem then might simply be because its judgment focus is different than that of chapter 12.

The battle sequence in chapter 14 also seems to use more detail than chapters 12-13. This additional detail may once again be related to the judgment focus of each battle sequence. Chapter 12 uses a series of similes to describe the power of Yahweh in combat as opposed to the specific descriptions of the judgment and restoration of Judah, Jerusalem, and the nations in chapter 14.²⁷⁹ This differing focus reveals an additional difference between the sequences. Chapter 14 uses the term **הַמַּגֵּפָה** (the plague) (14:12) while chapter 12 does not. However, the description of what appears to be the plague in 12:4 seems to be consistent with 14:12-14 suggesting these events will be the same.

²⁷⁹ The nations are commanded to keep the “Feast of Tabernacles” (14:16) which will require a pilgrimage to Jerusalem. This pilgrimage will spare the nations from experiencing additional judgment.

Chapter 5

Summary and Conclusion

Is Zechariah 12-14 prophesying about one or two different battles? The investigation of this question began with a discussion of Zechariah's historical context. Zechariah wrote chapters 12-14 in the style of apocalyptic literature. This genre was especially important during the Exile and continuing into the intertestamental period because of its focus on placing hope in the future. Understanding the difficulties Zechariah's generation faced following the return from Exile helps to put the events of the battle sequences in perspective. Zechariah's prophetic response to these difficulties is similar in both battle sequences. Zechariah promises that someday the nations that had oppressed Judah and Jerusalem will be defeated and then judged by Yahweh (12:4, 9 and 14:12-19). Specifically, Yahweh will judge the nations to the east and west in battle (12:6) while chapter 14 specifically refers to Egypt (14:18). Zechariah promises that Jerusalem, a defenseless city in the prophet's day, will be made secure by Yahweh (12:8, 14:11). He promises that Jerusalem, even while the people struggled to rebuild the Temple, will be re-established by Yahweh as a center of worship free from idolatry and false prophecy (13:1-6, 14:14). Zechariah also prophesies that Jerusalem will once again become a city of wealth even though the city struggled economically following the return from Exile. Finally, Zechariah prophesies that Jerusalem will once again have a king even though a Davidic monarch failed to materialize after the Exile. Zechariah promises that Yahweh, while directing the restoration of both Judah and Jerusalem, will assume the throne as King over all the people of the Earth (14:9). The historical events of Zechariah's ministry are clearly reflected in the prophecy of chapters 12-14 and therefore have an important impact on an understanding of the relationship of the battle sequences.

The restoration of Judah and Jerusalem, in Zechariah's oracle, will begin in conflict as the nations besiege Jerusalem (12:2, 14:2). The siege of Jerusalem was the first of several similarities revealed by the exegesis of Zechariah 12-14. Zechariah predicts that a plague will strike both the enemy soldiers and their horses during the conflict (12:4, 14:12). Zechariah prophesies that Egypt will be required to worship Yahweh in Jerusalem (14:18).²⁸⁰ And while chapter 12 does not specifically mention Egypt, the use of the phrase "will consume right and left all the surrounding peoples" in 12:6 may be a reference to the east and west or Babylon and Egypt. Zechariah offers an account of Yahweh's actions following the battle in both sequences (13:1-6, 14:6-11). Specifically, the prophet states that a cleansing fountain will flow from Jerusalem that will purify the people of their sin (13:1, 14:8). And finally, Zechariah links both passages through the creation motif. "The Lord, who stretches out the heavens, who lays the foundation of the earth, and who forms the human spirit within a person" (12:2) will recreate the landscape of Judah (14:10), lifting Jerusalem "from the Benjamin Gate to the site of the First Gate, to the Corner Gate, and from the Tower of Hananel to the royal winepresses."²⁸¹

While the similarities between the battles revealed by the exegesis of Zechariah 12-14 are important, there are three motifs which offer strong evidence toward a unity of the sequences. The first of these motifs is Zion and its associated theology. Zion Theology in the battle sequences includes four themes: the divine empowerment of Zion, the divine protection of Zion, Zion as the center of national restoration, and the future invincibility of Jerusalem. Zechariah 12:2 and 14:2 describes the future siege of Jerusalem by the nations.²⁸² In each instance, it is Yahweh who will come to the city's defense. Zion's power will be derived from Yahweh. Second, Yahweh will protect Jerusalem by empowering the people while inflicting the nations

²⁸⁰ Meyers, *Zechariah 9-14: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 474-476.

²⁸¹ Merrill, "An Exegetical Commentary: Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi," 309.

²⁸² Feinberg, *The Minor Prophets*, 330.

with a devastating plague. Third, the restoration will be centered in Zion, the historic center of worship. While Zechariah does not specifically mention the Temple in chapters 9-14, he does reference Jerusalem as the center of worship ten times in chapters 12-14 alone creating a strong link between the battle sequences. And finally, Zechariah prophesies that after the restoration, Jerusalem will “never again...be destroyed” (14:11). Zion “will finally enjoy the security it has always craved” while the nations will be at the mercy of Yahweh.²⁸³

The phrase *יום יהוה* (Day of the Lord) is the second of these connecting motifs. The phrase “on that day” references events that will transpire on the “Day of the Lord.” Several events in each sequence will take place *ביום-ההוא* (on that day). The attacking riders will be struck with blindness “on that day” (12:4 and 14:12-15). All the nations that attack Jerusalem will be engaged in Holy War by Yahweh “on that day” (12:9 and 14:3). And “a fountain will be opened” in Jerusalem to cleanse the people of their impurities “on that day” (13:1 and 14:8). This phrase is also “a significant rhetorical feature” for both battle sequences.²⁸⁴ “The form of [on that day] found in 12:3, 9; 13:2, 4 [marks] the structural skeleton for the passage that” followed.²⁸⁵ Zechariah 14:4, 6, 7, 13, 20, and 21 relate specific aspects of the victory and aftermath, similar to 13:1, 2, and 4. The phrase also marks the redemption of Judah through the life giving water in both battle sequences (13:1 and 14:8).

The Divine Warrior is the third of these connecting motifs. There are five steps in the Divine Warrior motif related to the prosecution of holy war with the first three found in both chapters 12-14.²⁸⁶ The first and second step in divine Holy War is the warfare itself. Zechariah 12:2-9 and 14:1-5 and 12-15 narrate the battle sequences. The Divine Warrior will bring the

²⁸³ Meyers, *Zechariah 9-14: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary*, 458.

²⁸⁴ Boda, *Haggai and Zechariah*, 481.

²⁸⁵ Ibid.

²⁸⁶ Longman and Reid, *God is a Warrior*, 83-85.

nations to war against Jerusalem in both battle sequences and will use a plague to defeat the nations. The third step of the Divine Warrior motif is kingship. Zechariah 14:9 declares, “The Lord will be king over the whole earth. “On that day” there will be one Lord, and his name the only name.” Chapter 12 does not identify this moment but in light of John 19:37, 12:10 seems to clearly identify Christ and the reaction of Israel after his return.²⁸⁷

Zion Theology, the “Day of the Lord,” and Yahweh as the Divine Warrior each offer strong evidence for identical battle sequences in Zechariah 12-14. However, the identical nature of the battles is threatened by two important differences. First, Zechariah prophesies that Jerusalem will be judged in chapter 14. He does not however mention this judgment in chapter 12. The reason for this difference might simply be the judgment focus of each battle sequence. Yahweh will use Judah and Jerusalem as tools of judgment against the nations (12:1-9). But Yahweh will also likely use the nations as tools of judgment against Jerusalem (14:1-2). It may be that both battle sequences in chapters 12-14 have a specific purpose in regards to the focus of Yahweh’s judgment on the day of battle.

Conclusion

There appears to be enough evidence to suggest that Zechariah 12:1-13:6 and chapter 14 are in fact describing the same battle in consecutive sequences. The exegesis revealed several similarities between the battles including the description of similar events. Yahweh will call the nations to Jerusalem for battle (12:2, 14:1-2). Yahweh will fight the nations using a terrible plague to disable the attacking armies (12:4, 14:12). And finally, Yahweh will claim victory over the nations (12:9, 14:11). There are also three motifs which appear to be central in both sequences. Jerusalem will be the center of both conflicts. Both battles will occur on the “Day of

²⁸⁷ Unger, *Zechariah: Prophet of Messiah’s Glory*, 217.

the Lord.” And finally, Yahweh as the Divine Warrior will judge Judah, Jerusalem, and the nations while also fighting for Judah and Jerusalem in both battle sequences. He will also become the Divine Deliverer in both sequences (12:10, 14:9).

These motifs, in light of the apparent shared chronology of the battles, seem to suggest that Zechariah is prophesying about the same battle in chapters 12-13 as chapter 14. Considering the many similarities of the sequences in chapters 12-14 it is difficult to imagine these battles as different events.

Additional Research

More research is needed to help explain the important differences between the battles. Chapter 12 does not offer a reason why the nations have come to war against Jerusalem and Yahweh’s judgment of Jerusalem is only known when chapter 12 is compared with 14:1-2. Also, while the events of the battle are similar, Zechariah does not call the calamity brought on the nations by Yahweh in 12:4 a plague. However, he does call this calamity a plague in 14:12. The result of Yahweh’s action against the nations in 12:4 and 14:12 is similar. But why would Zechariah use different language to describe similar acts? Finally, Zechariah 12 does not describe the suffering of Jerusalem. Does the specific focus of chapter 12 adequately explain this important difference?

How might the apocalyptic genre of Zechariah 9-14 help to explain these differences? And might the presence of apocalyptic motifs strengthen the case for a unity of the battle sequences? An investigation of the structure of Zechariah might also help to explain the differences. How do chapters 12-14 fit into the overall structure and purpose of the book?²⁸⁸

²⁸⁸ For more information on the structure of the book of Zechariah please note: Meredith Kline, “The Structure of the Book of Zechariah,” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 34, no. 2 (June 1991), 179-193.

How might this purpose dictate the events described in each sequence? Are there differences between the battle sequences which are found in chapters 9-10 and other “Day of the Lord” prophetic passages like Joel 2? Additionally, how might battle sequences like those in Ezekiel 38-39 inform an interpretation of Zechariah 12-14? Finally, how might the church use Zechariah 12-14 to predict specific end time events?

Zechariah has often been assigned a chiasmic structure. For further discussion note: Lamarche, Paul. *Zecharie IX-XIV: Structure Littéraire et Messianisme*. Paris: J. Gabalda, 1961. Klein offers a critique of Lamarche and Kline (George L. Klein, *Zechariah*, 46).

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