

The Temple in Zechariah 14

Zechariah 14 is clearly prophetic as it pertains to the “Day of the Lord” it mentions Yahweh going forth to fight and this is taken up in Revelation 16 where the place is called Armageddon which in all probability originates from the Meggido of Zech 12.11.¹ There is a great earthquake (that is likened to the one in Uzziah’s time) and the Olivet mount is split in two. The messiah is revealed and Israel’s enemies are defeated. The chapter concludes by describing the kingdom – a time healing and worship.

The house of the Lord is referred to in verse 20 and this may be taken as a reference to the temple, in fact Zechariah employs the terms “house” and “temple” in virtually interchangeable fashion in Zech 8.9; “Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Let your hands be strong, ye that hear in these days these words by the mouth of the prophets, which *were* in the day *that* the foundation of the house (בֵּית) of the LORD of hosts was laid, that the temple (הַיְדִיבָל) might be built”.

The reference in the above verse is the second temple, therefore the reference to the “house” in Zech 14.20-21 must also be to a physical temple leading us to the conclusion that a physical temple (and sacrifice) must be present in the age to come and that temple is obviously Ezekiel’s temple. However, such a facile, literal understanding does not do justice to wider biblical theology which understands Jesus and his saints as the temple and explicitly says that John saw “no temple” in the New Jerusalem (Rev 21.22).

A closer look at Zech 14.20-21

The verb (*zabach*) sacrifice (זָבַח) occurs 134x in the OT, 112x in the Qal and 22x in the Piel. The basic meaning of the Qal verb is to slaughter. The term is not always used for ritual

¹ On this see Michael Barber; Day further strengthens the case that Zech. 12 is the source for “Armageddon” by pointing out that it is the only place in the Hebrew Bible where Megiddo is referred to as megiddon rather than megiddo. Though the term megiddon appears in several places in the Greek Old Testament, this fact is significant because John asserts that “Armageddon” is derived from a Hebrew word (i.e. “at the place which is called in Hebrew...”). See J. Day, “Origin of Armageddon: Revelation 6:16 as an Interpretation of Zechariah 12:11,” *Crossing the Boundaries: Essays in Biblical Interpretation in Honour of Michael D. Goulder*, Stanley Porter, et al., eds. (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 315-26”. Michael Barber, *Coming Soon: Unlocking the Book of Revelation and Applying Its Lessons Today*, (Emmaus Road Publishing, 2006), 202-203 footnote 14. For a full discussion see Armageddon <http://www.biblaridion.info/html/ch16.html#P350>

sacrifice but can be used for non-sacral slaughtering of animals (e.g., Num 22.40. Deut 12.15,21, 1 Sam 28.24; 1 Kgs 19.21, Eek 34.3 see HALOT 262). Therefore it can mean slaughter to eat in a non ritual sense.

“On that day HOLY TO THE LORD will be inscribed on the bells of the horses, and the cooking pots in the LORD's house will be like the sacred bowls in front of the altar. Yea, every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness unto the LORD of hosts: and all they that sacrifice (slaughter to eat) (קֶבֶד) shall come and take of them (=the pots), and seethe therein: and in that day there shall be no more the Canaanite (merchant) in the house of the LORD of hosts” (Zech 14.20-21 NIV).

The whole city is holy (dedicated to God). Even the horses will carry the inscription **HOLY TO THE LORD** a phrase normally reserved for **the crown of the high priest** (Exod 28.36). This does not mean that horses do priestly service in the “house” (temple) but that every aspect of the city has been consecrated because of the presence of Yahweh. In the glory of the messianic age there will be no differences between the sacred and the profane– all will be dedicated to his use. In other words a “cooking pot” is as holy as an “altar bowl”. This does not necessarily mean that a literal altar will be present as Christians have been told; **“We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle”** (Heb 13.10). Jesus Christ is altar *and* sacrifice, priest *and* king, Son of God *and* Son of man. He is also the temple (house); **“The Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it”** (Rev 21.22).

The altar or “table”² is the one spoken of in Psalm 23.5-6; *“Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD forever”*. The table (altar) of the Lord has the bread and wine of the New Covenant with Jesus saying; *“...until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom”* (Matt 26.29).

“And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one” (Zech 14.9).

² The “altar” of the Lord is sometimes called the “table” (Mal 1.7).

This is obviously a reference to the “shema” of Deut 6.4. In Zechariah God and his people are one even though they are manifest as a multitude --- the new city and country whose builder and maker is God (Heb 11.10) consists of glorified saints – they are its pillars (Rev 3.12), walls and foundations (Rev 21.12-14). They are “lively” stones and **they all bear his name** (Rev 3.12).

The **New Jerusalem** which comes down from heaven (Rev 21.2) is the saints. It has the dimensions of the whole Middle East (Rev 21.16) so although we call Jerusalem a “city” a more accurate description would be a “region” or “country”. It is the kingdom promised to Abraham in Genesis 15 from the river of Egypt to the Euphrates. Elsewhere Zechariah pictures “boys and girls playing in the streets of Jerusalem” (Zech. 8.4-5). “Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls, for the multitude of men and cattle therein” (Zech. 2.4). This is in contrast with a region that presently for the most part lies in ruins (because of wars) and will undergo further destructions. In Ezekiel, Jerusalem is rebuilt as an enormous temple and a completely new city is built on the site of Bethlehem **but that never happened**. In Zechariah Jerusalem becomes a “temple/house” that has horses and children playing and the whole “city” **and everything in it is holy**.

This New Jerusalem will not allow the Canaanite entry. The Canaanite was a “**merchant**”; “trader” (because Canaanites, especially Phoenicians, were merchants and traders; cf. *BDB* 489 s.v. I and II כְּנַעֲנִי). English versions have rendered the term as “Canaanite” (KJV, NKJV, NASB, NIV), “trader” (RSV, NEB), “traders” (NRSV, NLT), or “merchant” (NAB), although frequently a note is given explaining the other option. Why no merchants? Merchants and money changers had turned the second temple into a den of thieves. Jesus uses similar words “....make not my Father's house an house of merchandise” (John 2.16). The merchants were necessary because they traded in animals and exchanged money....they are no longer necessary because there **are no longer any sacrifices** instead it would be a “*house of prayer for all nations*” (Mk 11.17).

“Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD
of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the LORD” (Zech 8.22).

Zechariah envisages a similar topographical change as Ezekiel, namely living waters flowing to the east and west (Zech 14.14)³ and Zechariah also describes how the nations make an annual pilgrimage to Jerusalem to celebrate Tabernacles (Zech 14.16).⁴ No doubt the splitting of the Rift valley will change the layout of the Middle East and even divert rivers. The region may even end up with a “lake of fire” (like Hawaii) on the surface. The physical

³ The *eastern sea* is a reference to the Dead Sea (cf. NCV, TEV, CEV, NLT) and the *western sea* is a reference to the Mediterranean Sea (cf. NCV, TEV, CEV, NLT).

⁴ “And the nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it: and the kings of the earth do bring their glory and honour into it” (Rev 21.24).

landscape transformations also have a metaphorical, spiritual dimension; “a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb” (Rev 22.1). This describes the saints (living waters)⁵ sent out to the whole world for....the healing of the nations (22.2). The feast of tabernacles (booths) celebrates deliverance from Egypt but it is also a harvest festival; compare “....the tree of life, which bare twelve *manner of* fruits, *and* yielded her fruit every month” (22.2). The “harvest” is the gentile nations--- Israel has finally fulfilled her destiny and is producing fruit. No longer is Israel a curse but rather a blessing--- a tree of life producing much fruit, hence the feast of Tabernacles. It is possible to celebrate Tabernacles without blood sacrifice; indeed the Jews celebrate it now without sacrifice. Zechariah describes fellowship where even mournful Jewish feasts will become occasions for; “*joy and gladness, and cheerful feasts*” (Zech 8.9).

Zechariah and Revelation do not describe a physical temple they describe a city wherein **everything is holy**. There is no merchant in this city because there is no sacrifice or money changing; “*And there shall in no wise enter into it anything that defileth*” (Rev 21.27). On the other hand Ezekiel does describe a temple (not a city) and there are sacrifices. Ezekiel’s temple is a **big red herring** because although it was meant to be built upon the return of Judah to the land it was never built. The vision of the glorious temple was meant **to make them ashamed** (Ezek 43.10-11). Were they ashamed? Did they change their ways? No, in fact the prophet Haggai (1.4) had to castigate the people for their failure to complete the temple and when it was complete the ancients who remembered the former glory wept (Ezra 3.11-13). However, the second temple was renovated (almost completely rebuilt) some five hundred years later by a **psychopathic Edomite** Herod the Great and administered by a corrupt **Sadducee Priesthood**. The word **Sadducee** comes from **Sadoc** or **Zadok**;

“But the priests the Levites, **the sons of Zadok**, that kept the charge of my sanctuary when the children of Israel went astray from me, they shall come near to me to minister unto me, and they shall stand before me to offer unto me the fat and the blood, saith the Lord GOD” (Ezek 44.15)

Ezekiel’s vision did not make the **sons of Zadok (Sadducees) ashamed**. They put the **messiah to death** and rejected belief in the resurrection. Ezekiel’s temple was never built

⁵ Jesus promised the Samaritan woman “living waters” and told her that God was not worshiped on “this mountain” (Samaria) or Jerusalem but in “Spirit and Truth” (John 4.14-24).

and the second temple was removed and replaced by Jesus Christ –the true temple.⁶ There are no functioning Zadokite priests in the kingdom age. The Mosaic dispensation has been done way with (even as a teaching tool) and Levitical priests have been replaced by Melchizedek priests after the likeness of Jesus Christ:

“Even he shall build the temple of the LORD; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both” (Zech 6.13).

Therefore Jesus becomes the temple builder *par excellence* and he unites the functions of priest and king in himself. He also unites the throne of David with the throne of God and therefore it can be said that the Davidic throne (cf. 2 Sam 7.14) is established forever by the resurrected Christ. The book of Hebrews cites Ps 45.6 where it says; “*But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom*” (Heb 1.8).⁷ In any case, the throne of God and the throne of David are united in Jesus Christ. Even before he establishes the kingdom of God on earth he is “the prince of the kings of the earth” (Rev 1.5) and John sees the Lamb “in the midst of the throne” (Rev 7.17) as Jesus is the lion of Judah and the root of Jesse (Rev 5. 5) and he has “been given the throne of God forever” (Ps 45.6, Heb 1.8) the Davidic throne can already said to be established (although not manifest).

⁶ See; Harry Whittaker, A Fresh Look at Ezekiel’s Temple, Critique of a literal reading; <http://www.biblaridion.info/resources/EzekTemp.pdf>

⁷ The Jewish Publication Society (JPS) translation of Psalm 45.6 [7] has it as a genitive as does RV margin; “Thy throne given of God is forever and ever; a sceptre of equity is the sceptre of thy kingdom”. The translation into the Greek (Heb 1.8) is then possibly, “Your throne is God forever and ever” The μέν...δέ (*men...de*) construction that connects v. 7 with v. 8 clearly lays out this contrast: “On the one hand, he says of the angels...on the other hand, he says of the Son.” Thus, it is grammatically *possible* that θεός (*theos*) in v. 8 should be taken as a predicate nominative but the correlative conjunctions make it unlikely. Elsewhere in the OT the King is called “Mighty God” (Isa 9.6) in his capacity as the divine agent therefore it is possible that “God” is intended (thy throne, O God...) – this is an example of God manifestation not incarnation; “Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name” (Philip 2.9)