

Zechariah 8:20

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

Thus saith the LORD of hosts; It shall yet come to pass, that there shall come people, and the inhabitants of many cities:

Analysis

Thus saith the LORD of hosts; It shall yet come to pass, that there shall come people, and the inhabitants of many cities. This verse begins an eschatological vision of universal pilgrimage to Jerusalem. The opening formula **"Thus saith the LORD of hosts"** (koh amar Yahweh Tzeva'ot, כֹּה אָמַר יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת) asserts divine authority, while "It shall yet come to pass" (od asher, עַד אֲשֶׁר) points to future fulfillment—this transcends immediate post-exilic reality to ultimate kingdom consummation.

The phrase **"there shall come people, and the inhabitants of many cities"** (yavo'u ammim ve-yoshvei arim rabot, יָבֹאוּ עַמִּים וְיוֹשְׁבֵי עָרִים רַבּוֹת) envisions mass movement toward Jerusalem. Ammim (עַמִּים, peoples/nations) indicates Gentiles, not merely scattered Jews returning. The "inhabitants of many cities" suggests organized delegations from urban centers worldwide. This isn't isolated individuals but corporate, civic movements—entire populations seeking the LORD.

This vision echoes multiple prophetic promises: Isaiah 2:2-3 foretells nations streaming to Zion saying "Come, let us go up to the mountain of the LORD"; Micah 4:1-2 parallels this; Isaiah 60:3 promises "nations shall come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising." The consistent prophetic testimony envisions Jerusalem as the center of universal worship in the Messianic age. The New Testament reveals Christ as the fulfillment—He draws all people to Himself (John 12:32), and the heavenly Jerusalem receives the redeemed from every nation (Revelation 21:24-26).

Historical Context

This prophecy would have seemed fantastic to Zechariah's audience. In 520 BC, Jerusalem was a small, struggling settlement with partially rebuilt walls and an unfinished temple. Surrounding nations were hostile or indifferent. Yet God promises that this despised city will become the magnetic center of world pilgrimage. The promise builds on Abrahamic covenant theology: through Abraham's seed, all nations would be blessed (Genesis 12:3, 22:18).

Historically, this began fulfilling through proselytes—Gentiles converting to Judaism (Acts 2:10, 6:5). But full realization came through Christ. At Pentecost, Jews from every nation heard the gospel (Acts 2:5-11), and the church exploded globally. Paul's ministry brought Gentiles into God's people (Ephesians 2:11-22). The Jerusalem church's initial resistance to Gentile inclusion (Acts 10-11, 15) gradually gave way to recognizing God's plan to save all nations.

The vision awaits ultimate fulfillment at Christ's return. Revelation depicts the New Jerusalem descending from heaven with nations walking by its light (Revelation 21:10, 24). The city Abraham sought—"the city that has foundations, whose designer and builder is God" (Hebrews 11:10)—will be fully realized. Meanwhile, the church proclaims the gospel to all nations (Matthew 28:19-20), gathering the elect from every tribe and tongue.

Related Passages

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Psalms 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Study Questions

1. How does this vision of universal pilgrimage to Jerusalem find fulfillment in Christ and the church?
2. What does God's promise that despised Jerusalem would become the world's worship center teach about His power to reverse human expectations?

3. How should the certainty of ultimate universal worship shape the church's current missionary efforts?
4. In what ways does your local church reflect the multi-ethnic, multi-national character of God's eschatological people?
5. How can believers maintain both commitment to the uniqueness of Christ and welcoming posture toward all peoples?

Interlinear Text

אֲשֶׁר עַד צָבָא וְהוֹ ה' אֱמַר כֹּה
 H834 H5750 H6635 H3068 H559 H3541
 Thus saith the LORD of hosts

עַרְיָם וְיוֹשְׁבֵי יְעִמֹּי יָבֹאוּ
 H5892 H3427 H5971 H935
 cities and the inhabitants people
 It shall yet come to pass that there shall come

רַבּוֹת:
 of many
 H7227

Additional Cross-References

Zechariah 2:11 (References Lord): And many nations shall be joined to the LORD in that day, and shall be my people: and I will dwell in the midst of thee, and thou shalt know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto thee.

Jeremiah 16:19 (References Lord): O LORD, my strength, and my fortress, and my refuge in the day of affliction, the Gentiles shall come unto thee from the ends of the earth, and shall say, Surely our fathers have inherited lies, vanity, and things wherein there is no profit.