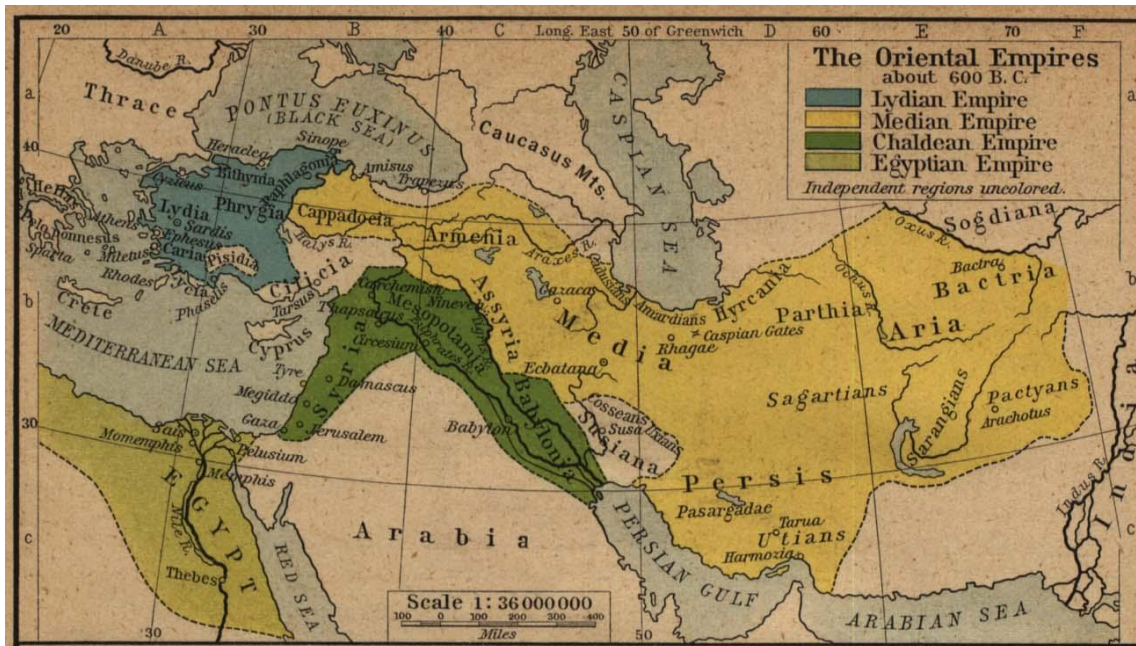


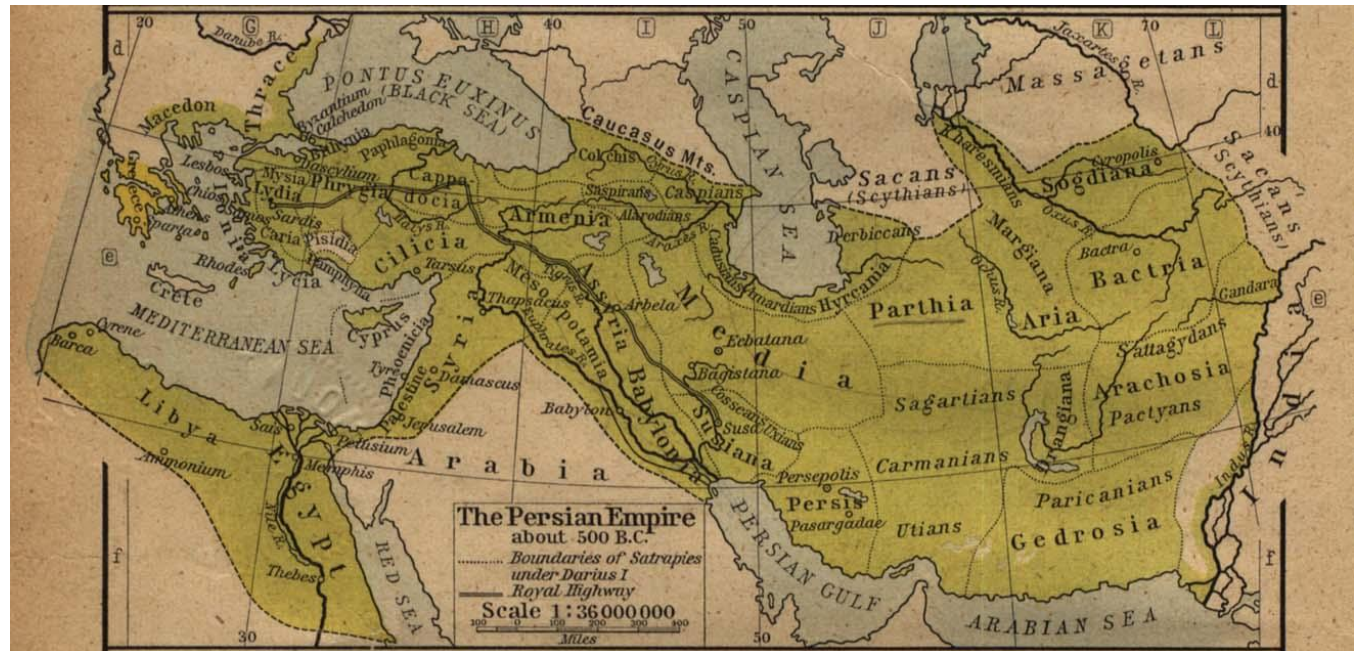
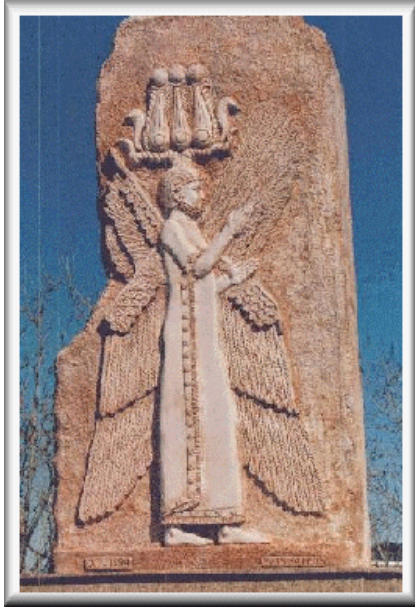
Zechariah

After Solomon's death, the nation of Israel began to fall apart. It divided into two kingdoms; in the north was Israel and in the south Judea. The northern kingdom was overrun by the Assyrians and began to worship idols. Judea in the south also began to turn from God and was warned by the prophets to repent, but they did not listen. So, God allowed Jerusalem to be defeated by Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar (**neh-byoo-kuhd-NEHZ-er**) in 597 BC. Things got even worse after a revolt against Babylonian rule in 586 BC and Nebuchadnezzar destroyed Jerusalem and the temple, and the people were taken off into bondage.



Zechariah

Well, as we have seen over and over, the people sin, the people are warned, the people do not listen, the people are punished, the people repent and pray to God to save them, and God came to the rescue once again. So, in 539 BC Cyrus the Great, king of Persia, marched against Babylon and the city was defeated in 538 BC. As Cyrus built the Persian empire he did not force the conquered people to give up their religion and culture, so in keeping with this policy he issued a decree in 538 BC that the Jews should go back to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple.



Zechariah

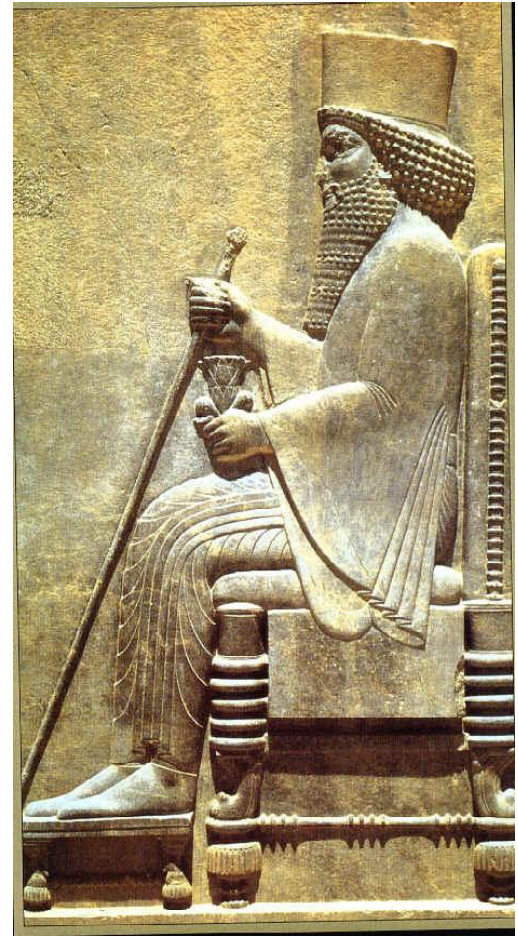
After the decree of Cyrus the Great for the Jews to return to Jerusalem, Zerubbabel (**zeh-RUH-buh-behl**), who was born in Babylon and had a Babylonian name, led a group of 42,360 Jews back to Jerusalem. Most of those “returning” were born in Babylonia and had never actually seen Jerusalem. Among them was the prophet Zacheriah (**zeh-kuh-RAI-uh**), whose name means “God has remembered.” Zacheriah was the son of Berechiah (**behr-ehk-AI-uh**) and grandson of Iddo (**IHD-o**) a priest, and was therefore of priestly lineage.

Zechariah

In 520 BC, after his return to Jerusalem, Zechariah received messages from God. Like his contemporary, Haggai (**HAG-ay-ai**), he was very specific about the dates.

Zechariah 1:1:

“¹ In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, the word of the Lord came to the prophet Zechariah son of Berechiah son of Iddo, saying:”



Zechariah

The book of Zechariah is in two basic parts. From my study bible:

“The first (chapters 1-8) is historical and dealt with the situation in Jerusalem at the time of its writing. The second half (chapters 9-14) is apocalyptic, having to do with prophecy and the end of the age.”

Zechariah

Zechariah starts out by telling the people of God's displeasure with them and reminds them that God does what He says (1: 2-6). I think He is saying, "I told you so."

²The Lord was very angry with your ancestors. ³Therefore say to them, Thus says the Lord of hosts: Return to me, says the Lord of hosts, and I will return to you, says the Lord of hosts. ⁴Do not be like your ancestors, to whom the former prophets proclaimed, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts, Return from your evil ways and from your evil deeds.' But they did not hear or heed me, says the Lord. ⁵Your ancestors, where are they? And the prophets, do they live for ever? ⁶But my words and my statutes, which I commanded my servants the prophets, did they not overtake your ancestors? So they repented and said, 'The Lord of hosts has dealt with us according to our ways and deeds, just as he planned to do.'

Zechariah

God warned His people to behave, but they did not listen. So, He brought their enemies against them and punished them. Now He is telling the people through Zechariah that they need to remember their history and not repeat the mistakes of the past. This reminds me of raising my own children. When they do not obey, they need to be punished and reminded that there are consequences for bad behavior. But sometimes, they just have to test me anyway.

Zechariah

Zechariah then tells of eight visions he receives. These visions are what I focused on.

“⁷ On the twenty-fourth day of the eleventh month, the month of Shebat, in the second year of Darius, the word of the Lord came to the prophet Zechariah son of Berechiah son of Iddo; and Zechariah said,”

Zechariah

(1) The Horsemen (1:8-17): Zechariah saw horsemen standing among the myrtle trees and asked who they were. The angel told Zechariah these were those whom the Lord sent to patrol the earth and they found peace everywhere. But this peace was among the nations that had enslaved His people for 70 years and God was going to punish them for this.

“¹⁵And I am extremely angry with the nations that are at ease; for while I was only a little angry, they made the disaster worse.”



Zechariah

(2) Four Horns (1:18-21): Next Zechariah sees four horns and four smiths. The four horns represent the nations that scattered Gods people and the blacksmiths were there to terrify them and strike them down. I was not really clear on what four nations were being referred to here. One commentary thought it referred to the four nations that ruled Judea. **Babylon**, who was defeated by **Persia**, who was defeated by **Greece**, who was defeated by **Rome**. If this is the historical part of Zechariah, I do not see how talking of the future fits here.

Another reference I found said, “The four horns were four kingdoms (Assyria, Babylon, Egypt, and Medo-Persia), all of which would fall in recompense for having destroyed Jerusalem.” This makes more sense to me.



Zechariah

(3) The Measuring Line (2:1-13): A man came with a measuring line to measure Jerusalem, but the angle stopped him and said that Jerusalem would be like a city without walls because there will be so many people and animals there that they will not fit behind the walls. But God would protect them and many nations would come to join them.

“⁵For I will be a wall of fire all round it, says the Lord, and I will be the glory within it.”

“¹¹Many nations shall join themselves to the Lord on that day, and shall be my people; and I will dwell in your midst. And you shall know that the Lord of hosts has sent me to you.”



Zechariah

(4) Joshua (3:1-10):

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

Joshua was the high priest who would be responsible for rebuilding the spiritual life of the Jews. He was standing in filthy cloths, representing the sin of the people. God rebuked Satan and the angle ordered that the filthy cloths be removed, removing his guilt, and that he be clothed in festal apparel. Then comes what seems to be a reference to the coming Christ. (However, later in 6:12 it refers to Joshua as the branch.)

“⁸Now listen, Joshua, high priest, you and your colleagues who sit before you! For they are an omen of things to come: I am going to bring my servant the Branch. ⁹For on the stone that I have set before Joshua, on a single stone with seven facets, I will engrave its inscription, says the Lord of hosts, and I will remove the guilt of this land in a single day.”

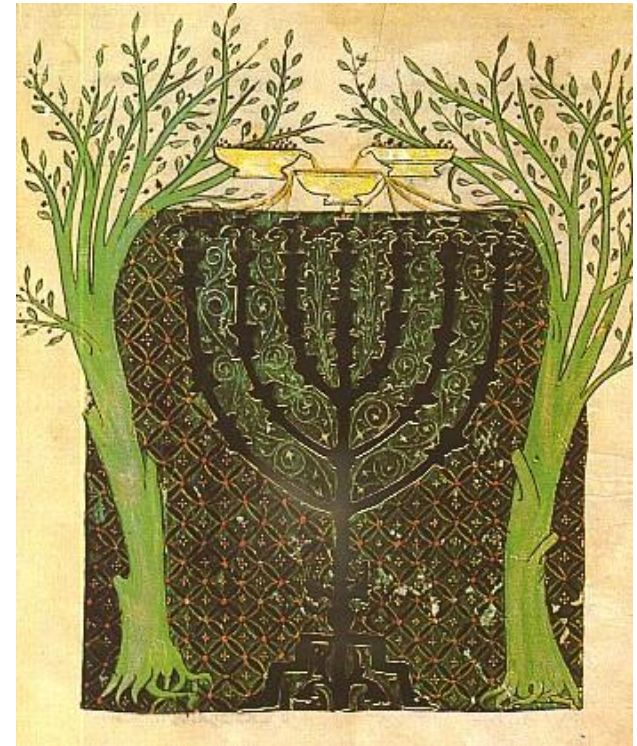
Zechariah

(5) The Lampstand and The Two Olive Trees (4:1-14): There was a lamp stand with seven lamps and each lamp had seven lips. Two olive trees were there, one on either side of the lamp stand supplying oil to the lamps.

“This vision shows the never-failing supply of strength from God (the trees), the agent of supply (the Holy Spirit), the human agents used by God (Joshua and Zerubbabel), and the fact that the job gets done.”

Zerubbabel was the political leader and Joshua was the spiritual leader.

“⁶He said to me, ‘This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel: Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, says the Lord of hosts.’”



Zechariah

(6) The Flying Scroll (5:1-4): This is God's judgment against those who steal and who bear false witness.

“³Then he said to me, ‘This is the curse that goes out over the face of the whole land; for everyone who steals shall be cut off according to the writing on one side, and everyone who swears falsely shall be cut off according to the writing on the other side.’”



Zechariah

(7) The Basket of Iniquity (5:5-11): The Greek word, translated in the NRSV as basket, is ephah (**EE-fuh**) which was a measuring container of about 22 liters. Wickedness was to be put in this basket and carried away.

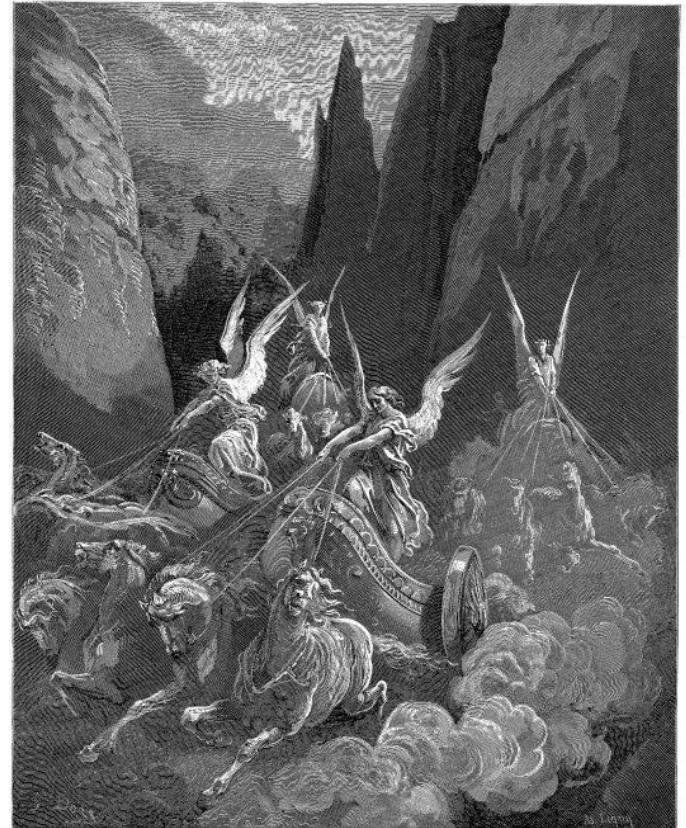
“⁷Then a leaden cover was lifted, and there was a woman sitting in the basket! ⁸And he said, ‘This is Wickedness.’ So he thrust her back into the basket, and pressed the leaden weight down on its mouth. ⁹Then I looked up and saw two women coming forward. The wind was in their wings; they had wings like the wings of a stork, and they lifted up the basket between earth and sky. ¹⁰Then I said to the angel who talked with me, ‘Where are they taking the basket?’ ¹¹He said to me, ‘To the land of Shinar, to build a house for it; and when this is prepared, they will set the basket down there on its base.’”



Zechariah

The Four Chariots (6:1-8): The last vision of Zechariah was of four chariots coming from between two bronze mountains. These chariots are sent out by God to patrol the four corners of the earth.

"The Vision of the Four Chariots" by Gustave Doré



Zechariah

Chapters 9-14 are apocalyptic in nature. I find these types of writing much more difficult to understand and require more time to investigate than I had. One thing I wanted to point out, though, was that many modern scholars do not believe Zechariah wrote these chapters because of the different style and references to events that had not happened yet. Those who believe in prophecy of coming events by those chosen by God to deliver his message don't have a problem with this. For example, in chapter 9 it says:

“¹³For I have bent Judah as my bow;
I have made Ephraim its arrow.
I will arouse your sons, O Zion,
against your sons, O Greece,
and wield you like a warrior's sword.”

But, Greece was not a great power at the time of the writing. How could Zechariah know about this? For me personally, I believe that if God could create the heavens and the earth, He could give visions of future happenings to His prophets.