

**THE LORD REMEMBERS AND WILL AGAIN  
CHOOSE JERUSALEM --  
COMMENTARY ON THE BOOK OF ZECHARIAH**

by Paul G. Apple, October 2007

**BY A SERIES OF PROPHETIC VISIONS AND MESSAGES OF ULTIMATE RESTORATION AND TRIUMPH, ZECHARIAH ENCOURAGES THE NATION OF ISRAEL IN THEIR MISSION OF REBUILDING THE TEMPLE BY REMINDING THEM OF GOD'S FAITHFULNESS TO FULFILL HIS MESSIANIC AND KINGDOM PROMISES**

*"the Lord will again comfort Zion and again choose Jerusalem"*

- Zechariah 1:17

For each section in the Book of Zechariah:

- Thesis statement ... to focus on the big idea
- Analytical outline ... to guide the understanding
- Devotional questions ... to encourage life application
- Representative quotations ... to stimulate deeper insight

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## BACKGROUND OF BOOK OF ZECHARIAH

**Malick:** Even though Yahweh warns the postexilic community and recounts their faithfulness, He encourages them through prophetic visions and messages of ultimate victory in order that they might presently trust and obey Him who is faithful.

**Roper:** The book of Zechariah, along with those of Haggai and Malachi, forms a triad that we call the "postexilic" prophets, obviously because they were written after the Exile. The Exile, as I indicated in the first study of this series, was a time of terrible humiliation for the Jews. They had spent seventy long years in Babylon and Persia, and they returned to their land greatly reduced in number. Only about forty-two thousand came back to rebuild Jerusalem and the temple. They were greeted upon their return by a picture of absolute desolation. The little cities in the heartland of Judah lay in ruins. The city of Jerusalem had been destroyed; there was a great deal of rubble in the streets and the walls had been broken down and had not been repaired. And in the middle of Jerusalem stood the burned-out hulk of the temple, which had been left behind by Nebuchadnezzar and his troops when he invaded Judah in the Sixth Century. It was a very difficult time.

There is nothing quite so discouraging as a rebuilding project. It was one thing, I am sure, to have built the temple when the materials were new and fresh, when they had Hiram of Tyre to assist them, and they could not quite envision how it would finally appear. It was exciting, and there was a great deal of momentum to the project. But it is a different matter entirely to have to take soot blackened stones and clean them, to have to salvage lumber which had been used before, and rebuild with these. That is difficult. So God raised up these prophets at this time to encourage them in this very discouraging task.

I am sure that many of us are involved in the process of reconstruction. Our lives, for one reason or another, have been ruined, and are just as blighted and blasted as the nation of Judah was. And now we are going back and picking up the pieces. That is so discouraging, because the materials have been distorted and ruined in some way, and it is difficult to put it all back together again. There is nothing quite so difficult as reconstruction.

The message revolves around the meaning of his name, for Zechariah means "God remembers". That would be important for the returned exiles to know. They felt at times that they were a forgotten people, that God had turned his back on them, and they needed to recall that God remembered. Actually, a number of priests during the exilic period were given this name, so it is evident that this was a thought which pervaded much of the nation of Judah at this time.

Zechariah's prophecy is divided into four major units. The first six verses of chapter 1 are an introductory section which was delivered between verses 9 and 10 of Haggai 2. Zechariah 1, verse 1, reads, "In the eighth month of the second year of Darius, the word of the Lord came to Zechariah the prophet..." Verse 9 of Haggai 2 ends a prophecy delivered "on the twenty-first of the seventh month," and verse 10 begins, "On the twenty-fourth of the ninth month, in the second year of Darius, the word of the Lord

came to Haggai the prophet.” Zechariah began his ministry just about a month before Haggai delivered his third message. So these two men worked together hand-in-glove to minister to the nation of Judah.

Zechariah's introductory message was given in the eighth month, which would be our month of November. Then a message followed a couple of months later, in the eleventh month, which would be our month of February. This second message is built around a series of eight visions Zechariah saw in the night. As you know, the Hebrew prophets are frequently referred to as "seers," because they saw things no one else saw. This was the case in Zechariah's ministry. The Lord revealed certain truths to him through visions which came to him in the middle of the night. These prophecies are given to us in chapter 1, verse 7, through chapter 6.

The third division is found in chapters 7 and 8. This message was given about two years after the visions of the second message. It is basically a response to the questions of a delegation of men that came to him from Bethel. The final message of Zechariah begins with chapter 9 and continues on to the end of the book in chapter 14. This section is a series of apocalyptic visions, i.e., it takes us way down to the end time, shows us the future of Israel and of the nations surrounding Israel. It is very much like the book of Revelation.

**Baxter:** After the short, forthright message of Haggai, this Book of Zechariah may seem discouragingly complicated; yet it is not so in reality, as we shall see. To an observant reader it quickly sorts itself out; and it is full of good things. . . . If we pick our way carefully through this Book of Zechariah two or three times, we soon find its arrangement becoming clear to us. We are sure to see, first of all, that there is a major break between chapters viii. and ix., which divides the book into two main parts. There can scarcely be any mistaking this, for the characteristics of the two parts are markedly different from each other. The first eight chapters are mainly *vision*-prophecies; the remaining six chapters are wholly *direct* prophecies. The first eight chapters were written during the rebuilding of the temple; the remaining six chapters were written considerably after the temple was rebuilt. The first eight chapters have a particular and immediate reference to the Jewish “Remnant” now back in the land; the remaining six chapters have a general and far-reaching reference to Israel as a whole, to the ultimate future, and to the Gentile nations. The contents of the first eight chapters are carefully dated; the contents of the remaining six chapters are nowhere dated.

**Feinberg:** Although Zechariah begins with the theme of the restoration of the sanctuary, he touches upon many phases of the spiritual life of the nation, and he treats with remarkable fullness the prophetic events leading up to Messiah’s return and reign.

<http://www.geocities.com/genebrooks/zechariah.pdf>

## **Outline:**

*Zechariah 1-8 During the Building of the Temple (520-518 BC)*

*Zechariah 9-14 After Building the Temple (480-470 BC)*

### **1. CALL TO REPENTANCE (Zechariah 1:1-6)**

## **2. EIGHT VISIONS IN ONE NIGHT (MESSIANIC & MILLENNIAL) (Zechariah 1:7-6:8)**

- a. Riders Under the Myrtle Trees (1:7-17) *The LORD will again be merciful to Jerusalem (1:14, 16-17) Rev 6:4*
- b. Four Horns & Four Smiths (1:18-21) *Those who scattered Judah are cast out (1:21)*
- c. Man with a Measuring Line (Chapter 2) *God will be a protective wall of fire around Jerusalem (2:3-5) Rev 19:8; 21:23*
- d. Joshua and Satan (3:1-10) *The Servant the Branch comes to save (3:8-9) First prophet to mention Satan*
- e. Lampstand and Two Olive Trees (Chapter 4) *The LORD empowers Israel by His Spirit (4:6) Rev. 1:12; 4:5; 5:6; 11:4*
- f. Flying Scroll (5:1-4) *Wicked governments are cursed (5:3)*
- g. Woman in the Basket (5:5-11) *Wickedness will be removed (5:9)*
- h. Four Chariots (Chapter 6) *Administrative forces of righteousness (G. Campbell Morgan) (6:5, 7) Rev. 6:2, 5*

## **3. CROWNING OF JOSHUA THE HIGH PRIEST (Zechariah 6:9-15)**

### **4. RITUAL FASTING AND THE FUTURE (Zechariah 7-8)**

- a. When the Heart is Right, the Ritual is Right (7:4-7)
- b. When the Heart is Wrong, the Ritual is Wrong (7:8-14)
- c. God's Purpose Concerning Jerusalem Unchanged by any Ritual (Chapter 8)

**5. REJECTION OF THE COMING MESSIAH (Zechariah 9-11)** Jesus returns the favor in prophesying judgment for Zechariah's martyrdom (Matthew 23:35)

### **6. MILLENNIAL REIGN OF THE COMING MESSIAH (Zechariah 12-14)**

- a. Siege of Jerusalem by Anti-Christ and his Armies (Chapter 12)
- b. Repentance of Israel and Reception of their true Messiah (Chapter 13) Romans 11:26
- c. Coming of the Great King to split Mount of Olives in two (Chapter 14)

## **MESSIANIC ZECHARIAH**

*Only Isaiah talks about the Messiah more*

Christ's Deity 3:4; 13:7

Christ's Humanity 6:12; 13:7

Christ's humility 6:12

Christ's priesthood 6:13

Christ's kingship 6:13; 9:9; 14:9, 16

Christ's glorious reign 9:10, 14

Christ's world peace 9:9-10; cf. 3:10

Christ the Branch 3:8

Christ my Servant 3:8

Christ the Good Shepherd 9:16; 11:11

Christ the smitten Shepherd 13:7; Matthew 26:31; Mark 14:27

Christ's entrance to Jerusalem on a colt 9:9; cf. Matthew 21:5; John 12:13

Christ betrayed for thirty pieces of silver 11:12-13; Matthew 14:27

Christ's hands pierced 12:10

Christ's people saved 12:10; 13:1

Christ wounded in the house of His friends 13:6

Christ's coming on the Mount of Olives 14:3-8; Acts 1:11

Christ's coming in glory 14:4

Christ's coronation Zechariah 14:9

Christ's building of the Lord's Temple 6:12-13

## **BLESSINGS OF CHRIST'S KINGDOM:**

\* Extent of His Kingdom worldwide 14:9

\* Abundant rain 10:1

- \* Outpouring of Spirit on Israel 12:10
- \* Revelation of the pierced Messiah 12:10
- \* Changes in Eretz Y Israel 14:4-5, 10-11
- \* Kingdom set up on earth 14:9-15
- \* Jerusalem the center of worship 14:16-17

**George L. Robinson:** The book of Zechariah is the most messianic, the most truly apocalyptic and eschatological of all of the writings of the Old Testament.

**Piper:** The main point is: *Fear not, for I purpose to do you good, says the Lord.* The whole book is made up of visions and prophecies of how God is going to save Israel and make her a blessing to others. And these promises are intended to fill the Jews with hope in God and make them fearless and strong.

One of the problems for gentile Christians like us is how a book full of promises to Jerusalem and Judah can be a help to us today. Let me try to sketch very briefly the principles that guide my interpretation of prophecies like this. First, I think these prophecies are aimed primarily at the ethnic people of Israel. They were the audience; and when they heard Zechariah refer to "the house of Judah and the house of Israel" they would naturally understand the Jewish people not the church of Christian gentiles. These prophecies are aimed at the ethnic people Israel. Second, I think there is a glorious future for Israel even yet when she repents. It is too simple to say that since the time of Christ the church has replaced Israel as God's chosen people, even though that is true, in a sense. The reason it is too simple is that in Romans 11 Paul teaches that God is not finished with ethnic Israel. In verse 1 he says, "Has God rejected his people? By no means! I myself am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham, a member of the tribe of Benjamin." Paul insists that God has not finished with the Jews, first of all because he is a Jew (of the tribe of Benjamin!). Paul does admit that the Jews are temporarily rejected through their unbelief, but this is for the benefit of us gentiles; and when the full number of gentiles is complete the remaining Jews, too, will repent and be saved. Romans 11:12,15, "Now if their (Jews) trespass means riches for the world, and if their failure means riches for the gentiles, how much more will their full inclusion mean! ... If their (Jews) rejection means the reconciliation of the world, what will their acceptance mean but life from the dead?" Here Israel is distinct from converted gentiles and is promised a glorious future. So a few verses later in verses 25,26, Paul says, "A hardening has come upon part of Israel until the full number of the gentiles comes in, and so all Israel will be saved." In the context of Romans 11:12,15 it is unwarranted to interpret "all Israel" here to mean anything other than corporate ethnic Israel. So one of my guiding principles in reading Old Testament prophecy about Israel is that there is a glorious future ahead when Israel will repent, turn to Christ and be saved.

Third, by faith in Christ gentile believers become full partners in the promises made to Israel in the Old Testament. The two key texts to support this principle are Galatians 3:29, "And if you are Christ's then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to the promise," and Ephesians 2:19 and 3:6, "So then you (gentiles) are no longer strangers and sojourners, but you are fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God ... (you are) fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise

in Christ Jesus through the gospel." So by faith in Christ we gentile believers are no longer "alienated from the commonwealth of Israel" but are full partners in the "covenants of promise" (Eph. 2:12).

Fourth, (these first three principles imply that) the prophecies of the Old Testament made to Israel are not less than literal (as though ethnic Israel were not intended) but more than literal, because they embrace not only the ethnic Israel but also the gentile children of Abraham by faith (Rom. 4:11), who will not be second-class citizens in the final kingdom.

Fifth, and finally, many of the benefits promised to the people of Israel are fulfilled in stages. This is especially true since the expected coming of the Messiah has occurred in stages. Christ came the first time (as Hebrews 9:26 says) "to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." And he will "appear a second time not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him." For the most part, Old Testament prophecy does not distinguish these two comings. Therefore, very often some aspects of Old Testament promises are fulfilled already in Christ, but the final consummation awaits the last day. So these are my guiding principles as I seek to apply Zechariah to our lives today: 1) it is aimed primarily at ethnic Israel; 2) there is yet a glorious future for ethnic Israel when she repents; 3) by faith in Christ we gentile believers become full fellow-heirs of the promises made to Israel; 4) therefore, the Old Testament prophecies concerning Israel are not less than literal but more than literal: they embrace not only ethnic Israel but also us gentile believers; 5) many of the benefits promised to the people of Israel are fulfilled in stages, especially since the promised Messiah himself comes in two stages (Christmas and the Second Coming).

The practical implication of all this is that whenever you read a "Fear not!" in the Old Testament you can take it for yourself as a fellow heir if you are a Christian. The reasons given in the Old Testament why you need not fear will almost always relate to Israel first but then indirectly also to you as a spiritual Jew (Rom. 2:29) and a child of Abraham (Gal. 3:29).

We began by suggesting that the main point of Zechariah's prophecy is, "Fear not, for God purposes to do you good." A very profitable way to read this book is to mark every verse where God says he is going to do something good for Jerusalem. I marked well over 50 verses. But since we can't look at all these, let's focus in on the most important of all: 13:1. I call it most important because all the other benefits promised to Israel (and to us) depend on this one.

"On that day there shall be a fountain opened for the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to cleanse them from sin and uncleanness." Zechariah promises the people that at some future time a fountain would be opened which would take away their sin and guilt. I say this is the foundation for all the other blessings promised because the only way sinners can hope to inherit the riches of God is if their sins are forgiven. The fountain of cleansing is the first checkpoint on the road to heaven.

<http://www.soundofgrace.com/piper82/120582m.htm>

**Dolphin:** On February 15, 519 B.C., some three and one-half months after his initial message in 1:1-6, and two months after Haggai's final message (Haggai 2:20-23), Zechariah was given eight night visions. It appears that all eight visions were given in one night, but we cannot be sure. The eight visions can best be understood in the chiasmic pattern of a, b, b, c, c, b, b, a, with the theological climax coming in the fourth and fifth visions. The first and the eighth vision bear a strong resemblance to one another, while the second and third, fourth and fifth, and sixth and seventh are in pairs. The resulting pattern would appear something like this:

- a Waiting in the Calm Before the International Storm 1:7-17
- b Watching the Nations Punish One Another 1:18-21
- b Expecting the Glory of God on Earth 2: 1-13
- c Symbolizing the Removal of Sin All in One Day 3:1-10
- c Receiving God's Spirit for Doing His Work 4:1-14
- b Purging Evil From Israel 5:1-4
- b Removing Wickedness From Israel 5:5-11
- a Executing Judgment on the Gentile Nations 6:1-15

**G Campbell Morgan:**

CHRONOLOGICAL CHART OF THE PROPHETS					
Northern Kingdom			Southern Kingdom		
Prophet	King		Prophet	King	
	Jeroboam	933-912			
	Nadab	912-911			
	Baasha	911-888			
	Elah	888-887			
	Zimri	887			
	Tibni	887-863			
	Omri	887-877			
ELIJAH	Ahab	876-854		Jehoshaphat	873-848
	Ahaziah	854-853		Jehoram	848-841
ELISHA	Jehoram	853-842	JOEL	Ahaziah	841
	Jehu	842-815		Athaliah	841-835
	Jehoahaz	814-798		Jehoash	835-796
	Jehoash	798-793		Amaziah	796-767
JONAH	Jeroboam II	793-743	ISAIAH	Uzziah	767-740
AMOS	Zachariah	743	MICAHA		
HOSEA	Shallum	743			
	Menahem	743-737			
	Pekahiah	737-736		Jotham	740-732
	Pekah	736-730	OBADIAH	Ahaz	732-716
	Hoshea	730-722	NAHUM	Hezekiah	716-687
<b>Fall of the Northern Kingdom</b>					
			JEREMIAH	Manasseh	687-643
				Amon	643-641
			HABAKKUK	Josiah	641-609
			ZEPHANIAH		
<b>The Exile</b>					
			DANIEL	Jehoahaz	609
				Jehoiakim	609-598
			EZEKIEL	Jehoiachin	598-597
				Zedekiah	597-586
<b>The Restoration</b>					
			HAGGAI		520
			ZECHARIAH		520
			MALACHI		520

<http://www.campuslight.org/Resources/Minor%20Prophets%20Lessons.pdf>



## II. Outline

- A. The Series of Eight Visions (1:1-6:15)
  - 1. The Man in the Myrtle Trees and the Horses (1:7-17) - Angels sent to survey the earth and comfort God's people with their words.
  - 2. The Four Horns and Four Carpenters (1:18-21) - The horns are four enemies of Israel. Carpenters are the spiritual forces which defeat the enemies.
  - 3. Man with the Measuring Line (2:1-13) - Angel measuring Jerusalem for a spiritual wall of protection.
  - 4. The Cleansing of the High Priest (3:1-10) - Represents the cleansing of Israel for the work of the LORD. Introduces the BRANCH.
  - 5. The Golden Candlestick and Two Olive Trees (4:1-14) - The light of the Word and the abundant power of the Spirit.
  - 6. The Flying Roll (5:1-4) - God's judgment on Israel's iniquity.
  - 7. The Woman in the Ephah - (5:5-11) - Wickedness being carried out from God's people.
  - 8. The Four Chariots and Crowning of the High Priest (6:1-8) - Judgments from the LORD and the crowning of Christ the High Priest as King of Kings.
- B. Sin, Judgment and Restoration (7:1-8:23)
  - 1. Obedience Rather than Religious Activity (7:1-7)
  - 2. Reason for the Captivity (7:8-14)
  - 3. Jerusalem's Future (8:1-23)
- C. Triumph of God in the Messiah's Coming (9:1-14:21)
  - 1. Rejoicing in the King - Ch. 9 (9:9)
  - 2. Restoration of God's People - Ch. 10 (10:6, 7, 12)
  - 3. Suffering of the Messiah - Ch. 11 (11:12)
  - 4. Crucified Christ - Ch. 12 (12:9-10)
  - 5. Death of Messiah - Ch. 13 (13:3, 6)
  - 6. Tribulation and Millennium - Ch. 14 (14:16)

## III. Some Lessons

- A. Spiritual cleansing must come from God and God alone. (3:3)
- B. Our "success" does not depend on us, but on the LORD. (4:6)
- C. God loves man so much that He sent His Son to die for our sins. (9:9; 11:12; 12:10)
- D. Jesus will return, so we must be ready. (14:4, 9, 16)

**Laney:** The restoration period was an exciting and challenging era in Judah's history. The Temple and the city walls of Jerusalem needed rebuilding; the worship institutions needed refurbishing; and the people, still weary from long years of exile, needed encouraging. In the face of those challenges there were threats from the Arabs and synchronistic Samaritans who wanted to prevent the reestablishment of Judah. The leaders of the people faced such internal difficulties as neglect of worship, neglect of spiritual priorities, and breakdown in marriage relationships. . .

The visions and prophecies contain "*comforting words*" (1:13) revealing the future glories of Zion, the ultimate overthrow of Israel's enemies, and the universal reign of Messiah. The prophecy of Zechariah presents a detailed portrayal of God's future dealings with His chosen people, Israel.

**Steven J. Cole:** The book falls into two main parts. The first part (chapters 1- 8) is specifically dated. The second part (chapters 9-14) is not. After the introductory theme (1:1-6), chapters 1-6 consist of eight night visions that came to Zechariah in 520 B.C. The overarching theme of these visions is that God is again working on behalf of His people and that He will bring judgment on the heathen nations that had afflicted His people. These visions encouraged the Lord's people to continue working to rebuild the temple.

In chapters 7 and 8, dated two years later, Zechariah gives a reply to a delegation of priests from Bethel concerning certain religious fasts. The thrust of his message is to show that God is concerned about hearts that are right before Him, not just about outward religious observance. It serves as a warning to the people that as the temple was completed, the danger would be to fall into outward religion without inward reality.

Chapters 9-14 are not dated and probably were written many years (perhaps 40) later. This section consists of a number of Messianic prophecies that reveal the importance of the rebuilt temple, since Messiah will come to this temple. Even though powerful nations will arise and threaten God's people, His prophetic plan of the ages will be carried out. Because of these prophecies, Zechariah has been called the Revelation of the Old Testament. Like Revelation, it is a difficult book to interpret. But the overall message is plain: It is an encouragement to God's discouraged and frightened people to walk in reality with Him, because He will keep His covenant promises.

You can remember the theme of the book if you will jot down the Hebrew meanings of the three names in verse 1. Zechariah means, "whom the Lord remembers." Berechiah means, "the Lord blesses." Iddo means, "at the appointed time" (Charles Feinberg, God Remembers [American Board of Missions to the Jews], p. 17). God raised up Zechariah to proclaim that God remembers His chosen people and that He will bless them in His appointed time.

#### **Dr. John C. Whitcomb: Precious Promises for Perilous Times**

It is important to realize the overall background and context of this message of Zechariah. For many Christians, the OT has been very neglected and misunderstood. This is the foundation of the NT and the NT presupposes that we understand the OT. Animal sacrifices will once again be offered in the millennial temple in Jerusalem in an ethnic Israelite theocratic program under the direction of the priest after the order of Melchizedek. Zechariah looks forward to that day. God's promises are irrevocable and absolutely dependable. He never breaks His covenant commitments to people – not dependent on our faithfulness. Ezekiel tells what the temple will be like in the millennial age. 586 B.C. destruction of temple under Nebuchadnezzar. Temple rebuilt in 516 B.C. Decree of Cyrus to urge the Jews to return and rebuild the altar and offer up sacrifices. They returned in 536 B.C. and were deeply depressed by what they saw. They started the project; were met with ecumenical opposition; resisted that and then suffered discouraging reprisals. For 16 years the project was on hold. Then in four short years the temple was finished. But they must have wept when they saw how pitiful the temple looked in comparison to its former glory.

The Davidic line never recovered from the curse of Jehoiachin. *"Never will any of your sons prosper sitting on the throne of David in Jerusalem."* Jesus received the throne rights through Joseph from Solomon. Jesus had to be adopted -- not begotten by Joseph who inherited the curse of Jehoiachin. Through Mary he inherited the Davidic line through Nathan. Thus God worked out His promises in a way that nobody could have anticipated. The intricacies of the details of God's prophecies are amazing. The judges and then the kings had failed and now the priests were ruling the nation. They were not

all godly priests; but they were the legitimate rulers of the nations in the absence of kings and judges.

41 times the NT quotes or alludes to the book of Zechariah. Nothing any servant of God can do or plan or say -- no matter how devoted he may be -- can guarantee the spiritual state of the next generation. God doesn't have any spiritual grandchildren. Every generation is a disaster apart from the mercy and grace of a sovereign God. The theme is that God is Sovereign and that is how He can remember and do something about the situation. Only God can handle the situation.

# OUTLINE OF ZECHARIAH

## THE LORD REMEMBERS AND WILL AGAIN CHOOSE JERUSALEM

**BY A SERIES OF PROPHETIC VISIONS AND MESSAGES OF ULTIMATE RESTORATION AND TRIUMPH, ZECHARIAH ENCOURAGES THE NATION OF ISRAEL IN THEIR MISSION OF REBUILDING THE TEMPLE BY REMINDING THEM OF GOD'S FAITHFULNESS TO FULFILL HIS MESSIANIC AND KINGDOM PROMISES**

*"the Lord will again comfort Zion and again choose Jerusalem"*  
- Zechariah 1:17

### **I. (1:1 – 8:23) SERIES OF EIGHT PROPHETIC VISIONS AND FOUR MESSAGES FROM THE LORD**

***TIMESTAMP: During the Building of the Temple (520-518 BC)***

**A. (1:1-6) INTRODUCTORY CALL TO REPENTANCE -- HISTORY PROVES THAT THE LORD'S URGENT CALL TO REPENTANCE MUST BE RESPONDED TO RIGHT NOW**

**B. (1:7 – 6:15) SERIES OF EIGHT PROPHETIC NIGHT VISIONS REGARDING THE FUTURE OF ISRAEL AND JUDGMENT ON HER ENEMIES**

1. (1:7-17) **VISION #1** – MAN ON RED HORSE AMONG MYRTLE TREES – HOW LONG? WHY DO THE WICKED PROSPER?

The day is coming when the Lord will have compassion and restore the fortunes of His people

2. (1:18-21) **VISION #2** – THE HAMMERING OF THE HORNS -- JUDGMENT AGAINST THE OPPRESSIVE GENTILE NATIONS

The day is coming when the Lord will overthrow the Gentile nations which have scattered and oppressed the Jewish people

3. (2:1-13) **VISION #3** – THE SURVEYOR – GOD IS THE DEFENSE AND GLORY OF HIS ELECT PEOPLE -- EXPANDED JUDAH RESTORED AND PROTECTED BY THE LORD

A day is coming when the Lord will return to prosper and protect Judah by dwelling in her expanded midst (establishing His glorious throne at the center of her universe)

4. (3:1-10) **VISION #4** – JOSHUA -- THE BRAND PLUCKED FROM THE FIRE AND CLEANSED BY THE MESSIAH -- THE BRANCH

God's elect are untouchable and fit for spiritual service because of the cleansing from sin provided by Christ --

The combination of roles of King and Priest in one person is prefigured in Joshua (the brand plucked from the fire) and fulfilled in the coming Messiah (My Servant the Branch)

5. (4:1-14) **VISION #5** – THE GOLDEN LAMPSTAND AND 2 OLIVE TREES

God's work succeeds only by the abounding enabling supplied by God's anointing Holy Spirit

6. (5:1-4) **VISION #6** – THE FLYING SCROLL – PROCLAMATION OF GOD'S CURSE AGAINST LAW BREAKERS

Because God takes sin seriously there will be no escaping His certain judgment

7. (5:5-11) **VISION #7** – THE WOMAN IN THE MEASURING BASKET (EPHAH)

Wickedness cannot be allowed to exist in the holy assembly – Wickedness will ultimately be confined (separated), removed from the midst of God's people and temporarily enshrined in Babylon

8. (6:1-8) **VISION #8** – THE FOUR CHARIOTS – PATROLLING THE EARTH TO BRING JUDGMENT AGAINST ISRAEL'S ENEMIES

The execution of judgment (against Israel's wicked enemies) appeases the wrath of God who will ultimately be victorious

(6:9-15) **EPILOGUE: CROWN HIM WITH MANY CROWNS – THE ULTIMATE KING-PRIEST**

The coming Messiah will reign and minister peace as both King and Priest from the temple which He will build

**C. (7:1 – 8:23) SERIES OF FOUR MESSAGES FROM THE LORD -- EXHORTATION TO LIVE RIGHTEOUSLY IN ANTICIPATION OF PROMISED PROSPERITY THAT WILL SPILL OVER TO THE GENTILES**

Introduced by: *"Then the word of the Lord . . ."* (7:4,8; 8:1,18)

1. (7:1-14) **MESSAGE #1 & #2** -- HEARTS LIKE FLINT

Hard hearts close their ears to God's commands and substitute religious ritual for loving obedience

a. (7:1-3) Self Righteous Question: Isn't it time now for me to enjoy some well-deserved relief from God's burdensome commands? (specifically: fasting)

b. (7:4-7) **Message #1** – Your motivation and perspective are all wrong

c. (7:8-14) **Message #2** – You have missed the heart of God's commands (not about the externals) – so don't expect God to bail you out

2. (8:1-23) **MESSAGE #3 & #4** -- GOD'S FAVOR EXTENDED TO BOTH JEWS AND GENTILES (IN CONNECTION WITH HIS PRESENCE)

The blessings associated with the future restoration of the Jews will attract the allegiance of the Gentiles

- a. (8:1-17) **Message #3** – God guarantees future restoration to Zion as the center of truth and peace in His kingdom
- b. (8:18-23) **Message #4** – The blessing on the Jews will spill over to the Gentiles who seek God's favor

## **II. (9:1 – 14:21) SERIES OF TWO MESSAGES OF ULTIMATE RESTORATION AND TRIUMPH**

### ***TIMESTAMP: After the Building of the Temple (480-470 BC)***

Introduced by: *"The burden of the Word of the Lord . . ."* (9:1; 12:1)

#### **A. (9:1 – 11:17) FIRST MESSAGE – THE MESSIAH COMES THE FIRST TIME AND IS REJECTED**

1. (9:1-17) REJOICE IN THE COMING KING

God's people should rejoice in anticipation of their coming king who will vanquish all enemies and establish peace and prosperity

2. (10:1-12) STRENGTHENED IN THE LORD FOR VICTORY

The compassionate God will ultimately strengthen His regathered remnant led by the Messiah to tread down their enemies and be firmly established in the promised land

3. (11:1-17) THE REJECTION OF THE WORTHY SHEPHERD

God's judgment always accompanies the rejection of His worthy shepherd and allegiance towards ungodly false substitutes

#### **B. (12:1 – 13:9) SECOND MESSAGE – THE MESSIAH COMES THE SECOND TIME AS THE TRIUMPHANT WARRIOR-KING**

1. (12:1-14) ISRAEL PROTECTED AND TRANSFORMED IN THE DAY OF THE LORD

The Day of the Lord will bring supernatural destruction to Israel's attackers and divinely initiated repentance to all the Jews who now recognize their Messiah

2. (13:1-9) NATIONAL CLEANSING FOR THE REMNANT OF ISRAEL

The rejection of the Good Shepherd leads to a refining process where the remnant of Israel is eventually cleansed and restored to its loyal covenant relationship

3. (14:1-21) KING OF THE HILL – TRIUMPHANT RETURN OF THE WARRIOR-KING

The promised Messiah will return as the triumphant Warrior-King to defeat Israel's enemies and usher in the millennial kingdom

TEXT: Zechariah 1:1-6

TITLE: REPENT NOW

**BIG IDEA:**

**HISTORY PROVES THAT THE LORD'S URGENT CALL TO REPENTANCE MUST BE RESPONDED TO RIGHT NOW**

**INTRODUCTION:**

Zechariah was a contemporary of Haggai and proclaimed a message of encouragement to God's people who had returned from Exile and faced the daunting challenge of rebuilding. But before proclaiming the word of hope contained in the apocalyptic visions (along the line of the Book of Revelation), Zechariah introduces his prophecy with a ringing call to repentance. *'Return to Me,' declares the Lord of hosts, 'that I may return to you,' says the Lord of hosts.'* God will remember His people at the proper time; but everything hinges on the spiritual condition of their heart – it must be properly oriented towards God in repentance and faith. They must not stubbornly persist in rebellion or allow their hearts to grow cold like their forefathers had done in precipitating God's judgment of them in the Exile to Babylon.

**(:1) CONTEXT – THE COMMUNICATION OF GOD'S REVELATION**

A. Identification of the Time of the Prophecy

*"In the eighth month of the second year of Darius"*

B. Identification of the Source of the Prophecy

*"the Word of the Lord"*

C. Identification of the Prophet Himself – significance of the 3 names mentioned here (Stedman)

1. Zechariah = "Jehovah remembers" – takes care of; watches over  
*"came to Zechariah the prophet,"*

**Whitcomb:** powerful verb in Hebrew; cf. used of God remembering Noah and his family; Jesus remembering the thief on the cross; I heard your cry; felt your need; and answered you

2. Berechiah = "God blesses"  
*"the son of Berechiah,"*

3. Iddo = "at the appointed time"  
*"the son of Iddo saying"*

**I. (:2-3) THE CALL TO IMMEDIATE REPENTANCE OFFERS THE ONLY ESCAPE FROM GOD'S IMPENDING WRATH**



A. (:2) Sin Incurs God's Wrath

*"The Lord was very angry with your fathers"*

How much trouble were they in if the God of the universe was *very angry* with them?

What is the connection between the sins of the fathers and are own well-being?

In what ways had they sinned against God? Described below as "leaving God"

**MacArthur**: This actually means "to break out in long-controlled indignation," reminding the people of the severity of God's wrath and the necessity of His judgment on their past sins in pre-Exilic times.

B. (:3) Only Repentance Can Restore the Fractured Relationship

*"Therefore say to them, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts, 'Return to Me,' declares the Lord of hosts, 'that I may return to you,' says the Lord of hosts."*

Significance of the name *"the Lord of hosts"*

Nature and Necessity of Repentance

Implied Timing of Repentance = Right Now – while you have opportunity

Blessings associated with restored fellowship

**Mackay**: Their physical return to the land of the Lord's inheritance had to be matched by a spiritual return in obedience to him. . .

This is the essence of the prophetic word of warning and of the promise attached to renewed obedience. The spiritual process involved had often been spelled out at key points in the nation's history, from their earliest days (Deut. 4:27-31; 30:2-10), at the inauguration of the Temple (1 Kgs. 8:47-48), and by the prophets (Jer. 3:11, 22; 4:1; Ezk. 33:11). It will be taken up later by the prophet Malachi (Mal. 3:7). It is a promise based on the mercy of the forgiving God who receives graciously and loves freely (Hos. 14:2, 4).

## **II. (:4) THE CONTRAST OF REJECTING THE COMMAND TO REPENT PROVES THE FUTILITY OF STUBBORN REBELLION**

A. Negative Contrast Hits Close to Home

*"Do not be like your fathers,"*

Sad case when you are commanded to reject the behavior example of your Parents

Children could not argue that they were in some way excused from God's wrath



because of the sin of their parent – God is the standard and we are held accountable – still it is sad when our parents fail us

B. Same Call for Immediate Repentance

*“to whom the former prophets proclaimed, saying, ‘Thus says the Lord of hosts, Return now from your evil ways and from your evil deeds.’”*

Privilege of access to God’s revelation through His messengers, the prophets

Faithful proclamation of the message of God

Same connection between sin and the fracturing of the relationship

Same necessity of immediate repentance – *“Return now”*

C. Tragic Closing of the Ears to the Pleas of God

*“But they did not listen or give heed to Me, declares the Lord.”*

### **III. (:5-6a) THE CONTRAST BETWEEN MORTALITY AND ETERNITY VINDICATES GOD’S FAITHFULNESS TO CARRY OUT HIS WORD**

A. (:5) Limited Perspective of Mortal Men

*“Your fathers, where are they? And the prophets, do they live forever?”*

B. (:6a) Historical Vindication of the Eternal Word of God

*“But did not My words and My statutes, which I commanded My servants the prophets, overtake your fathers”*

God will faithfully bring about all that He has prophesied –  
Both the blessings and the curses

**Mackay:** Both questions are addressed to the people, and point to the transitory nature of human life. Both the past generations – no matter what their sin – and the prophets – no matter how faithfully they had delivered the Lord’s message – had passed away. None could deny that. The point is not the similar fate endured by bad and good alike. Rather the thrust of the questions is to bring home the fact that there is no immunity from the march of time. The people are being urged to recognize their need to respond now, while the opportunity is afforded to them.

**Mackay:** *‘Overtake’* pictures a pursuer capturing someone who is fleeing, a hunter catching his game, or a wild animal grasping its prey (Gen. 31:25; Ex. 14:9; 15:9). So their forefathers were pursued and caught by the inescapable curse of God. This metaphor is also found in Deuteronomy 28:15, 45, which provides a probable background for this passage.

#### **IV. (:6b) THE CONFESSION OF REPENTANCE BRINGS FORTH THE FRUIT OF SUBMISSION TO GOD'S SOVEREIGN DISPOSITION – BUT WILL IT BE TOO LATE??**

*“Then they repented and said, ‘As the Lord of hosts purposed to do to us in accordance with our ways and our deeds, so He has dealt with us.’”*

Their forefathers ended up changing their mind about their own sinfulness and the Lord's charges against them. But it was not in time to benefit them. The message to the contemporaries of Zechariah is to Repent NOW while there is still time to participate in the blessings. Ultimately all of mankind will bow the knee before the Lord's sovereign authority and acknowledge the fairness of His justice and the holiness of His standards.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### **DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:**

- 1) Where in the Scriptures do we see examples of the Lord being “*very angry*”? How should that impact our living in an awareness of “the fear of the Lord”? How is the fear of the Lord the beginning of all wisdom for us?
- 2) What do we learn about the Lord's grace and mercy and patience in His plea to His people to return and be forgiven and blessed?
- 3) How should our sense of our own mortality as contrasted with the eternity of God and His faithfulness to His Word impact our daily living?
- 4) Why is it so imperative to Repent NOW?

\* \* \* \* \*

#### **QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:**

**Stedman:** The book of Zechariah has been called the Apocalypse of the Old Testament. Like the book of Revelation, Zechariah is a book of prophecy. Its theme is to set forth the program of God, which is also the theme of the book of Revelation. The difference is that in Zechariah Israel is in the foreground and the Gentile nations in the background, while in the book of Revelation the Gentile nations are in the foreground and the continuous thread that ties them together is the nation of Israel.

The first verse of Zechariah reveals in a very interesting way this focus on the nation Israel:

In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, the word of the LORD came to Zechariah the son of Berechiah, son of Iddo, the prophet, {Zech 1:1a RSV}

We usually read through these opening verses without thinking of them as having much significance, but remember that Hebrew names mean something. The most outstanding example perhaps of the significance of Hebrew names is Methuselah, the name of the oldest man who ever lived. His name means "when he dies it will come" -- and when he died, the flood came, just as that name prophesied.

Here, we have three names that are very significant. Zechariah means "God remembers" and Berechiah, his father's name, means "God blesses" and his grandfather's name Iddo, means "At the appointed time." That is the theme of the book of Zechariah. It is a book of encouragement to the people of Israel.

Zechariah was a contemporary with Haggai, one of the prophets who ministered to the remnant who had returned from captivity in Babylon. Although they were back in Jerusalem rebuilding the temple and the city, they were still vassals of Babylon, still subject to the Gentile nations around them, without much hope for the future. It was a discouraging, depressing time, and a spirit of dark pessimism gripped these people. And Zechariah comes to them in the midst of their depression, with this announcement that is even wrapped up in his name and ancestry: Jehovah blesses, Jehovah remembers at the appointed time. What an encouragement those names must have been.

At the beginning of the first chapter there is a brief outline of the book. This is often true of the Bible, and if you look for these little outlines, you can often find a brief summary of the message of the book in the opening sections. Here it is broken up in a dramatic way by the name of God, the Jehovah of hosts. It is one of the unusual names of God. Jehovah of hosts, that is, the God of the masses -- the God of all the armies, whether they be angel armies, human armies, demonic armies, makes no difference. The stars are also called the hosts. This is the God who is sovereign over all the masses, whoever they may be. And this name is repeated three times (verses 2-3):

"The LORD [Jehovah] was very angry with your fathers. Therefore say to them, Thus says the Lord [Jehovah] of hosts: Return to me, says the LORD of hosts, and I will return to you, says the LORD of hosts." {Zech 1:2-3 RSV}

Three times that name is repeated. What is said before each of those repetitions marks the divisions of this book. It falls into three brief sections. The first one is included in,

"The Lord was very angry with your fathers." {Zech 1:2 RSV}

That marks the first division, comprising just the first six verses which describe God's displeasure with his people. Then we have,

"Return to me." {Zech 1:3b RSV}

And that marks the second division, covering from chapter 1, verse 7, clear over to chapter 6, verse 15, speaking of God's deliverance of his people. Then, chapters 7 through 14 make up the third division which is an exposition of these words:

"and I will return to you, says the Lord." {Zech 1:3d RSV}

That is always God's way. If you find yourself straying away from his presence and as a result, your life grows cold, your faith grows dim, you grow discouraged, you are defeated, you find yourself exposed to all types of temptations and prey to every evil thought, what must you do? "Return to me," says the Lord, "and I will return to you." If you want God back in your life, with all the glory of his presence, then come back to him. That is always the formula.

**Roper:** A brief word of introduction to the book of Zechariah, and then we will look at it in some detail. We do not know much about Zechariah the prophet. Twenty-five or thirty men in the Old Testament bore that name, so it is difficult at times to sort out the various individuals involved. But evidently he was a priest, and came from a long line of distinctive priests. His father Berechiah and grandfather Iddo were well known in Israel. Iddo served at the head of one of the priestly courses, So Zechariah was also revered in Israel, and he had an extensive teaching ministry as a priest, as well as his prophetic ministry as a prophet. There is some indication that his father died when he was quite young, because his father himself never became the head of a priestly course as he was destined to become. We do not know much about Zechariah's life, except that at this time God raised up this man and gave him a message.

**Roper:** Zechariah begins by taking these exiles back into the pre-exilic period and reminding them of the fate of their fathers, the men who went off into exile in Babylon. He reminds them that, from the very beginning, prophets had called upon them to return. If you go back to the Eighth Century prophets, to Hosea and Amos and Micah and Isaiah, you see that their word to Israel was repeatedly:

"Return! Return! Return!" This figure suggests a nation going off in the wrong direction, each step taking them further and further away from the Lord, There is only one direction where they will find release, and that is in returning to the place from which they departed. They are to return. That term occurs over and over again in the prophets, right down to the time of the Exile. But they did not listen.

Zechariah asks rhetorically, "Where are the fathers today?" Well, the answer is: "They are dead in Babylon." The whole generation that was deported perished in Babylon. "Where are the prophets?" Even the prophets did not endure. They also died in Babylon, or in Egypt, or in the other places to which they were deported. But God's word overtook them. God's word did not fail. God did what he had purposed to do. They had to go through this period of discipline.

It was a terrible time, but it was a redemptive time. It was medicinal. It was designed to purify and cleanse and correct the nation. God is so faithful to do that. His word will always catch up to us. Now, Zechariah is not talking about the sort of sins which grow out of our weakness, which we repent of and desire to put away. He is talking about sins we commit, to use the Old Testament idiom, "with a high hand"--belligerent sins,

determined sins. If we determine to go our own way and pursue our own path, the Lord will let us go, and he will cry out to us to return. But if we do not return, his word will overtake us, sooner or later. We simply do not get away. He pursues us because he loves us. That is what happened to the nation. God pursued them into exile, and his word overtook them there. That is why Zechariah said for them to recall what God did for his people, and not to be like their fathers, but to return.

**MacArthur:** Though primarily a book of consolation, the prophet begins with a call to repentance, to preclude any false security on the part of Israel, i.e. thinking that God would bless His chosen people regardless of their spiritual condition. This expresses the ongoing desire of God (cf. Ge 17:7; Lv 26: 12; Eze 37:27; 2Co 6:16; Jas 4:8; Rev 21:3), and the constant condition for blessing.

**Mackay:** [Re vs. 6] The problem is that of determining who ‘they’ are: is it a reference to the forefathers, or to the current generation? It seems more likely to refer to previous generations, as the NIV punctuation indicates. . . . When the punishment of the Lord had come upon them, they were brought to recognize its justice, and the folly of the way they had been behaving. ‘The Lord is righteous, yet I rebelled against his command’ (Lam. 1:18).

But it is not a picture of impending doom that is presented. It is rather a challenge to faithfulness. Zechariah points to the fact that it had taken the trauma of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Exile to bring the previous generation to their spiritual senses (Lam. 2:17; Dan. 9:4-14). They have been forced to recognize that the Lord’s warnings were not idle, and that their own expectations and conduct had been blameworthy. But that recognition had come too late as far as they were concerned, because the calamity had already engulfed them. However, it was not too late for the generation that had been restored to Jerusalem, if only they were prepared to learn the lessons of the past. They must ensure that they were living close to God or all their enterprises would also be liable to be swept away. They are being challenged to live obediently, without God having to chasten them to bring them to their senses.

**Laetsch:** The Lord recalls to the mind of the Jews the seventy years of His sore displeasure during the Babylonian Captivity, in which the fathers of the present generation had suffered the well-deserved punishment of their own and their fathers’ sins. The Lord finally had fulfilled His threat (Ex. 20:5; Lev. 26:14ff; Deut. 28:15-68). This manifestation of God’s displeasure was still very vivid in the memory of the Jews who had returned only fifteen years before. The lesson of the Exile and God’s avenging justice ought never to be forgotten. Yet the Searcher of hearts (Jer. 17:9) sees the beginning of the rebellious spirit of the fathers in the refusal of the present generation to build the Temple and to give it their wholehearted support.

**Baxter:** After the short, forthright message of Haggai, this Book of Zechariah may seem discouragingly complicated; yet it is not so in reality, as we shall see. To an observant reader it quickly sorts itself out; and it is full of good things. . . . If we pick our way carefully through this Book of Zechariah two or three times, we soon find its arrangement becoming clear to us. We are sure to see, first of all, that there is a major

break between chapters viii. and ix., which divides the book into two main parts. There can scarcely be any mistaking this, for the characteristics of the two parts are markedly different from each other. The first eight chapters are mainly *vision*-prophecies; the remaining six chapters are wholly *direct* prophecies. The first eight chapters were written during the rebuilding of the temple; the remaining six chapters were written considerably after the temple was rebuilt. The first eight chapters have a particular and immediate reference to the Jewish "Remnant" now back in the land; the remaining six chapters have a general and far-reaching reference to Israel as a whole, to the ultimate future, and to the Gentile nations. The contents of the first eight chapters are carefully dated; the contents of the remaining six chapters are nowhere dated.

**Steven J. Cole: Returning to the Lord**

1. Returning to the Lord is necessary because of His wrath against all sinners (1:2).
2. Returning to the Lord is the human response that opens the supply of God's personal grace (1:3).
3. Returning to the Lord is what we should learn from the history of God's people (1:4-6).

**Whitcomb:** God is just as capable today as then to bring repentance and obedience and response to His Word. There was tremendous apostasy just 40 years after the temple was rebuilt. Look at how rapidly the theocracy deteriorates in every generation. Look at the situation that Ezra and Nehemiah found. Haggai's and Zechariah's revival did not last very long.

At the opening of Zechariah, the people had been under deep depression. The ministry of Haggai is about to end. "*Lord of hosts*" = "I am not just a tiny little local provincial deity. I am the God of all the hosts of angels. I am a very great God." Zechariah is saying, "Be very careful; you are not here long; do not delay your repentance; don't count on repeated warnings forever; respond to the one thing you may have heard from a servant of God." This is serious business. These ancestors got what they deserved exactly as God had prophesied. Why didn't Israel ever believe the Word of God through His prophets?

TEXT: Zechariah 1:7-17

TITLE: VISION #1 – MAN ON RED HORSE AMONG MYRTLE TREES –  
HOW LONG? WHY DO THE WICKED PROSPER?

**BIG IDEA:**

**THE DAY IS COMING WHEN THE LORD WILL HAVE COMPASSION AND RESTORE THE FORTUNES OF HIS PEOPLE**

**INTRODUCTION:**

This is a message of comfort regarding the Lord's compassion towards His people. Although some of the Jews have returned from exile and begun the rebuilding program, things have not gone well. There has been much opposition and discouragement. Zechariah's contemporary Haggai had challenged the indifference of God's people and stirred up their hearts to repentance. They understood the priority of giving themselves wholeheartedly to the work of the Lord. The temple needed to be rebuilt; the Messiah would some day come to reign over the nations from Jerusalem. But the situation still looked bleak. The oppressing nations were the ones enjoying peace and prosperity. How long would it be before the Lord remembers His promises? Zechariah encourages the people to focus on the future reign of the Messiah which will surely come. In fact the prophet's name means "*the Lord remembers.*"

**Psalm 13**

*How long, O Lord? Will You forget me forever?*

*How long will You hide Your face from me?*

*How long shall I take counsel in my soul,*

*Having sorrow in my heart all the day?*

*How long will my enemy be exalted over me?*

*Consider and answer me, O Lord my God.*

*Strengthen my eyes, or I will sleep the sleep of death.*

*And my enemy will say, "I have overcome him."*

*And my adversaries will rejoice when I am shaken.*

*But I have trusted in Your lovingkindness;*

*My heart shall rejoice in Your salvation.*

*I will sing to the lord, Because He has dealt bountifully with me.*

**Mackay:** The visions are not intended to be merely personal experiences for the prophet. They convey to him truth that he is to pass on to the people of Jerusalem. Their purpose is to encourage them to abandon the survive-for-the-moment mentality that persisted among them and to persevere in the work they are undertaking, by setting before them the glorious promises of God concerning their future as the people of God. This was a ministry of consolation to the struggling remnant in the land. They could locate themselves in terms of the Lord's future prospects which extended to include the Messiah and the advance of his cause in New Testament times.

## **(:7-8a) SETTING OF THE VISION**

### A. Date of the Vision

*“On the twenty-fourth day of the eleventh month, which is the month Shebat”*

**Lindsey:** This date was five months after the building of the temple was resumed (Hag. 1:14-15; 2:15), three months after Zechariah’s first prophecy (Zech. 1:1), and two months after Haggai’s last prophecy (Hag. 2:20 – a prophecy regarding the destruction of world powers before the millennial rule of the Messiah; cf. Hag. 2:21-23).

### B. Political Context of the Vision

*“in the second year of Darius”*

**MacArthur:** The Persian emperor Cyrus had died and was succeeded by Cambyses (ca. 530-521 B.C.) who conquered Egypt. He had no son, killed himself, and Darius rose to the throne by quelling a revolution.

### C. Source of the Vision

*“the Word of the Lord came to”*

Interesting combination of Word and Vision: cf. the Incarnate Christ as the Word – enabling us to see God for who He really is;  
God takes the initiative to reveal Himself to man

### D. Medium of the Vision

*“Zechariah the prophet, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo”*

### E. Introduction to the Vision

*“as follows”*

### F. Testimony to the Vision – there are going to be a series of 8 night visions

*“I saw at night and behold”*

## **I. (:8b) THE SUBJECTS OF THE VISION – FOCUS ON THE ANGEL OF THE LORD**

A. The Central Figure – twofold description of the Angel of the Lord = the pre-incarnate Christ (speculation as to the significance of some of these details since no clear interpretation is offered in the text)

#### 1. War-like figure – Commander in Chief

*“a man was riding on a red horse”*

#### 2. Prince of Peace

*“and he was standing among the myrtle trees which were in the ravine”*

**Zondervan Pictorial Encycl:** Found six times, sometimes as myrtle branches (Neh 8:15), often as myrtle trees (Zech 1:8, 10, 11). . . The tree is an evergreen, thirty ft. tall; the



leaves are small, shiny, slightly-scented and leathery. The white or pinkish flowers are scented, and are followed by blue-black berries, which can produce a perfume. . . The queens of England carry sprigs of myrtle in their wedding bouquets as a symbol of peace.

**Lindsey:** standing astride his horse

(not a contradiction to earlier statement that he was riding on the red horse)

**Mackay:** if any definite location is sought, nothing more specific may be intended than a reference to the lower part of the valley of Kidron outside Jerusalem, where there was a deep gorge with many myrtle trees. We would then have a picture of the Angel of the Lord outside the city indicating that they did not yet fully enjoy the blessings of the Lord's presence with them, but at the same time he was not far from the city, and was watching over it protectively. Indeed, the Angel was receiving the reports of the horsemen because he was going to order the affairs of the world to suit his plans for his people. . .

(Re myrtle trees) – They are referred to as replacing the brier in the wilderness when the Lord restores the fortunes of his people (Isa. 41: 19; 55:13), and may be an apt symbol of the restored community.

B. The Supporting Cast = angels on a variety of colored horses

*“with red, sorrel and white horses behind him”*

1. Red – symbolizing war and judgment?

2. White – symbolizing peace and righteousness and prosperity?

3. Sorrel – symbolizing some mixture?

**MacArthur:** red speaking of bloodshed and judgment (cf. Is. 63:1,2), white speaking of victory (cf. Rev 19:11), and sorrel or a brownish color is possibly a combination of the others. A similar picture is found in Rev 6:1-8. These horses are about to gain a victorious judgment. Since they are messengers of vengeance, they likely represent angels, so frequently employed as God's instruments of judgment.

## **II. (:9-11) THE INITIAL DIALOGUE – QUESTION AND ANSWER FORMAT – THE QUIET BEFORE THE STORM**

A. (:9) Answer Given by the Interpreting Angel – Voice of Explanation

*“Then I said, ‘My lord, what are these?’ And the angel who was speaking with me said to me, ‘I will show you what these are.’”*

This angel must always be distinguished from the Angel of the Lord

B. (:10) Answer Given by the Angel of the Lord – Voice of Authority

*“And the man who was standing among the myrtle trees answered and said, ‘These are those whom the Lord has sent to patrol the earth.’”*

- C. (:11) Answer Given by the Surrounding Angels – Voice of Reporters  
*“So they answered the angel of the Lord who was standing among the myrtle trees and said, ‘We have patrolled the earth, and behold, all the earth is peaceful and quiet.’”*

Speaks to the sense of false security among the nations who seem prosperous but have no idea that the wrath of God is about to be executed upon them.

### **III. (:12) THE BIG QUESTION – HOW LONG??**

*“Then the angel of the Lord said, ‘O Lord of hosts, how long will You have no compassion for Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, with which You have been indignant these seventy years?’”*

- A. The Assumption: Expectation of Prosperity on the Part of God’s Chosen People
- B. The Agony of Pain and Suffering – experiencing the Discipline of God
- C. The Argument Based on the Lord’s Character
- His Compassion
  - His Faithfulness to His Promises
  - His Sovereign Power over the nations
  - His Patience and Longsuffering – He gets angry and disciplines His people, but ultimately shows mercy and forgiveness

### **IV. (:13-17) THE ANSWER: THE TABLES WILL SOON BE TURNED**

- A. (:13) Word of Comfort to God’s People  
*“The Lord answered the angel who was speaking with me with gracious words, comforting words.”*
- B. (:14-15) Word of Warning to the Nations
1. (:14) Favored Status of Jerusalem Still in Effect  
*“So the angel who was speaking with me said to me, ‘Proclaim, saying, Thus says the Lord of hosts, I am exceedingly jealous for Jerusalem and Zion.’”*

Everyone wants to deny this today and say that God is finished dealing with Israel and fulfilling His promises to the nation.

2. (:15) Fear the Impending Wrath of God  
*“But I am very angry with the nations who are at ease; for while I was only a little angry, they furthered the disaster.”*

God used these nations to discipline his people; but in their wickedness they went too far and angered God greatly; their fate will be far worse

C. (:16-17) Word of Promised Restoration and Prosperity to Israel

1. (:16) Faithful Compassion Leads to Restoration and Growth

*“Therefore thus says the Lord, ‘I will return to Jerusalem with compassion; My house will be built in it,’ declares the Lord of hosts, ‘and a measuring line will be stretched over Jerusalem.’”*

2. (:17) Sovereign Choice Leads to Prosperity and Blessing

*“Again, proclaim saying, ‘Thus says the Lord of hosts, My cities will again overflow with prosperity, and the Lord will again comfort Zion and again choose Jerusalem.’”*

**CONCLUSION:**

*“The Lord’s lovingkindnesses indeed never cease,  
For His compassions never fail.  
They are new every morning;  
Great is Your faithfulness.”*  
Lamentations 3:22-23

\* \* \* \* \*

**DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:**

- 1) Why should the Jews have had any expectation of God’s compassion and mercy after their repeated failures to remain faithful to His covenant?
- 2) How are we quick to wrongly evaluate the perceived prosperity of the wicked?
- 3) How should the Lord’s jealousy for the fidelity and prosperity of His people motivate us to live? How do we provoke the Lord to jealousy?
- 4) What do we learn from this passage about the Lord’s sovereign election?

\* \* \* \* \*

**QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:**

**Dr. John C. Whitcomb:** God will comfort Jerusalem (1:17), be jealous for His people (1:14), and will return to His people (1:16).

**Matthew Henry:** The earth sat still, and was at rest. It is not uncommon for the enemies of God to be at rest in sin, while his people are enduring correction, harassed by temptation, disquieted by fears of wrath, or groaning under oppression and persecution. Here are predictions which had reference to the revival of the Jews after the captivity, but those events were shadows of what shall take place in the church, after the

oppression of the New Testament Babylon is ended.

**Lambert Dolphin:** Christ is said to be "among the myrtle trees" (v. 8). The "myrtle," or hadassah shrub (the Jewish form of the name Esther), was an indigenous shrub that grew all over Israel and was a popular name for Israel. Thus, in this vision the myrtle tree symbolizes Israel.

The rider on the red horse is also located "in the hallow" (v. 8), a glen, ravine, or valley. This may well indicate that the nation of Israel was at the time in a period of deep humiliation. This low time in the nation's history is directly related to the fact that we have now passed into the "times of the Gentiles" (Luke 21:24). That period would last from the time of Nebuchadnezzar's first captivity in 605 B.C. until just before the second coming of Christ.

The variegated coloring of the horses may well indicate that the mission of God would be mixed. "Red" usually points to the judgment of war, and "white" usually points to mercy and peace. "Sorrel" (also translated "speckled," "dappled," "tawny," or a reddish-brown color) suggests a combination and mixture of God's works. . .

This text sets forth three declarations and four comforting words. The first of the three declarations is: "[God is] zealous for Jerusalem" (v. 14). The covenant God made with the people of Israel will never be revoked; it will be fulfilled, for the Lord made it unconditionally. One day Israel will be brought back to her land, not because she deserves it, but because God will be faithful to His Word.

The second declaration is: "[God is] exceedingly angry with the nations" (v. 15). These Gentile nations are altogether too complacent and self-reliant. Whereas God was but "a little angry" with His people, when God used nations such as Assyria or Babylon to discipline Israel (Isa. 10; Hab. 1-2) these nations "helped--but with evil intent" (v. 15); they used the occasions to try to destroy Israel and remove her from the family of nations. They disciplined Israel beyond what God had intended.

The third declaration, necessarily implicit in a text about God's zeal or jealousy, is that God will judge these nations. God will judge them before His earthly kingdom comes (Joel 3:1ff; Zech. 6:1-8).

These declarations are followed by four "good and comforting words" (v. 13). The first is that Messiah will come again to Jerusalem (v. 16a). The book of Ezekiel describes how the "glory of the LORD" departed from Jerusalem, left the Holy of Holies to go to the porch of the temple, moved out to the eastern gate of the city, and finally, went up the Mount of Olives, where the glory of the Lord went up to heaven and where it will return when our Lord returns the second time (Ezk. 10:18--19; 11:23). By the term "glory," of course, the writer means the presence of God. In the meantime, Zechariah declared that His return would signal His restoration of the people to "mercy" (v. 16a).

The second wonderful word of hope and comfort for God's people is "My house shall be built in [Jerusalem]" (v. 16b). The project of rebuilding the so-called "second temple" in the days of Haggai and Zechariah was only a partial fulfillment of the

command to build a temple when our Lord returns to rule and reign in the Millennium. God's glorious promise of a temple--the details and dimensions of which had never before been seen (Ezk. 40-48)--was to be realized far in the future. Zechariah will have more to say about this structure in Zechariah 2 (see also Isa. 2:2-3).

The third comforting word promises that Jerusalem's boundaries would expand (v. 16c). This city, ravaged as it was by the Babylonians in 587 B.C., the Romans in A.D. 70, and many other conflicts since--and still ravaged in our present day--would experience unusual urban renewal and expansion. The surveyor's line would "be stretched out" to measure an enlarged Jerusalem. [Rev. 11:1]

The fourth comforting word is that Jerusalem would once again be the city God had chosen (v. 17). Somewhat like our "Governor's Award" for a model city in a state, the Lord will select Jerusalem once again as His chosen place. The reason God will do this is because "the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable" (Rom. 11:29). Having set His affection once on this city, our Lord will not forget what He has promised, even though He must judge the people of Jerusalem in the interim. The cities of the Promised Land will "spread out," or "overflow" just as the springs of water overflowed into the streets in Proverbs 5:16.

<http://www.ldolphin.org/daniel/zech02.html>

**Steve Zeisler:** The first thing God says is that he recognizes that evil is going unpunished at that moment, but his anger is great and it remains undiminished on those who are cruel, violent and wicked, those who have "furthered disaster." So God is fully aware that justice is being perverted. Secondly, God says, "I will deal compassionately with my people. I have not forgotten my covenant. My servants with whom I have a love relationship will not be abandoned. I have plans to restore and honor my people."

**Lindsey:** Because of God's love for Israel and His anger toward the Gentiles, He now promised six blessings for Israel:

- (a) the presence of God in Jerusalem (*I will return . . . with mercy*; cf. Ezek. 43:5; 48:35) in contrast with the departure of the divine glory from the pre-exilic temple (Ezek. 10:18-19; 11:22-23)
- (b) the rebuilding of the temple (*My house will be rebuilt*; cf. Ezek. 40-48)
- (c) the rebuilding of the city (*the measuring line will be stretched out over Jerusalem*; cf. Jer. 31:38-40)
- (d) Israel will be enriched (*towns will again overflow with the wealth of divine blessings which the city walls will be unable to contain*; cf. Isa. 60:4-9)
- (e) the inhabitants of Jerusalem (*Zion*) will be comforted by the fulfillment of God's gracious promises (cf. Deut. 13:17; 30:3; Isa. 14:1; 49:15)
- (f) they will be chosen (cf. Zech. 2:12; 3:2), referring to God's focusing His sovereign love on them and perhaps also referring to God's inaugurating the new Covenant with Israel (Jer. 31: 31-40; cf. Rom. 11:26-27).

The complete fulfillment of these blessings from a New Testament perspective relates

to the Second Advent of Christ, the millennial temple, and the blessings of the millennial kingdom, as suggested in the parallel Scripture passages mentioned above.

**Steven J. Cole: When God Seems to Have Forgotten You**

Big Idea: When it seems as if the wicked are at ease and the godly are forgotten, Christ encourages us with His powerful presence, His prayer for us, and His promises for our welfare.

The vision is described (1:7-8), explained (1:9-11), and applied (1:12-17).

1. There are often times when it seems that the wicked are at ease and the godly are forgotten (1:8, 11).
2. Christ encourages us with His powerful presence, His prayer for us, and His promises for our welfare.
  - A. Christ encourages us with His powerful presence (1:7-10).
  - B. Christ encourages us with His prayer for us (1:12).
  - C. Christ encourages us with His promises for our welfare (1:13-17).
    - (1) The Lord of hosts emphatically affirms His jealous love for His people (1:14).
    - (2) The Lord asserts His fierce anger towards the nations that oppressed His people (1:15).
    - (3) The Lord reaffirms His compassion for His people and His promises for their future blessing (1:16-17).

TEXT: Zechariah 1:18-21

TITLE: VISION #2 – THE HAMMERING OF THE HORNS -- JUDGMENT AGAINST THE OPPRESSIVE GENTILE NATIONS

**BIG IDEA:**

**THE DAY IS COMING WHEN THE LORD WILL OVERTHROW THE GENTILE NATIONS WHICH HAVE SCATTERED AND OPPRESSED THE JEWISH PEOPLE**

**INTRODUCTION:**

The “*time of the Gentiles*” will not last forever. In their pride and false sense of security, they judge themselves to be impenetrable. They have spread terror among God’s people in scattering and oppressing them and obliterating all hope of deliverance. But God will terrorize them and ultimately overthrow their sovereignty to establish His own righteous reign.

**I. (:18-19) THE FOUR HORNS**

A. The Vision

*“Then I lifted up my eyes and looked, and behold, there were four horns”*

**Mackay:** There seems to be no break from the first vision as Zechariah proceeds.

B. The Question

*“So I said to the angel who was speaking with me, ‘What are these?’”*

**Lindsey:** A horn when used symbolically indicates invincible strength (cf. Micah 4:13) or often a Gentile king who represents his kingdom (Dan. 7:24; Rev. 17:12). Here the four horns symbolize proud Gentile powers. . .

**Mackay:** How this arose can easily be seen, in that the horn is used by the animal to defend itself and also to attack. It is the horn that is displayed as a trophy when the hunter has captured a wild beast.

C. The Answer Given by the Interpreting Angel

*“And he answered me, ‘These are the horns which have scattered Judah, Israel and Jerusalem.’”*

**Mackay:** The unusual order in which Judah, Israel and Jerusalem are mentioned has given rise to much speculation. One might have expected Israel to be mentioned before Judah in that the Northern Kingdom with its capital at Samaria was overthrown earlier in 722 B.C.

**Laetsch:** Judah is the tribal name, Israel, the honorable name of the nation chosen by the Lord (Gen. 32:24-30); and Jerusalem, the seat of God’s dwelling; a climax indicating the wickedness of the enemy who opposed and sought to destroy not merely a sister

nation, but God's people, Jehovah's own city, a blasphemous crime.

## II. (:20-21) THE FOUR CRAFTSMEN

### A. The Vision

*"Then the Lord showed me four craftsmen"*

### B. The Question

*"I said 'What are these coming to do?'"*

### C. The Answer Given by the Interpreting Angel

#### 1. The Culpability of the Gentile Nations -- Review of the Vision of the Horns

*"These are the horns which have scattered Judah so that no man lifts up his head"*

**Mackay:** The picture of being unable to raise the head is one of utter conquest and subjugation (Judg. 8:28).

#### 2. The Sovereign Conquest of the Gentile Nations

*"but these craftsmen have come to terrify them, to throw down the horns of the nations who have lifted up their horns against the land of Judah in order to scatter it."*

\* \* \* \* \*

## DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Note other passages in the Bible where the figure of a "horn" signifies political authority and power.
- 2) How can these Gentile nations be held accountable by God if they were used as His instrument to judge rebellious Israel?
- 3) Why do we believe that the present scattering of the Jewish people is not a permanent situation?
- 4) What does the figure of craftsmen signify in this passage?

\* \* \* \* \*

## QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**MacArthur:** *four horns* -- Horns were symbols of power and pride (cf. Pss 75:10; 89:17; 92:10; Da 7:24; 8:20, 21; Mic 4:13). In the context of judgment each symbolizes either a nation or the head of that nation (cf. Da 7:21, 24; 8:3; Rev 17:12). Here the horns represent nations that attacked God's people (vv. 19, 21), referring either to Egypt,



Assyria, Babylonia, and Medo-Persia or perhaps, more likely, to the 4 world empires of Da 2:7: Babylonia, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome, all of which oppressed Israel.

**MacArthur:** *four craftsmen* – The word is literally the term for stoneworkers, metal workers, and wood workers – those who shape material with hammers and chisels. These “hammers” represent the nations which overthrow the 4 horns (v 18). As with the 4 beasts of Da 7, each empire is overthrown by the subsequent one, the last being replaced by Messiah’s kingdom (cf. Da 2:44; 7:9-14, 21, 22). Babylon was hammered in a night attack by the Medo-Persians (539 B.C.). With the victory of Alexander over Darius in 333 B.C. at Issus, the Greeks hammered the Medo-Persian “horn.” In the second century B.C., the Roman hammer fell and one by one the nations fell (Israel in 63 B.C.) The Roman Empire, revived in the last days, according to Daniel, will be hammered by the returning Messiah (cf. Da 2: 34, 35, 45).

**Lindsey:** It seems better either to regard the number four as a number of completeness, the totality of Israel’s opposition, or to refer the four horns to four nations that had scattered Israel before Zechariah saw the vision (perhaps Assyria, Egypt, Babylonia, and Medo-Persia). [because of the past tense in 1:19]

**Merrill:** The connections between this vision and the first are also striking. It is clear that the fact that there were four horses in vision one and four horns and four craftsmen in this one is significant.<sup>256</sup> The implied hostility of the nations in vision one (vv. 12, 15) is explicit in vision two (vv. 19, 21). Finally, just as the horses of the first vision were YHWH’s instruments of dominion over all the earth (vv. 10, 11), so the four craftsmen reduce the nations to defeat (v. 21).

**Keathley:** The first horn is Babylon. Babylon takes over Judah, but what does Nebuchadnezzar do? He is told that he is the head of gold on the statue, but he likes the idea of being the whole statue, so he builds a golden statue. Then what does God do with the head of gold? He makes it go eat grass. Belshazzar comes along and likes all the treasure from the temple in Jerusalem and decides to throw a party. God writes on the wall and says, “you have been measured, found wanting and deserving of destruction.” Along comes the first craftsman. The first craftsman is Persia. Then Greece and finally Rome.

The whole point is that the horns are the Gentile nations that come along to discipline Israel, and the craftsmen come along to discipline the Gentile nations who became arrogant in their domination. You would almost think God was in control.

**Spurgeon:** And then he finds the right men; not four gentlemen with pens to write; not four architects to draw plans, but four mechanics to do rough work. He who wants to open an oyster, must not use a razor: there needs less of daintiness, and more of force, for some works: providence does not find gentlemen to cut off the horns, but carpenters. The work needs a man who, when he has his work to do, puts his whole strength into it, and beats away with his hammer, or cuts through the wood that lays before him with might and main. Rest assured, you who tremble for the ark of God, that when the horns

grow troublesome, the carpenters will be found.

**Whitcomb:** Message to Israel: Don't despair. The workmen symbolize that every country which attacks Israel will be destroyed. For every enemy of Israel, God has an enemy to destroy that enemy.

TEXT: Zechariah 2:1-13

TITLE: VISION #3 – THE SURVEYOR – GOD IS THE DEFENSE AND GLORY OF HIS ELECT PEOPLE -- EXPANDED JUDAH RESTORED AND PROTECTED BY THE LORD

**BIG IDEA:**

**A DAY IS COMING WHEN THE LORD WILL RETURN TO PROSPER AND PROTECT JUDAH BY DWELLING IN HER EXPANDED MIDST (ESTABLISHING HIS GLORIOUS THRONE AT THE CENTER OF HER UNIVERSE)**

**INTRODUCTION:**

Do we have the throne of the Lord established at the center of our universe? Or are we still sitting on the throne and trying to govern our own lives? Here the Lord shows us the glory of that future day when the presence of the Lord on His throne in Jerusalem will provide protection and prosperity for His people. The Lord will reign in glory and be a fire of protection around those who submit to His gracious rule. If we choose instead to seek our own glory we will remain vulnerable and exposed to the enemies without.

**I. (:1-5) THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD WILL DOMINATE THE FUTURE RESTORATION OF EXPANDED JUDAH**

A. (:1-2) Presentation of the Vision

1. (:1) The Image -- Man with a Tape Measure

*“Then I lifted up my eyes and looked, and behold, there was a man with a measuring line in his hand.”*

2. (:2a) The Question – A Man on a Mission

*“So I said, ‘Where are you going?’”*

3. (:2b) The Answer – the large dimensions will be surprising

*“And he said to me, ‘to measure Jerusalem, to see how wide it is and how long it is.’”*

We limit God in many ways when we think that we can measure with physical tools what He is able to accomplish in a specific situation. Think of all of the times throughout the Bible where God surprised people by doing the impossible. Here God shows that it will take a different type of supernatural measuring to figure the dimensions of that Jerusalem of the future.

B. (:3-4) Prosperity of the Restored Expanded City

*“And behold, the angel who was speaking with me was going out, and another angel was coming out to meet him, and said to him, ‘Run, speak to that young man, saying, Jerusalem will be inhabited without walls because of the multitude*

*of men and cattle within it.”*

A city without walls might seem vulnerable; but not in this case;

The multitude of men and cattle speaks to the surprising prosperity of the restored city – beyond one’s imagination as they look at present circumstances.

**Merrill:** The second messenger, with a sense of great urgency, commands the first to run to Zechariah with the meaning of the vision. This urgency is communicated by the double imperative in Hebrew (*rus dabber*, “run, speak”). This can only mean that what is about to happen is imminent. Neither the messenger nor Zechariah can be slow to hear it and act upon it.

B. (:5) Presence of the Lord

1. To Sovereignly Protect

*“For I,’ declares the Lord, ‘will be a wall of fire around her’”*

2. To Sovereignly Rule

*“and I will be the glory in her midst.”*

Cf. the Shekinah Glory that had departed from the temple

**Roper:** That is a supernatural line of defense—a wall of fire. God would protect his people. And his presence would be felt among them; the glory would return. Ezekiel had seen the Shekinah glory depart from the temple. And though the Shekinah would never be there again in visible form until the Millennium, God would be there, his presence would rule. Every resource that he had in himself would be available to them. They would not need to fear, they would not need to defend themselves, they would not need to act on their own behalf; God would deliver them. This is a picture of deliverance, which is the first stage of reconstruction. Zechariah wants us to know that God, who formerly was our enemy, once we have been reconciled to him, is our friend, and has constituted himself the enemy of every force arrayed against us.

## **II. (:6-9) THE VENGEANCE OF THE LORD WILL BE EXECUTED AGAINST ALL THOSE NATIONS WHICH HAVE HARMED JUDAH**

A. (:6-7) TwoFold Warning to Take Refuge in God’s City

1. Warning #1

*“Ho there! Flee from the land of the north,’ declares the Lord, ‘for I have dispersed you as the four winds of the heavens,’ declares the Lord.”*

2. Warning #2

*“Ho, Zion! Escape, you who are living with the daughter of Babylon.”*

Maybe some of you today are *living with the daughter of Babylon* rather than submitting to the yoke of the Lord’s gracious commands.

**MacArthur:** The prophet turned from the distant future (vv. 4, 5) to the present, summoning those Israelites still in Babylon (referred to as the land of the north, cf. v. 7, because of the direction from which it invaded Israel) to flee before God poured out His judgment on it. This also implied a future call to leave a future Babylon (cf. Rev 17:3-5; 18:1-8).

**Mackay:** The next three words, rendered in the NIV *after he has honoured me and has sent me*, are highly problematic. Literally they are, ‘after (or afterwards) glory (or honour or weight) he sent me.’ And that seems to be as much as there is general agreement about. Some of the more plausible interpretations include the following.

- (1) ‘Weight’ or ‘weightiness’ may be an idiomatic expression for persistent urging or insistence. Whoever was sent had no option but to go. It was required by God.
- (2) The phrase ‘after glory’ may indicate the purpose for which the person was sent. He was to obtain glory by carrying out the task of 2:9. [my choice]
- (3) The phrase ‘after glory’ may indicate time. The particular time indicated would then depend on identifying the speaker.

Although many take the reference to be to the prophet himself, this seems to be ruled out by the nature of the mission described in 2:9 as ‘I will surely raise my hand against them’ and so punish the oppressing nations. That is a divine task. So the best explanation of the first person references is that the speaker is the Angel of the Lord who can both speak as the Lord and yet be distinguished from him.

#### B. (:8-9) TwoFold Description of Mission of Vengeance

##### 1. (:8) Description #1 – Protecting a Precious Possession

*“For thus says the Lord of hosts, ‘After glory He has sent Me against the nations which plunder you, for he who touches you, touches the apple of His eye.’”*

**Merrill:** The famous “*apple of his eye*” derives from a hapax legomenon (, baba), cognate to Aramaic (baba) or Akkadian babu, both meaning “gate.” It is thus the opening of the eye that is intended here or, perhaps with most modern scholars, the pupil. In either case it represents one of the most important and vulnerable parts of the body. To strike a blow at Zion is to strike one at YHWH, wounding him in a most sensitive area, to carry out the full import of this bold anthropomorphism.

**Mackay:** Being very sensitive and easily injured it is looked after with particular care (Deut. 32:10; Ps. 17:8; Prov. 7:2).

##### 2. (:9) Description #2 – Plundering a Ruthless Oppressor

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

**Dr. Barry Horner:** With “*a wave of His hand*,” as a gesture militant opposition, God will reverse the fortunes of the Gentile oppressors so that master becomes slave and slave becomes master. The enemies of Israel will become the spoil of Israel because of Messiah’s intervention (Isa. 19:16-17). This astonishing about-face will cause the

children of God to acknowledge His sovereignty in their lives. He remembers His own children (Isa. 49:15-16). “Then . . . you [Israel] will know that the LORD of hosts has sent Me” (cf. 12:2-10).

### **III. (:10-12) THE PRESENCE OF THE LORD WILL VINDICATE HIS SOVEREIGN ELECTION OF THE NATION OF JUDAH**

- A. (:10a) Exhortation to Exalt  
*“Sing for joy and be glad, O daughter of Zion”*
- B. (:10b) Promise of Abiding Presence  
*“for behold I am coming and I will dwell in your midst,’ declares the Lord.”*
- C. (:11a) Expansion of Blessing to the Gentiles  
*“Many nations will join themselves to the Lord in that day and will become My people.”*
- D. (:11b) Confirmation of the Identity of the Messiah  
*“Then I will dwell in your midst, and you will know that the Lord of hosts has sent Me to you.”*
- E. (:12) Vindication of the Lord’s Sovereign Election of Judah  
*“The Lord will possess Judah as His portion in the holy land, and will again choose Jerusalem.”*

### **(:13) CONCLUSION – WHEN THE LORD SPRINGS INTO ACTION, WATCH OUT!**

*“Be silent, all flesh, before the Lord; for He is aroused from His holy habitation.”*

Talk about waking a sleeping giant!  
The Lord dwells in the context of holiness.

**Lindsey:** The entire human race is to bow in silence and awe before the Almighty God.

#### **Psalm 15**

*O Lord, who may abide in Your tent?  
Who may dwell on Your holy hill?  
He who walks with integrity, and works righteousness,  
And speaks truth in his heart.  
He does not slander with his tongue,  
Nor does evil to his neighbor,  
Nor takes up a reproach against his friend;  
In whose eyes a reprobate is despised,  
But who honors those who fear the Lord;*

*He swears to his own hurt and does not change;  
He does not put out his money at interest,  
Nor does he take a bribe against the innocent.  
He who does these things will never be shaken.*

\* \* \* \* \*

#### DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) In what ways has the Lord been a *wall of fire* around you to protect you in specific instances?
- 2) Do you have a sense of the Lord's presence within you, manifesting His glory to others?
- 3) How precious does it make you feel to know that the Lord considers you to be as the *apple of His eye*?
- 4) What lessons about divine election can you learn from this passage?

\* \* \* \* \*

#### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Zeisler:** A useful way to look at the message which Zechariah preached is to look at the three commands around which the message centers. The first command is twice given, in different words. Zech.2:6-7: "Flee from the land of the north"; verse 7: "Escape, you who are living with the daughter of Babylon." Disentangle yourselves from the commitments you have to the world system. If you are still living in Babylon, if you have not yet returned to the land, if you are tied to it, if you are embracing the daughter of Babylon, cut yourself off; get away as fast as you can. That is the first command. The second command is in Zech.2:10: "Sing for joy and be glad, O daughter of Zion; for behold I am coming and I will dwell in your midst"; while the third is: "Be silent, all flesh, before the Lord" (Zech.2:13). . .

The second is, "Sing for joy." Christian joy is a most unaccountable, hard to argue with experience. People who derive their joy from something other than their circumstances are very difficult to explain; people who are filled with hope and delight, exuberance, verve and bounce, even when they are suffering, because of what God has said and what he has done inside them. "Sing for joy" is what Paul and Silas did in the jail at Philippi, even in the midst of an earthquake. The joy of faith, the joy of Christianity is what has arrested unbelievers in every age. . .

The third command is given in Zech.2:13: " Be silent, all flesh, before the Lord; for he is aroused from his holy habitation." The commands, "Sing for joy," and "Be silent, all flesh, before the Lord," are not antithetical. We derive our joy from the presence of God

in our midst. We are overcome by silence, by respect and awe for God when we clearly see him for who he is and when we ponder the actions he has taken and will take. Our God is aroused from his habitation. He is standing up, he is on the point of action. That ought to strike us with a sense of respect and awe that does not allow for words. Be silent. God will act. His may be an act as terrible and unthinkable as crucifying his own Son. Imagine our God, aroused to act, visiting his judgment on sin, breaking his own heart to do it? What can you say? Be silent. God is aroused to act. He may end it all. This may be the point when human history will be done away with once and for all. We see God poised to act to end human history; what can we do but close our mouths and worship and respect him?

Zechariah was not a bad preacher once he was on his feet. Here were his main points: Flee from the entanglements of Babylon; sing for joy for the dwelling place of God is with men; be silent before the Lord for he is aroused for action. Zechariah ministered to his people because he had seen visions that communicated to him the answer to the anxious question, "Why doesn't God do more?" The answer enabled him to see the larger picture of the success of God in meting out justice, and to recognize that the future of God's people was one of prosperity and protection and glory. Having seen all those things Zechariah had something to say.

**Merrill:** What Zechariah sees is a re-measurement of Jerusalem in order to reestablish the ancient boundary lines preparatory to the city's full reoccupation. Jeremiah had anticipated such a day when he, prior to the fall of Jerusalem, had redeemed the property of his uncle against the day when the Babylonian exile would be over and land could be reclaimed (Jer 32:6-15). With full confidence in the promises of YHWH, Jeremiah had avowed that "houses, fields, and vineyards will once more be bought in this land" (v. 15). . .

Does the vision have only eschatological significance, or can it relate to Zechariah's own circumstances? In our judgment it does both. . .

In conclusion, it is impossible to know a great deal about the construction and configuration of walls about Jerusalem in the post-exilic period, including the time of Nehemiah. What is clear is that for the greater period of time there were no walls or none sufficient, at least, to provide protection. Whether this was due only to harassment from unfriendly neighbors or also because of a population that had outstripped the capacity of the earlier walls cannot be known. It very likely was a combination of the two.

The eschatological import of the vision is much less debatable. The time will come, Zechariah learns, when there will be no need of walls to protect the great population of the city, for YHWH Himself will be a wall of fire and a source of glory (v. 5).<sup>280</sup> Such a vision of Jerusalem first appears in Ezekiel in an eschatological passage (38:10-13) that speaks of the nation's security despite the absence of material fortification. When the enemies of Israel advance upon them, YHWH will send fire against them (39:6) with the result that His holy name will be known in the midst of Israel (39:7). The



juxtaposition of the themes of unwalled villages, fire, and YHWH's glorious presence is certainly striking and instructive.

Though the imagery is different, one can nevertheless hardly fail to connect the fire and glory of this vision with the language of the exodus and wandering narratives.<sup>281</sup> YHWH had led His people out of Egypt by a guiding and protecting pillar of fire (Ex. 13:21; cf. 14:19-20, 24, 25; Pss. 78:14; 105:39), one associated with His glory (Ex. 33:9). Isa. 4:5 is especially relevant, for it too looks forward to the day when YHWH will create over Zion and her people "a flaming fire at night, for over all the glory will be a canopy." That glory will, of course, be His own presence (vv. 10, 11; cf. Hag. 2:9).

### **Keathley:** 2:10-13

- Yahweh will come to dwell in the midst of Israel. This is a comforting and encouraging message to the people.
- Notice also that other nations will become the people of God. We have seen that over and over again in the prophets.
- Judah and Jerusalem (12) will be God's dwelling place. Again we have emphasis on land promises being fulfilled which points to a future for national Israel. We don't know just from reading Zechariah that the literal fulfillment will be in the Millennium. We learn that in the NT and esp. Revelation.

**Mackay** – The Divine Promise (2:4-5) – To challenge the incipient defeatism of the people and to counteract their restricted ideas of what the future held (as represented by the man with the measuring line), the Lord presents a threefold promise. This promise undoubtedly spoke to the immediate situation of Zechariah's day, but it cannot be contained within that period. It opens out from the prospects of the Old Testament church to include the wider vista of the new Testament church, of whom it is said, "*You have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the living God*" (Heb. 12:22). Although in one sense the church has now arrived, and has come to Jerusalem, it is still waiting for "*the Holy City, the new Jerusalem*" (Rev. 21:2), where these promises will be finally and completely realized.

- (1) Expansion
- (2) Protection
- (3) Divine Indwelling

**John Brine:** (1732-1764) He will destroy those who seek the Ruin of his Church, none can afflict the Saints without the .greatest Injury to themselves; since God is as tender of them, as a Man is of the Apple of his Eye: The Church is a burdensome Stone, and all that burden themselves with her shall be cut in Pieces, though all the People in the Earth be gathered together against her (Zechariah 12:3.). God may for wise Reasons permit the Enemies of his People to harass and distress them, yea, he may use them as his Rod for the Correction of his Children; yet this will not excuse them from his most severe Resentment and Anger, which, I apprehend, to be the Import of these Words, Thus saith the Lord of Hosts, I am jealous for Jerusalem, and for Zion with a great jealousy; and I am very sore displeas'd with the Heathen that are at ease, for I was but a little displeas'd, and they helped forward the Affliction. To the Saints the Lord is a

Wall for their Security, and round about them, so that they are not any way open to Invasion: As he is a Wall of Fire, it is most certain that he will consume and burn up those who attempt the Destruction of his Church, the City about which he is a Wall of Protection and Defense. However, formidable her Enemies may be, and though they may imagine that it is an easy Thing to devour her, because she is weak and defenseless in her self, as was before observed; yet they will ever find it absolutely impossible, and will eternally sink under the intolerable Weight of divine Vengeance.

[http://www.mountzionpbc.org/John\\_Brine/jb\\_defence.htm](http://www.mountzionpbc.org/John_Brine/jb_defence.htm)

**Spurgeon (quoted by Dr. Barry Horner):** comments concerning Zechariah 2:1-5.

I am not given to prophesying, and I fear that the fixing of dates and periods has been exceedingly injurious to the whole system of premillennial teaching; but I think I clearly see in Scripture that the Lord Jesus Christ will come—so far I go, and take my stand—that he will come personally to reign upon this earth. At his coming it appears clear to me that he will gather together the Jewish people, that Jerusalem shall become the metropolis of the new empire which shall then extend from pole to pole, from the river even to the ends of the earth. If this be a correct interpretation of prophecy, you may read the whole of this chapter through and understand it; you have the key to every sentence: without such a belief; I see not how to interpret the prophet's meaning.

[http://www.bunyanministries.org/expositions/zechariah\\_commentary.pdf](http://www.bunyanministries.org/expositions/zechariah_commentary.pdf)

**Steven J. Cole: God Our Strong Defender and Benefactor**

Big Idea: God will defend and bless His chosen people in His time.

1. God defends His chosen people in His time by punishing the wicked who oppress them (1:18-21).
2. God will bless His chosen people in His time as their defender and benefactor by sending His Messiah (2:1-13).

TEXT: Zechariah 3:1-10

TITLE: VISION #4 – JOSHUA -- THE BRAND PLUCKED FROM THE FIRE AND  
CLEANSED BY THE MESSIAH -- THE BRANCH

**BIG IDEA:**

**GOD’S ELECT ARE UNTOUCHABLE AND FIT FOR SPIRITUAL SERVICE  
BECAUSE OF THE CLEANSING FROM SIN PROVIDED BY CHRIST**

**THE COMBINATION OF ROLES OF KING AND PRIEST IN ONE PERSON IS  
PREFIGURED IN JOSHUA (*THE BRAND PLUCKED FROM THE FIRE*) AND  
FULFILLED IN THE COMING MESSIAH (*MY SERVANT THE BRANCH*)**

**INTRODUCTION:**

You recall the OT anointed roles of Prophet, Priest and King. God had wisely established a division of power and responsibility so that God’s dealings with the nation would not all be mediated through one central person – despite the presence of many strong individual leaders down through Israel’s history. Right from the beginning of God’s choice of Abraham, we saw the mysterious figure of Melchizedek as a precursor to the coming Messiah – one who was greater than Abraham (since he received tithes from him) and one who functioned as both Priest and King (cf. Hebrews 7). However, the coming Messiah will be the one to ultimately combine these leadership roles in His sinless reign.

**Psalm 110:**

Picture of Kingship:

*The Lord says to my Lord:*

*“Sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies a footstool for your feet.”*

...

Picture of Priestly Service

*The Lord has sworn and will not change His mind,*

*You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.*

Amazingly, the church saints have been blessed with the lofty calling of being both a priesthood (1 Pet 2:5, 9) and a people who will ultimately reign with the Messiah (2 Tim 2:12) when he returns to establish His kingdom. We have experienced the forgiveness of sins and have been clothed with the righteousness of Christ so that we are no longer under any condemnation – in fact we have the Lord Jesus as our Advocate before the throne of God to rebuke all of the attacks and accusations of Satan (the accuser of the brethren).

This passage gives tremendous insight into the role of the Messiah. He is seen here in his preincarnate existence as the Angel of the Lord. He is shown in various images as coming to save the nation in that future eschatological day when He will restore Judah to prosperity. This vision speaks to the restoration of the nation of Israel to her priestly role in ministering spiritual prosperity to the world. As cleansed vessels, no longer

under any condemnation, and defended against the accusations of Satan, we are fit for spiritual service.

**I. (:1-5) THE VISION OF JOSHUA AS IT RELATES TO OUR PAST --  
A BRAND PLUCKED FROM THE FIRE --  
AS GUILTY SINNERS WE STAND IN GOD'S PRESENCE ONLY BECAUSE  
OF THE ADVOCACY OF THE LORD AS OUR GREAT HIGH PRIEST TO  
REBUKE THE ACCUSATIONS OF SATAN, CLEANSE US FROM SIN, AND  
CLOTHE US WITH HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS**

A. (:1) The Opening Scene – High Level Participants in the Presence of the Lord in Heaven – this is heavy stuff

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

**Mackay:** This is a different style of introduction from those of the other visions. This and other changes in the way the vision is related are just elegant variations to avoid monotony. They certainly do not constitute valid grounds for questioning the authenticity of the vision.

1. Joshua the high priest

Normally a very impressive figure – but not when you see the rest of the Cast; Jesus = Greek form of Joshua

**Merrill:** Neither Ezra nor Nehemiah describes Joshua as “high priest.” This is left to Haggai and Zechariah, though clearly the prominence of Joshua among the priests in even the accounts of Ezra and Nehemiah leaves no question that they also knew him as such (cf. especially Neh. 12:1, 7). He was a direct descendant of Aaron through Zadok, founder of the line of priests established by David and Solomon (1 Chron. 6:3, 8-15). His father Jehozadak had gone into Babylonian exile in 586, so it is likely that Joshua was already advanced in years when he returned to Jerusalem in 538, nearly fifty years later. Certainly by the year of Zechariah’s night visions (519) Joshua was an old man.

2. Angel of the Lord

3. Satan = the accuser of the brethren

Satan is a powerful adversary – just ask Job – but he cannot do more than what the Lord allows him to do. He certainly is not bound now ... as some would preach. He walks about like a roaring lion seeking whom to devour.

Some of his typical accusations:

- your puny attempts at rebuilding the temple will never amount to anything; your service to the Lord is in vain; it’s not worth it
- you will always be a defeated, worthless sinner
- you are a nobody; God does not even see what you are doing or care about you

- all of the future promises of God that you are counting on are suspect – maybe you are interpreting them wrong; maybe God has changed His mind ...

B. (:2) The Stern Lines -- The Elect of God Have Been Rescued from Condemnation and Rendered Untouchable – even against the Accusations of Satan Himself – despite their Sin

*“The Lord said to Satan, ‘The Lord rebuke you, Satan! Indeed, the Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?’”*

**Merrill:** The rationale for the rebuke is that Satan has overlooked the fact that YHWH, who has chosen Jerusalem, has declared Joshua to be a brand snatched from the fire (v. 2). The reference to YHWH as “He who has chosen” (habboher) Jerusalem establishes the connection between this vision and the preceding oracle (and the first as well) where YHWH, speaking with reference to the eschaton, promises to choose Jerusalem again (2:12; cf. 1:17; 2 Chron. 6:6; Isa. 14:1 [Israel]). “He who has chosen Jerusalem” thus orients the vision to the end times, but it also draws attention to Jerusalem as the place of YHWH’s habitation, particularly in the Temple.

**Constable:** The Lord then referred to Joshua as a burning stick plucked from the fire, evidently for His future use (cf. Amos 4:11). If Joshua represents Israel, then the fire must refer to the Babylonian captivity from which Israel had come almost destroyed, and the stick refers to the surviving remnant. Israel had experienced another brush with extinction at the Exodus (Deut. 4:20; 7:7-8; Jer. 11:4), and she will do so again in the Tribulation (13:8-9; Jer. 30:7; Rev. 12:13-17).

C. (:3-5) The Symbolic Action -- Picture of Imputed Righteousness

1. The Stripping off of the Filth of Sin

*“Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments and standing before the angel. He spoke and said to those who were standing before him, saying, ‘Remove the filthy garments from him.’ Again he said to him, ‘See, I have taken your iniquity away from you”*

**Merrill:** The scene that meets the human eye is that of a high priest dressed in garments stained with excrement, a sign of the vilest defilement. The same way of describing human sinfulness is found in Isa. 4:4 where, interestingly enough, the daughters of Zion will be cleansed from their filthiness in a purging associated with the coming of the “Branch,” a messianic figure introduced in Zech. 3:8 in connection with our present vision. As distasteful and shocking as this may be in general terms, the appearance of the high priest so defiled was beyond comprehension. His dress was to be of the finest, purest linen, especially on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:4), so to see him this way was to see him in a state of absolute cultic and spiritual disqualification.

2. The Gracious Clothing in the Righteousness Provided by God

*“and will clothe you with festal robes.’ Then I said, ‘Let them put a clean turban on his head,’ So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him with garments, while the angel of the Lord was standing by.”*

It's comforting to have the angel of the Lord *standing by* for whenever we need him

**Merrill:** He passes from a condition of utmost defilement to one of unsurpassed glory. It is significant, however, the word used here to speak of the new garments, is not the normal one for the robes of the high priest ("holy garments"; cf. Ex. 28:2). Rather, it describes the apparel of royalty or wealth. The point is that Joshua forms with Zerubbabel a dyarchic rule in which the high priest increasingly enjoyed political as well as cultic authority. The turban of v. 5 also supports this understanding.

**Cole:** We stand before God not in our own good deeds, but in the righteous deeds of Jesus Christ, imputed to our account. It is not a lifelong process of God infusing enough righteousness into us that eventually we qualify for heaven, as the Roman Catholic Church teaches. Rather, it is a judicial decision on God's part that takes place in an instant, as the clothing of Joshua here pictures. God justifies the guilty sinner by grace alone through Christ alone, received by faith alone. Our good deeds have nothing at all to do with it.

## **II. (:6-7) THE VISION OF JOSHUA AS IT RELATES TO OUR PRESENT -- FAITHFUL SERVICE TODAY GRANTS THE PRIVILEGE OF RULING AND SERVING IN THE FUTURE**

### A. Charge to Serve the Lord Faithfully – Conditions for Blessing

#### 1. Tone of Divine Exhortation

*“And the angel of the Lord admonished Joshua saying, ‘Thus says the Lord of hosts’”*

#### 2. Twofold Responsibility

##### a. Responsibility of Personal Obedience – Covenant Loyalty

*“If you will walk in My ways”*

##### b. Responsibility of Faithful Service in His Role as Priest

*“and if you will perform My service”*

### B. Promise of Threefold Blessing

#### 1. Governing Authority – emphasis on the temple and associated people

*“then you will also govern My house”*

#### 2. Administration Privileges – emphasis still on the temple courts

*“and also have charge of My courts”*

#### 3. Priestly Service

*“and I will grant you free access among these who are standing here.”*

**Mackay:** If he maintains his integrity then he will be given permission to enter into the heavenly court, into the very presence of God, and there to fulfill his priestly role by

interceding on behalf of the people.

### **III. (:8-10) THE VISION OF JOSHUA AS IT RELATES TO OUR FUTURE -- THE MESSIAH THE SERVANT OF THE LORD IS COMING AS THE DIVINE BRANCH AND THE ONE STONE TO SAVE JUDAH AND RESTORE PROSPERITY TO THE LAND**

A. (:8a) Call to Joshua and his Fellow Priests to Listen

*“Now listen, Joshua the high priest, you and your friends who are sitting in front of you – indeed they are men who are a symbol”*

B. (:8b-9a) Threefold Image of the Function of the Messiah in the End Times

1. Image of Messiah as God’s Servant

*“for behold, I am going to bring in My servant”*

2. Image of Messiah as the Branch– direct extension of deity

*“the Branch”*

**MacArthur**: denotes His rise from humble beginnings (Is 11:1; Jer 23:5,6) and His fruitfulness (6:12; Is 11:1).

3. Image of Messiah as the Stone with Seven Eyes

*“For behold, the stone that I have set before Joshua; on one stone are seven eyes.”*

**Merrill**: Stone as a messianic symbol is also well known throughout the Bible, for the foundation upon which God’s future Temple of redemption and dominion must rest is none other than the messianic figure of whom this scene provides a foreshadowing. As Kenneth Barker points out, the Messiah was, in His first advent, a stumbling stone and rock of offense (Ps. 118:22-23; Isa. 8:13-15; Matt. 21:42; 1 Peter 2:7-8) but now is the chief cornerstone of the church (Eph. 2:19-22). In the eschaton He will be “the dependable rock of the trusting heart.” Thus, behind this vision hovers the unmistakable aura of messianic promise and fulfillment.

Remarkable about the stone of the present oracle is that it has seven eyes (Zech. 3:9). Seven in biblical numerology signifies fullness or completeness, so the seven eyes suggest omniscience or undimmed vision. In vision five (Zech. 4:1-14) the seven eyes are identified as the eyes of YHWH that “run to and fro over the whole earth” (4:10). This universal attention by YHWH is an affirmation of His sovereign control, His unlimited dominion (cf. 1:10). Hanani the prophet had long before taught King Asa of Judah that “the eyes of YHWH run to and fro over the whole earth to show himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is upright toward him” (2 Chron. 16:9).

D. (:9b) End Times Activity of the Lord Described – Declaration of His Purpose

1. Purpose Statement #1

*“Behold, I will engrave an inscription on it,’ declares the Lord of hosts”*



**Keathley:** The engraving - the only place where we have engraved stones is on the garments of the priests. The stone on the priest's headband was engraved with the phrase, "Holy to the Lord."

**MacArthur:** The engraving may be a reference to the cornerstone of the temple building, on which will be engraved an inscription attesting to the Divine Builder and the purpose for which the building was erected. As such, it is closely tied to the removal of "*the iniquity of that land in one day*," symbolized by the removal of filthy garments in v. 4. The phrase looks to the future day when there will be cleansing and forgiveness for the nation as a whole (12:10 – 13:1; Ro 11:25-27), made possible through Christ's redemptive provision at Calvary.

2. Purpose Statement #2

*"and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day."*

E. (:10) Picture of Kingdom Prosperity

*"In that day,' declares the Lord of hosts, 'every one of you will invite his neighbor to sit under his vine and under his fig tree.'"*

\* \* \* \* \*

**DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:**

- 1) What types of accusations does Satan like to level against you? How do you respond?
- 2) Do you view yourself as a brand plucked from the fire? What does this image mean to you?
- 3) What are your favorite images that speak to the role and function of the Messiah?
- 4) What is the significance of the Israelites enjoying the fellowship and hospitality described in verse 10?

\* \* \* \* \*

**QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:**

**Ryrie:** Joshua the high priest is cleansed in this vision. This had personal significance in that it answered the charge some had made that Joshua was unfit to serve in that office. It had priestly significance for the nation, picturing their restoration to a priestly position before God. It also had prophetic significance, illustrating the future cleansing of the nation at the return of Christ.



**Merrill:** Joshua, the high priest with whom Zechariah was personally acquainted, appears in the prophet's vision in a state of ritual impurity, so much so that he is being condemned for it by Satan in the very presence of YHWH. YHWH, however, views Joshua as a chosen vessel and demands that he be considered as such and provided appropriate attire. This is done, and then Joshua is told that if he continues to be faithful to YHWH, he will have a place of ongoing prominence in the purposes of YHWH. The lesson to be learned, so the oracular section (vv. 8-10) points out, is that Joshua and his colleagues are a sign of what YHWH is about to do by means of his servant the Branch, who will be a foundation stone of redemption and restoration. . .

In addition to the eyes, however, there is about to be engraved on the stone an inscription reading, "I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day." This admittedly novel interpretation of v. 9b rests on several factors. First, it seems evident that the stone in question is the cornerstone of a building, in this case most likely the Temple of YHWH. Second, in the ancient Near Eastern world cornerstones invariably bore inscriptions attesting to the builder and the purpose for which the building was erected. The eyes on the stone would be the divine signature identifying YHWH as the real architect and builder of the structure. The necessary statement of purpose is the rather oblique reference to the function of the Temple as a place of expiation of sin. When the Davidic branch comes and the Temple of YHWH is complete, the iniquity of all the land will be removed, all in one day.

This removal of iniquity calls to mind the taking away of the iniquity of Joshua in the vision (v. 4). It is most evident that the two ideas, and hence the two passages, are to be taken together. Joshua, "snatched from the fire" by divine grace, is a prototype of the whole nation, the "kingdom of priests" (Ex. 19:6), that will also finally achieve cleansing and forgiveness. When that comes to pass, YHWH pledges, everyone will invite his friends to sit in peace with him under the vine and the fig-tree (Zech. 3:10). This is a common image in the eschatological literature to describe the day of YHWH's universal dominion (Mic. 4:4; cf. 1 Kings 4:25).

In summary, vision four describes a day of redemption in which Joshua the high priest, typical or representative of Israel as a priestly people, will be cleansed of his impurities and reinstated in his capacity as high priest. This presupposes a Temple in which this can take place, so Joshua will build such a structure. Again, this Temple is only the model of one to come, one whose cornerstone is YHWH Himself. That cornerstone contains the glorious promise of the regeneration of the nation, a mighty salvific event that will be consummated in one day (Isa. 66:7-9).

#### **Dolphin:**

But it is the use of the title "BRANCH" that is significant. This title appears in the Old Testament in four wonderful promises about the coming Messiah. These prophetic promises give four presentations of the Branch that correspond to the four presentations of Christ in the four gospels. They are:

(1) The Branch as Royal King. "I will raise to David a Branch of righteousness" (Jer. 23:5); "Behold your King" (corresponds to the presentation of the Messiah in Matthew).

- (2) The Branch as Servant. "My Servant the BRANCH" (Zech. 3:8); "Behold My Servant" (corresponds to the presentation of the Messiah in Mark).
- (3) The Branch as Fully Man. "The Man whose name is the BRANCH" (Zech. 6:12); "Behold the Man" (corresponds to the presentation of the Messiah in Luke).
- (4) The Branch as Fully God. "The Branch of the LORD" (Isa. 4:2); "Behold the Son of God" (corresponds to the presentation of the Messiah in John).

**Constable:** In that day, the Lord promised, the Israelites would all invite their (Gentile) neighbors to join them in enjoying their peace and prosperity. Israel would enjoy peace and security as never before, even under the reign of Solomon (1 Kings 4:25; cf. 2 Kings 18:31; Mic. 4:4). Then God will lift the curse that He imposed on the creation at the Fall, and there will be agricultural prosperity as well as spiritual prosperity (Isa. 11:1-9; 35; 65:17; Dan. 7:13-14, 27; Mic. 4:1-4). Paradise lost will become paradise regained.

**Cole: How Can Sinners Serve a Holy God?**

God cleanses sinners through Christ on the basis of His grace and then uses them to serve Him as they walk in His ways. . .

Note also that the cleansing from sin mentioned in Zechariah 3 is not potential, waiting on Israel's response, but actual, according to God's purpose. The Lord doesn't turn to Joshua and say, "I'd really like to cleanse you, I'm out here knocking on the door of your heart, but it's your decision, Joshua. I'm waiting for you!" No, the Lord powerfully rebukes Satan and then commands those standing near Joshua to remove his filthy garments and put clean garments on him. Then He explains what He is doing to Joshua. As Charles Feinberg states,

"It is clearly God's work without any help from man" (The Minor Prophets [Moody Press], p. 285).  
 Dr Feinberg also says, "Let those who rail at the choice of God note this passage, and let them rejoice that this is their certainty and assurance for eternity also" (ibid.). If you deny God's sovereign gracious election as the basis for your salvation, you not only deny the clear teaching of His Word, but also rob yourself of a major ground of assurance! To make your cleansing from sin rest on your feeble choice of God is to ground your salvation on a faulty surface. God grounds your cleansing from sin on the sure foundation of His sovereign choice, and not even Satan can bring a charge against God's elect (Rom. 8:33)!

Thus we've seen that Joshua had no merit of his own. Rather, God cleansed him according to God's sovereign election. . .

When John Wesley was six years old, he awoke one night to the horror of being in a burning house. Everyone else had gotten to safety, but somehow he had been forgotten. At the very last moment, just before the roof collapsed, a neighbor climbed

through the window and pulled the terrified child to safety. He always saw himself as a brand plucked from the burning. After his conversion, which came after years of trying to earn salvation by his good works, he realized even more how much God had rescued him from the eternal flames of hell.

If God has not rescued you from your sins, you must let go of your good works and allow God to cleanse you by His sovereign grace through Christ alone. If He has rescued you, it is so that you can now serve Him as you walk in His ways.

**Dolphin:**

- A. Christ Intervenes For Us As Our High Priest 3:1-2
- B. Christ Cleanses Us As Our High Priest 3:3-4
- C. Christ Challenges Us As Our High Priest 3:5-7
- D. Christ Delivers Us As Our High Priest 3:8-10

**Spurgeon** (quoted by **Guzik**):

“So it is with the child of God. What is he at the best? Till he is taken up to heaven, he is nothing but a brand plucked out of the fire. It is his daily moan that he is a sinner; but Christ accepts him as he is: and he shuts the devil’s mouth by telling him, ‘Thou sayest this man is black - of course he is: what did I think he was but that? He is a brand plucked out of the fire. I plucked him out of it. He was burning when he was in it: he is black now he is out of it. He was what I knew he would be; he is not what I mean to make him, but he is what I knew he would be. I have chosen him as a brand plucked out of the fire. What hast thou to say to that?’ Do observe that this plea did not require a single word to be added to it from Joshua.”

**MacArthur**: God’s favor rested on Israel above any nation on earth (cf. Dt 7:6-11). He snatched them from potential disappearance in their captivity, like pulling a stick out of the fire just before it is torched (cf. Am 4:11). Thus, God confirmed His purposes for Israel, sweeping from Zechariah’s time to the consummation of human history (cf. Rev 12:3-17).

TEXT: Zechariah 4:1-14

TITLE: VISION #5 – THE GOLDEN LAMPSTAND AND 2 OLIVE TREES

**BIG IDEA:**

**GOD’S WORK SUCCEEDS ONLY BY THE ABOUNDING ENABLING SUPPLIED BY GOD’S ANOINTING HOLY SPIRIT**

**INTRODUCTION:**

The prerequisite to serving God must be the type of sanctification and cleansing emphasized in the last vision. Here we see the encouragement to ministry success. Vision #4 dealt with Joshua, the religious leader; Vision #5 encourages Zerubbabel, the political leader who must motivate the people to accomplish the difficult task at hand. The key would be reliance upon the unending supply of God’s resources through His Spirit. There are no mountains of difficulty that he cannot tunnel through.

Remember the simple Sunday School song:

Got any rivers you think are uncrossable?  
Got any mountains you can’t tunnel through?  
God specializes in things thought impossible.  
He does the things others cannot do.

**THREE ENCOURAGEMENTS TO MINISTRY SUCCESS:**

**I. (:1-7) THE AVAILABLE UNCTION**

A. (:1) Transition to the Next Vision

*“Then the angel who was speaking with me returned and roused me, as a man who is awakened from his sleep.”*

Vision #4 focused on Joshua and the priestly role – the spiritual cleansing from sin and sanctification that is a prerequisite to do God’s work.

Vision #5 focuses on Zerubbabel as the political leader – the resources of God that will enable the work of rebuilding the temple to be completed successfully.

B. (:2-3) The Vision Itself – Two Main Elements

1. The Golden Lampstand

*“He said to me, ‘What do you see?’ And I said, ‘I see, and behold, a lampstand, all of gold with its bowl on the top of it, and its seven lamps on it with seven spouts belonging to each of the lamps which are on the top of it;’”*

**MacArthur:** The lampstand is the 7-branched kind used in the tabernacle, with the addition of a bowl on the top if it in order to maintain an abundant supply of oil and spouts to carry the oil to keep the 7 lamps burning. The picture is of an abundant supply.

**Merrill:** The purpose of the menorah obviously was to illuminate the interior of the Holy Place (Ex. 25:37), but it also spoke of the illumination of the presence of YHWH Himself.

2. The Two Olive Trees

*“also two olive trees by it, one on the right side of the bowl and the other on its left side.”*

**Roper:** Then, draped over the top of the lampstand are two olive trees, creating a picture of perpetual supply. The olive trees grow to maturity, the olives ripen, the olive oil then drops into the bowl on top and flows through channels to each of the individual lamps--necessitating a good deal of plumbing--all this intended to convey the idea of unlimited resource: the oil keeps flowing, the lamp keeps burning.

C. (:4-5) Request for Insight and Understanding

*“Then I said to the angel who was speaking with me saying, ‘What are these, my lord?’ So the angel who was speaking with me answered and said to me, ‘Do you not know what these are?’ And I said, ‘No, my lord.’”*

No understanding apart from the Spirit of God making things plain to us

D. (:6-7) The Powerful Explanation – focusing on the resources of God’s Spirit and God’s Grace – How Can Anyone be Adequate for Ministry?

Two Key Principles:

1. (:6) Success Comes Only by God’s Spirit

*“Then he said to me, ‘This is the word of the Lord to Zerubbabel saying, Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord of hosts.’”*

We cannot overemphasize the importance of the ministry of the Holy Spirit – despite what we see as excesses in some other movements – we do not want to overreact by minimizing His role

**Merrill:** The focus cannot be on the menorah itself but on its source of illumination, the oil that provides its fuel. The reservoir—the lamps, the pipes—all have to do with this fundamental idea that the menorah is useless without the power that energizes it. Likewise the task of temple building and, indeed, of the establishment of the sovereignty of YHWH and His kingdom cannot be accomplished apart from divine enablement; hence the word of YHWH: “Not by strength and not by authority, but by my Spirit” (v. 6).

2. (:7) Grace Can Remove the Greatest Obstacles

*“What are you, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel you will become a plain; and he will bring forth the top stone with shouts of ‘Grace, grace to it!’”*

Sola Gracie – one of the tenets of the Reformation

**Roper:** He is referring to the huge pile of rubble that was strewn over the temple area. When it had burned, the temple had caved in and become a great mound of rubble. It seemed to be insurmountable. How could they clean all this rubble and rebuild the temple? Well, Zechariah is told to say to Zerubbabel, "Before you this great mountain will become a plain." How is this to be accomplished? "Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit," says the Lord. God's strength, his resources, would be adequate.

**Mackay:** Generally the most important stone in an ancient building was the foundation stone, but here it is the completion of the building that is specially marked, perhaps when Zerubbabel superintends the placing of a stone at the top of an arch or gateway, marking the completion of the Temple. It would have been previously prepared and then brought out from the workshop or quarry to fit into its allotted place. With jubilation the people will cry out, "*Grace! Grace to it!*" extolling God's freely given blessing on the work now completed, and imploring that he continue to look with favour on the Temple and all that was represented by it.

## **II. (:8-10) THE ASSURANCE OF SUCCESS**

### A. (:8) Additional Words of Divine Encouragement

*"Also the word of the Lord came to me, saying"*

### B. (:9a) Promise of Ultimate Ministry Success

*"The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house, and his hands will finish it."*

### C. (:9b) Confirmation of Divine Prophecy

*"Then you will know that the Lord of hosts has sent me to you."*

### D. (:10) Assurance that God Knows What He is Doing

#### 1. Don't Get Discouraged by Man's Limited Perspective

*"For who has despised the day of small things?"*

The rebuilding of the temple looked pitiful compared to its former glory in the days of Solomon; but God was at work to accomplish His purposes; we should never despise or underestimate the importance of something that God considers important.

**MacArthur:** Though the rebuilding of a temple smaller than Solomon's may have been discouraging to some (cf. Ezr 3:12; Hag 2:3), the Lord announced that His pleasure was upon this work, and that His omniscient care was watching over and taking pleasure in its completion. He said in effect, 'Don't despise what God is pleased with.' This was only a picture of the glorious restoration when Messiah comes to reign. That temple will make all others pale by comparison (cf. Eze 40 -48).

2. Rejoice in God's Omniscient Perspective

*"But these seven will be glad when they see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel – these are the eyes of the Lord which range to and fro throughout the earth."*

**Mackay:** this is the practical impact of the Lord's close supervision of all that occurs on earth. The project that he approves of will not lack his care and protection until it is completed.

**III. (:11-14) THE ANOINTING FOR LEADERSHIP**

A. (:11-13) Request for Insight and Understanding

1. (:11-12) Twofold Request for Explanation of the Two Olive Trees

a. (:11) Request #1 – Vision described in very general terms

*"Then I said to him, 'What are these two olive trees to the right of the lampstand and on its left?'"*

b. (:12) Request #2 – Vision described in much more specific terms

*"And I answered the second time and said to him, 'What are the two olive branches which are beside the two golden pipes, which empty the golden oil from themselves'"*

2. (:13) Need for Insight and Understanding

*"So he answered me, saying, 'Do you not know what these are?' And I said, 'No, my lord.'"*

B. (:14) Explanation of the Significance of the Olive Trees

*"Then he said, 'These are the two anointed ones who are standing by the Lord of the whole earth.'"*

"sons of oil"

\* \* \* \* \*

**DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:**

- 1) Does God still speak to His people today in similar types of visions? Why or Why not?
- 2) Trace the passages in Scripture where oil is used as a type of the Holy Spirit. What do we learn from this analogy?
- 3) How abundant do we consider God's resources to us for the task at hand?
- 4) How has God leveled out our mountains and overcome our obstacles?



\* \* \* \* \*

## QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Roper:** As we saw in our last study, Zechariah's message is presented to him in the form of eight visions, one after another, given on the same evening. It was God's normal procedure, at least during Old Testament times, to reveal truth to the prophets in this way. They saw things that other people did not see. That is why at times they are called "seers". They received truth in visual form. They saw things that it would have been impossible for them to know apart from the activity of God in their lives. If you or I had visions of this nature, we would probably consider giving up catsup on our pizza before bedtime! But these visions were something very real; these were not nightmares, although they have a strange, almost bizarre quality about them. But these were visions that came from God to the prophets. Now, it appears that God is not revealing himself in this way any longer. In the book of Hebrews the writer says in the first verse, "In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets [that is, he spoke to them through visions, through dreams, through auditory experiences]; but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son..." So the final, complete revelation of God is in the person of Christ, and he is not speaking to us, it appears, in the same ways that he did formerly. But this was the normal experience of the prophets in Zechariah's day. . .

So we can see now something of the picture. The oil is produced by the tree, flowing through the branches down into the lamps, and the light is given off. Consistently throughout Scripture, oil is used to refer to the ministry of the Holy Spirit working powerfully through us. Thus this is a picture of the power of the Holy Spirit, flowing through Zerubbabel and Joshua out to the people, so that the people then can become what they are intended to be. What a beautiful picture of the Spirit-filled life! As a matter of fact, these two men are called "sons of fresh oil"-that is the translation of the word "anointed" in the margin of the New American Standard Version. That is, they are those who are full of oil, who are filled with the Spirit and thus are able to have this sort of ministry to those in need around them, so that light is produced where it was beginning to flicker and die. What a beautiful picture of the ministry of the Spirit of God in our life! There is no end to what he can do; there is no limit to the resources available. The tree never fails to produce fruit, so there is always an adequate supply of oil.

**MacArthur:** The purpose of the vision was to encourage Zerubbabel to complete the temple rebuilding, to assure him of divine enablement for that venture and the endless supply for the future glory of Messiah's kingdom and temple. The lampstand pictured Israel fully supplied by God to be His light then and in the future. . .

The two olive trees (vvs. 3, 11) represent the kingly and priestly offices in Israel through which the blessing of God was to flow. The two olive branches (v. 12) are the two men who occupied the supreme positions in those offices at that time: Zerubbabel,



as a descendant of David, and Joshua, the High-Priest, a descendant of Eleazar. Together, they foreshadow the Messiah, in whom these two offices are combined (cf. 6:13; Ps 110) and who is the true source of blessing to make Israel the light to the nations (cf. Is 60:1-3). They had positions of responsibility in service to “the Lord of the whole earth,” a millennial term that points to the final kingdom (cf. Mic 5:4).

**Mackay:** (Re vs 6) “*Might*” and “*power*” are very close synonyms. “*Might*” refers to material wealth and military capability, while “*power*” refers to the exercise of it. Together they represent the full extent of human resources which could be deployed to deal with a difficult situation. As Zerubbabel looked at what was available to him in organizing the building of the Temple, he might well have compared what he had to the lavish provision David had set aside for Solomon – “*a hundred thousand talents of gold, a million talents of silver, quantities of bronze and iron too great to be weighed, and wood and stone*” (1 Chr. 22:14; 29:2). He might also have thought of the mighty men available to David and Solomon to protect their realms against external threat. The restored community had no comparable economic or military resources. . .

The next verse dramatically declares that the problems besetting Zerubbabel as God’s agent will be swept aside. *What are you, O mighty mountain?* (4:7) issues a challenge to whatever opposes God’s purposes. From a human perspective there may seem to be insuperable impediments – a great mountain of them – but it is the divine perspective that ultimately counts. Isaiah showed how every obstacle would be cleared from the path of the coming Lord, every mountain and hill being made low (Isa. 40:4). In Jeremiah the figure of a mountain is used specifically of Babylon, “*the destroying mountain*” (Jer. 51:25), which had done so much wrong in Zion. Perhaps then this challenge is not issued just to obstacles in general, but particularly to those parties that had already tried to make life difficult for the Jews.

**Dolphin:** Three principles are taught in this vision:

- A. God's Work Will Be Accomplished by God's Spirit 4:1-6
- B. God's Work Must Not Be Despised for Its Small Beginnings 4:7-10
- C. God's Work Values People More than Institutions 4:11-14 . . .

**CONCLUSION:** God will accomplish His purposes through His chosen instruments, mortals who are willing to fuel the fires that give light and life to the house and mission of our Lord. Our Lord will accomplish His purposes in spite of mountainous obstacles that tasks such as the rebuilding of the temple pose. Moreover, while God values men and women more than He values institutions, men and women must not think that their work for God in building the institutions is accomplished by their own might and power. Rather, it is done only by His Holy Spirit.

That is why men and women must not negatively judge any work of God based on how it appears to them at present, for any demeaning or belittling of small beginnings is premature and ill-founded. All so-called “small things” are directly linked to God’s ongoing triumph and, especially, to His climactic victory in the final day.

## **Steven J. Cole: Preventing Spiritual Burnout**

Big Idea: To prevent spiritual burnout, see the importance of God's work and depend on the continual supply of His Spirit.

1. To prevent spiritual burnout, see the importance of God's work.
  - A. We must be aware of some seeming negatives in God's work.
    - (1) God's work seems beset with problems.
    - (2) God's work seems incredibly slow in its progress.
    - (3) God's work often seems insignificant.
  - B. We must keep in mind the sure positives of God's work.
    - (1) God's work is the focus of His delight.
    - (2) God's work is a worldwide work that will prevail.
    - (3) God's work is the work of revealing God in and through us.
  
2. To prevent spiritual burnout, depend on the continual supply of God's Spirit.

TEXT: Zechariah 5:1-4

TITLE: VISION #6 – THE FLYING SCROLL – PROCLAMATION OF GOD’S CURSE AGAINST LAW BREAKERS

**BIG IDEA:**

**BECAUSE GOD TAKES SIN SERIOUSLY THERE WILL BE NO ESCAPING HIS CERTAIN JUDGMENT**

**INTRODUCTION:**

Some people can get so involved in the work of the Lord that they imagine the requirements of holiness don’t apply to them. They think that their religious activities should somehow give them a pass when it comes to certain aspects of obedience. The people of Zechariah’s day who were committed to rebuilding the temple may have had such thoughts. Here God makes plain His view of transgression of His holy law. He will not hold anyone guiltless who breaks His covenant. His judgment will be certain and his judgment will be severe.

**I. (:1-2) THE PRESENTATION OF THE FLYING SCROLL – THE IMPARTIALITY OF THE LAW – ITS CURSES APPLY TO EVERYONE**

A. (:1) Overall Image

1. Standard Introduction

*“Then I lifted up my eyes again and looked,”*

2. Special Effects – public message to read by all

*“and behold, there was a flying scroll.”*

B. (:2) Outstanding Features

1. Introduced by the Interrogating Angel (interpreting angel as well)

*“And he said to me, ‘What do you see?’”*

2. Identified by the Prophet Zechariah

a. Special Effects

*“And I answered, ‘I see a flying scroll;’”*

**Dolphin:** The fact that the scroll was "flying" likens its messages to some of the advertisements one can see at a seashore, fair or football stadium, where a small aircraft flies overhead trailing a long sign. In the case of the scroll, however, the message was being guided by God. It is almost as if the scroll were on automatic pilot.

**MacArthur:** The scroll represents, then, a divine standard, by which man is to be measured.

b. Specific Size

*“its length is twenty cubits and its width ten cubits.”*

**Merrill:** Among biblical objects or places with these measurements are the Holy Place in the Tabernacle (Ex. 26), the “porch” of Solomon’s Temple (1 Kings 6:3), and the great bronze altar of the Temple (20 cubits long and 10 high; 2 Chron. 4:2). All three of these have to do with the sanctuary, the place where YHWH meets with His people.<sup>394</sup> As the interpretation shows in vv. 3-4, the connection of the scroll with the dwelling-place of YHWH leads to the conclusion that the scroll contains the covenant document that binds YHWH and the nation together.

**Dolphin:** Since a "cubit" is about eighteen inches, this scroll was about 30 feet x 15 feet. Scrolls, which antedated our modern books, were usually long strips of papyrus or parchment, but this scroll was unusually wide.

## **II. (:3-4) THE PROCLAMATION OF GOD’S CURSE AGAINST LAW BREAKERS – THE CERTAINTY AND SEVERITY OF GOD’S JUDGMENT**

### **A. (:3) Four Aspects of the Targeted, Terrible Curse**

1. Scope of the Curse – Targeted against the Land of Judah – No Mistake  
*“Then he said to me, ‘This is the curse that is going forth over the face of the whole land’”*
2. Subjects of the Curse = Targeted against those breaking God’s Ten Commandments – No Exceptions
  - a. Thieves  
*“surely everyone who steals will be purged away according to the writing on one side”*
  - b. Swearers = taking the name of the Lord in vain  
*“and everyone who swears will be purged away according to the writing on the other side”*

**Ryrie:** The scroll was not rolled up since both sides could be read.

**Merrill:** The flying scroll of Zechariah mentions only two of the covenant stipulations, violation of which will invite the sanction of curse. These two, however, represent the whole law, for the one has to do with interpersonal, human relations and the other with man’s responsibility before God

3. Severity of the Curse = Terrible in its Effects  
*“will be purged away”*
4. Signature of the Curse = Terrible in its Sovereign Disposition  
*“according to the writing”*  
Just as it is determined whose names are written in the book of life

### **B. (:4) 3 Sobering Descriptions regarding the Execution of the Curse**

1. Sovereignly Dispatched – it cannot be stopped  
*“I will make it go forth,’ declares the Lord of hosts”*
  
2. Selectively Invasive – it will find the appropriate targets  
*“and it will enter the house of the thief and the house of the one who swears falsely by My name”*
  
3. Severely Destructive – it will do the intended damage  
*“and it will spend the night within that house and consume it with its timber and stones.”*

**Dolphin:** Surely this indicates the severity of the judgment that God would bring against those who violated His covenant. Moreover, the curse would "consume [the houses], with its timber and stones" (v. 4d). Such a consuming judgment from God reminds us of the fire that fell from heaven when the prophet Elijah prayed for God to answer his prayer by fire (1 Kings 18:38). The fire ate up the sacrificed animal, the twelve stones of which the altar was made, and the water-filled trench surrounding the altar. The wicked may not expect to escape the judgment of God.

**Lindsey:** The severity and the totality of the judgments suggest a fulfillment in the Millennium because only then will divine judgment on sin be so rapid and so complete.

**Feinberg:** The curse will not go astray; it will find the guilty and extirpate him, root and branch.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Trace the concept of *“the curse of the law”* throughout both the Old and New Testaments. Does this topic seem to present God in an overly harsh fashion?
  
- 2) How seriously do you view sin in your own life?
  
- 3) Why did God focus just on these two particular commandments?
  
- 4) What remains after God’s awesome judgment?

\* \* \* \* \*

#### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Merrill:** In line with the structural pattern of the night visions, visions six and three are a matching pair.<sup>391</sup> In support of this the Meyers point first to such matters in common as the national focus of both, that is, the centrality of Judah in the restoration program.

Second, a solitary individual in both visions is the immediate recipient of them, contrary to the other visions where multiple recipients appear, at least secondarily. Third, there is the measuring line in vision three with which the unidentified surveyor is about to measure the breadth and length of Jerusalem. Vision six features a scroll that also is measured, but this time in terms of length and breadth. Finally, the scroll is flying, just as the man of vision three is on the move to accomplish his task. . .

That mission is transparently clear—the scroll will demolish the house to the last timber and stone. Although this should be taken literally to some extent as referring to material structures, the use of “house” as a metaphor for one’s family and life is more likely. The scroll as the covenant Word of God contains the message that judges and brings to ruin all human efforts at salvation and success. The covenant breaker will find that his sins against God and against men will lead inexorably to utter devastation.

In concluding comment on this vision, another instructive but contrastive parallel should be drawn to vision three. There the surveyor was about the business of building, the result of which was a city with no wall of protection but YHWH Himself, the “wall of fire” (2:5). Here the scroll does not build but, to the contrary, destroys, leaving neither wall nor roof nor foundation. In the first case, the remnant people who trust confidently in YHWH will find adequate shelter in His presence among them. In the present case, the thief and blasphemer will know nothing of this protective grace but only the wrath of a holy God whose covenant mercies have been spurned (cf. Hab. 2:9-11).

**Constable:** In spite of the glorious promises of the future just revealed in the previous visions, the Israelites needed to realize that sin would still bring inevitable divine punishment on them. They needed to remain pure so they could avoid the Lord’s curses and enjoy His promised blessings (cf. 2 Cor. 7:1). They were still under the Mosaic Law, specifically the Decalogue.

### **Cole: What God Thinks About Sin**

President Calvin Coolidge was not known for his talkativeness. A story, perhaps apocryphal, says that one Sunday he attended a worship service without his wife. When he returned home, she asked him what the minister had talked about. “Sin,” replied silent Cal. “What did the preacher say about sin?” his wife persisted. Coolidge replied, “He was against it.” Coolidge’s answer is a succinct summary of Zechariah 5, which tells us what God thinks about sin. In a nutshell, He is against it. Zechariah’s sixth and seventh night visions tell us, God will be relentless in judging all sin.

A major mistake that God’s people can make is to think that if we are doing God’s work, it buys us some indulgences against our sins. Israel was rebuilding the temple, and Zechariah wanted to encourage them in that work. But God also wanted to warn them that His people must be holy, even as He is holy. Rebuilding the temple was a great work, but it didn’t earn them any credit in the sin department. Just because they were God’s chosen nation didn’t mean that God would tolerantly overlook their sin. God would deal with all sinners in Israel and He would ultimately purge the

nation of all wickedness. . .

Again, we must remember that this verse ultimately looks forward to the millennium, when the Lord will purge out sinners and establish His righteous reign. But there is still an obvious application for us, namely, that God is committed to the holiness of His people, beginning on the thought level (Matt. 5:27-30). Sometimes He takes drastic measures to impress on His people that He is a consuming fire (Heb. 12:29). Paul mentions that in Corinth some were sick and others were dying because they did not judge their own sins before coming to the Lord's Table (1 Cor. 11:29-31).

**Mackay:** The description emphasizes the thoroughness of divine judgment, extending even to the destruction of the stones of their homes. . . There are no half measures when God acts. "The Lord's curse is on the house of the wicked, but he blesses the home of the righteous" (Prov. 3:33). The holiness of God should be reflected in his people.

TEXT: Zechariah 5:5-11

TITLE: VISION #7 – THE WOMAN IN THE MEASURING BASKET (EPHAH)

**BIG IDEA:**

**WICKEDNESS CANNOT BE ALLOWED TO EXIST IN THE HOLY ASSEMBLY --**

**WICKEDNESS WILL ULTIMATELY BE CONFINED (SEPARATED), REMOVED FROM THE MIDST OF GOD’S PEOPLE AND TEMPORARILY ENSHRINED IN BABYLON**

**INTRODUCTION:**

A Jack-in-the-Box scene – a genie-in-the-bottle scene – here we have a woman who personifies wickedness being confined in an ephah and carried off to be worshiped in her own temple in Babylon. This passage is a nice corollary to the teaching in 1 Cor. 5 on the necessity for church discipline – sexual immorality (in that context) cannot be tolerated in the church. Here the wickedness in question is more probably the idolatry that had so characterized the children of Israel and led to their former captivity. In the end times in preparation for the millennial kingdom, after God restores His people to their land, He will purge the land of wickedness and idolatry. This is a very difficult section, but we will try to explain the significance of each portion of the imagery without going overboard and engaging in a lot of speculation.

**I. (:5-8) WICKEDNESS WILL ULTIMATELY BE CONFINED (SEPARATED) (ISOLATED) – stuffed into the ephah basket**

**A. (:5-6a) Dominant Imagery of the Vision – The Ephah Going Forth**

*“Then the angel who was speaking with me went out and said to me, ‘Lift up now your eyes and see what this is going forth.’ I said, ‘What is it?’ And he said, ‘This is the ephah going forth.’”*

**1. Significance of an *ephah* – The Measuring of Wickedness – the fullness of sin**

- used for holding dry goods as a measurement
- significance of measuring throughout these visions
- unusual size of this ephah – large enough to hold a woman
- maybe no more significant than it was a common basket used as a container for holding things

**2. Traveling ephah – “*going forth*” – The Banishment of Wickedness**

Very public spectacle; seen by all – just like the flying scroll

**B. (:6b) Significance of the Imagery of an Eye – The Dominion of Evil**

*“Again he said, ‘This is their appearance in all the land’”*



Word literally means “eye” like a physical eye; some versions translate it “iniquity” here; I like the explanation of **Merrill**:

**Merrill**: First, it is necessary to deal with the very much debated “their eye” in v. 6b. Many versions translate “*their appearance*. . . That may, indeed, be the preferred translation, but that does not solve the difficulties. The LXX and Syriac read “*their iniquity*,” . . . This would solve the problem of meaning nicely, especially in light of “wickedness” in v. 8, but the text-critical principle of *lectio difficilior* would tend to rule that out.

The answer lies, we submit, in letting Zechariah supply his own fund of language and imagery. He has used the phrase (bekol haares), “in (or through) all the earth,” three times previously in the book (1:10, 11; 4:10) and does so once again later (6:7). Without exception it occurs in contexts having to do with dominion, especially YHWH’s universal rule. In one of those instances “eyes” is part of the formula, namely, in 4:10. There YHWH identifies the “seven” of v. 10a as “the eyes of YHWH which run to and from through the whole earth.” As argued at that passage, this refers to YHWH’s omniscience by which He knows the end from the beginning.

This is likely the import of “*their eye*” in 5:6. Without repeating the whole cliché, “*their eye which runs to and fro through the whole earth*,” the interpreting messenger compresses it to simply “*their eye ... through the whole earth*.” What he has in mind, if this view be correct, is that the forces of evil, like YHWH himself, assert dominion over all the earth, though in their case it is woefully nonomniscient and pitifully inadequate. Yet, like Satan in the prologue of Job (Job 1:7; 2:2), they make the effort oblivious to the sovereignty of YHWH, who will someday call their hand and hold them to account. The ephah and its contents, then, represent the antitheocratic powers of this world with their pseudo-dominion of all the earth. This interpretation has in its favor an inner-hermeneutical method without resort to textual emendation.

C. (:7a) Significance of the Lead Cover = Stopper or Lid on the basket  
“(and behold, a lead cover was lifted up)”  
Prevents the woman from escaping

D. (:7b-8) Significance of the Imprisoned Woman  
1. Why a Woman – personifying Wickedness – the identification expressly Made; cf. Rev. 17:3-5  
“and this is a woman sitting inside the ephah.  
Then he said, ‘This is Wickedness!’”

**Dolphin**: To make the image of the personified wickedness even more vivid, wickedness is depicted as “a woman sitting inside [a] basket” (v. 7). The picture is reminiscent of a kind of genie in a jar. This woman’s influence would be capped by the “lead disc” (v. 7). Surely that would be God’s concluding act of placing wickedness under wraps.

## 2. Imprisoned Against Her Will

*“And he threw her down into the middle of the ephah and cast the lead weight on its opening.”*

**Merrill:** That a woman could be contained in a five-gallon vessel is, in actual life, impossible. But in a vision such things are not only possible but frequently insisted upon in order to draw attention to the surreality of the experience and its divine origination.

## **II. (:9) WICKEDNESS WILL ULTIMATELY BE REMOVED FROM THE MIDST OF GOD’S PEOPLE**

### A. Significance of the Winged Women – Divine Agents to Facilitate Sanctification

*“Then I lifted up my eyes and looked, and there two women were coming out with the wind in their wings; and they had wings like the wings of a stork,”*

**Guzik:** Some regard these women as agents of evil because storks were unclean animals, but here they seem to do the work of God in sending the wicked woman back to Babylon.

Probably symbolic of the work of the Holy Spirit in sanctification; on the other hand if these women were actually involved in building the temple in Shinar, it could be argued that they were evil agents. Since they were transporting wickedness against her will, it seems like they should be viewed as divine agents.

### B. Significance of the Elevation of the Ephah – Power Over Wickedness

*“and they lifted up the ephah between the earth and the heavens.”*

Wickedness did not want to get lifted up and removed against her will

## **III. (:10-11) WICKEDNESS WILL TEMPORARILY BE ENSHRINED IN BABYLON**

### A. (:10) The Question of Destiny

*“I said to the angel who was speaking with me, ‘Where are they taking the ephah?’”*

Where is Wickedness ultimately headed? How about those who practice evil?

### B. (:11a) The Ultimate Futility = Building a Temple in Babylon

*“Then he said to me, ‘To build a temple for her in the land of Shinar’”*

The Pride of man from the beginning of history has sought to establish his own temple and exalt his own accomplishments – cf. the Tower of Babel

This is a shameful temple in a shameful land.

**MacArthur:** The destination of the women bearing the basket was Shinar, an older word designating Babylon (cf. Ge 10:10). The older word is used possibly to recall the Tower of Babel as a symbol of opposition against God (cf. Ge 11:2). There it will be placed in a “temple” and set on a base or pedestal as an idol. Again the vision is unmistakably looking forward to the final Babylon of Rev 17, 18 at the second coming of Christ (cf. Mal 4:1-3).

C. (:11b) The Ultimate Idolatry = The Worship of Wickedness

*“and when it is prepared, she will be set there on her own pedestal.”*

**Merrill:** Reference to Shinar is tantamount to reference to Babylon, for that city becomes the very epitome of humanistic independence of and resistance to God and His sovereignty. It was at Babylon, in the land of Shinar, that the rebel human race erected a great ziggurat, the purpose of which was to frustrate God’s mandate to “be fruitful, multiply, and fill the earth” (Gen. 1:28; 9:1). The men of Babylon had said, “Let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad upon the surface of the whole earth” (Gen. 11:4). From that time Babylon became synonymous with arrogant human independence, the very fountainhead of antitheocratic social, political, and religious ideology.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What benefit would the people of Zechariah’s day have derived from this difficult to understand passage?
- 2) How has God promised to defeat wickedness in the last days as recorded in the Book of Revelation?
- 3) How does this view of separation compare to God’s command to the church to exercise discipline in removing wickedness from the assembly?
- 4) How does the world worship wickedness today? What idols have we had to cast out of our lives?

\* \* \* \* \*

#### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Dr. Richard Bacon:** (Notes from his audio message on [SermonAudio.com](http://SermonAudio.com)) – Most commentators get this passage wrong. They find too many things in the passage that just are not there. This is the most difficult passage I have preached in my 15 years as pastor here. Rabbinic view: historical approach: all the wickedness was carried away in the captivity and purged there. Matthew Henry says this is talking about fraudulent commerce. An ephah is a measurement of dry goods (somewhere between 5 and 9

gallons). Lead stopper weighs 90 pounds. The exact size is not that important. It is a standard measure. The Jews had 3: an omar (a little less than a peck – a couple of pounds); ten of those make up an ephah; ten of those make up a homar. Warning against diverse measures = having a large and small ephah depending on whether you are buying or selling. Others: it is talking about materialism in general. They thought too much about this world's goods and not enough about God. That would preach ... but it is not what Zechariah is talking about. The fundamental teaching in this passage: when God prospers the church spiritually he also purges the church of sin

God is there purging wickedness from the land. Review of verses 1-4: a reassertion of the curse of the law. Here we have a vindication of the righteousness of God in banishing wickedness from His church. 3 Signs of a true church: 1) It must preach the true gospel; 2) The ordinances of God must be rightly administered; 3) Church discipline – look to join a church that is willing to kick you out; will put your feet on a righteous track and will let you know when your feet get off that righteous track.

The idea of measuring occurs over and over in the book of Zechariah. The ephah refers to the full measure of sin; sin is replete; the cup is full. The bucket is going to be full of wickedness – he takes the heavy lead lid and pushes the woman into a space where normally she would not fit. (cf. Matt. 23:32 – talks about the measure of the Pharisees' wickedness had become full; then God destroyed Jerusalem in 70 A.D. Also 1 Thess. 2:16) Once it is measured it is removed. We have the Word of God, particularly the law, to measure what is sin. It is measured and then taken out of the land by the 2 women -- Eccles. 5 – two are better than one = the certainty of it happening?? (Amos 3:3). Not called angels here. There were two angels at Christ's resurrection (John 20:12).

He casts the lead on her mouth – whose mouth (“the mouth thereof”)? It looks like a stopper; regardless, the wickedness is being contained. 1) Wickedness Measured; 2) Wickedness Removed; 3) That removal made permanent – But outside of the church, wickedness is enthroned and virtually worshipped (even though they don't call it wickedness) -- Set up in an idol house and actually worshipped.

Application: We need to protect our children from the influences of wickedness. Get out of Babylon and get back to Jerusalem where we are building the temple of God. (2 Cor. 6:14ff – pretty strong antithesis). There is a cumulative effect of sin; it builds up in our system. The barrel does not get full on the first day. We become more tolerant as sin builds up. Those in a position of sin have a responsibility to limit or restrict sin and to punish evil doers (not reform them). When the bucket of sin gets full, God will remove it. Repent before I come and take the candlestick away. The final outcome of sin is banishment.

<http://www.sermonaudio.com/sermoninfo.asp?SID=41706805>

**Laetsch:** A woman is chosen as the symbol of wickedness because of the alluring, captivating, deceptive power of sin. (cp. Judg. 14:15 ff.; 16:5-20; Prov. 2:16-19; 7:7 ff.; 9:13 ff.) Wickedness by its very nature is not willing to be caged, confined to narrow

limits. It longs for liberty to roam about at will. Yet in spite of her violent effort to gain her liberty, the woman is hurled back into her prison, and the “weight,” literally, the stone, such as were used to cover large openings (cp. Gen. 29:2 f.; John 11:38, 41) “of lead” was replaced over the opening end of the ephah. . .

[Application to the necessity of Church Discipline]

The Holy Land is for holy people. While even the justified and sanctified believers have need of daily forgiveness, wickedness, manifest rebellion against God, cannot be tolerated in God’s holy Church, the communion of saints. It must be removed by removing the wicked man or men (Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 5:9-13).

**Lindsey:** Israel’s corporate sin, associated with idolatry, will be removed from her land. . . Returning the wickedness of idolatry to its place of origin in Babylon apparently will set the stage for final judgment on Babylon (Rev. 17-18). Its removal from Israel will prepare the way for Christ’s second coming and millennial kingdom (Rev. 19-20).

**Feinberg:** In Babylon culminates all that defies God and his righteousness on earth. Godlessness of every sort, including that of Israel, will find its place there.

**Dolphin:** Given the part that Babylon plays in the eschatological drama of the closing days of this present age, the removal of wickedness to Babylon might have been in preparation for the final conflict between good and evil. Isaiah 13-14, and, especially, Jeremiah 50-51, place a revived Babylonian empire at the center of the final contest between God and "all the nations of the earth" that have been gathered into the Near East for history's finale. But God will triumph, for He has full control over evil. That can be seen in His ability to pack up evil and literally ship it to the center of wickedness where He is able to deal with it conclusively at the end of the age.

**Constable:** The angel explained that the woman represented wickedness. He picked her up, threw her down into the middle of the basket, and shut the lead cover over her (cf. 2 Thess. 2:6-8). Obviously some conflict was involved; "Wickedness" did not want to be restricted. Perhaps Zechariah saw a woman, instead of a man, because the word "wickedness" in Hebrew is feminine. Here the woman represents the sum total of Israel's sins, wickedness being the opposite of righteousness (cf. Prov. 13:6; Ezek. 33:12).

**Matthew Henry:** He sees the woman thrust down into the ephah, and a talent, or large weight, of lead, cast upon the mouth of it, by which she is secured, and made a close prisoner in the ephah, and utterly disabled to get out of it. This is designed to show that the wrath of God against impenitent sinners is, 1. Unavoidable, and what they cannot escape; they are bound over to it, concluded under sin, and shut up under the curse, as this woman in the ephah; he would fain flee out of his hand (Job 27:22), but he cannot. 2. It is insupportable, and what they cannot bear up under. Guilt is upon the sinner as a talent of lead, to sink him to the lowest hell. When Christ said of the things of Jerusalem’s peace, Now they are hidden from thy eyes, that threw a talent of lead upon them.

**Roper:** Do you see what all this is? Zechariah is given, in this series of visions, a number of truths related to what the New Testament calls our "sanctification"--how we are set apart for God. And I see here a series of levels of truth, almost like a layer cake, or a sandwich--four principles which carry all the way through the Scriptures, from beginning to end. The first is the principle of law. God says, "You shall be holy, for I am holy," and he has never rescinded that command. It is true that we are not under the specific statements given to Israel; we need to be clear about that. We do not have to keep the sabbath literally, although we do keep it in its spiritual sense now--the sabbath rest. We do not need to abstain from eating an ossifrage any longer. You can eat one if you can find out what it is! We are not under that specific law; but we are under law to God, in the sense that his character is still there. He has not removed that. We are to be holy because he is holy, and this principle runs right through the Scriptures.

Right under that is the next layer, the repeated statements of the resources of God, the power that is available In Christ. How do you respond to the law? You lay hold of Christ. This is shown in the symbol of the lamp stand. Grace is extended to us at any time. Whatever the requirement, there is always an adequacy in Christ.

Then, underneath that, there is this picture of the principle of sin itself having been dealt with. This too is found all through the Scriptures. "Sin shall not have dominion over you.' You have been set free from the dominion of the flesh--the habits and the old way of doing things which have dominated your life for so long.

And underneath that, going back to the picture of Joshua the high priest, is the astounding forgiveness of God. Even when you have failed in everything--when you look at the law and turn your back on it, or look at the law and try to keep it in your own flesh and you fail--beneath everything else is this wonderful forgiveness of God. He picks you up, brushes you off, says, "Let's have another go at it, but let's do it the right way this time." All these truths are evident repeatedly throughout Scripture.

Where does all this originate? This is made clear in the final scene, toward the end of chapter 6. Let's begin reading with verse 9 . . .

This is saying that for the first time in history, there will be a King and a Priest on the throne at the same time. For the first time in history it has been sanctioned by God that a Priest/King will rule. And the crown, which is taken from the exiles, is to be placed on his head. He is to be the King among God's people, and he is called the Branch. If you go back to the other prophets in the Old Testament--Isaiah, Jeremiah--you find that the Branch is Messiah, the Lord Jesus himself. He is the One who makes it possible. He does it all, when we are willing to crown him as King, and to keep that crown in the temple. You notice that the crown is to remain in the temple as a memorial to the exiles. And it is to remain in our lives as a memorial of the time when we crowned Jesus Christ as Lord in our lives. If we have never done that, then these truths are not available to us. But if we have, if we have genuinely made him King and Lord of our life, then all of the resources portrayed for us in this visual way are ours.



TEXT: Zechariah 6:1-8

TITLE: VISION #8 – THE FOUR CHARIOTS – PATROLLING THE EARTH TO BRING JUDGMENT AGAINST ISRAEL’S ENEMIES

**BIG IDEA:**

**THE EXECUTION OF JUDGMENT (AGAINST ISRAEL’S WICKED ENEMIES) APPEASES THE WRATH OF GOD WHO WILL ULTIMATELY BE VICTORIOUS**

**INTRODUCTION:**

The wrath of God is going to be satisfied one way or another. Christ’s propitiation upon the mercy seat via His substitutionary sacrifice on the cross can satisfy God’s wrath for those who repent and place their faith in the Savior. But for those wicked enemies who refuse to submit to God’s rule, God’s wrath will ultimately be appeased via the execution of judgment. Israel’s enemies found this to be the case. After having been used by God in a disciplinary fashion, they demonstrated their heart of unrighteousness and cruelty in excessively tyrannizing God’s people. This final night vision in the book of Zechariah shows God’s judgment going forth against these nations.

**I. (:1-3) THE BASIC ELEMENTS OF THE FINAL NIGHT VISION – GOD GOES FORTH IN POWER AND JUDGMENT**

A. (:1a) Introduction

*“Now I lifted up my eyes again and looked, and behold”*

B. (:1b) The Four Chariots

*“four chariots were coming forth”*

**Mackay:** In the first vision the prophet had seen horses which had patrolled the earth. Now the time for reconnoitering was past. Action was called for, and it is chariots that are presented to his view. Although used for the conveyance of kings and other notable persons, these were principally military vehicles. They symbolize the Lord’s power (Isa. 66:15; Hab. 3:8). That there are *four* of them seems to refer to the worldwide scope of their mission (2:6; 6:7).

**Holdeman:** Not a racing vehicle here; Two-wheeled offensive weapon of war pulled by a couple of horses; pre-cursor of the tank

C. (:1c) The Two Bronze Mountains

*“from between the two mountains; and the mountains were bronze mountains”*

**Feinberg:** The original employs the definite article, *the two mountains*; that is, Mount Moriah and the Mount of Olives. The chariots ran through the Valley of Jehoshaphat.

D. (:2-3) The Four Groups of Powerful Colored Horses (each group associated with a



chariot) – “*all of them powerful*” (alternate reading – rather than just a reference to the dappled horses) – then vs. 7 would also refer to all 4 groups of horses

1. Red Horses

*“With the first chariot were red horses”*

War and bloodshed

2. Black Horses

*“with the second chariot black horses”*

Famine and death

**Laetsch:** Black symbolizes famine with all its horrors. (Cp. Rev. 6:5.)

3. White Horses

*“with the third chariot white horses”*

**Lindsey:** triumph and victory

4. Dappled Horses

*“and with the fourth chariot dappled horses”*

Not used elsewhere so it is hard to know what this signifies

## **II. (:4-6) THE BASIC EXPLANATION OF THE ELEMENTS – GOD ULTIMATELY WILL AVENGE EVERY WRONG AND ESTABLISH HIS KINGDOM ON EARTH**

### A. (:4-5a) Introduction – Asking for an Explanation

1. The Question Introduced

*“Then I spoke and said to the angel who was speaking with me, ‘What are these, my lord?’”*

2. The Response Introduced

*“The angel replied to me”*

### B. (:5b) The Explanation of the Four Chariots

*“These are the four spirits of heaven, going forth after standing before the Lord of all the earth.”*

**Mackay:** “*the four winds of heaven*” are used to represent powerful forces, especially of God’s judgment (Jer. 49:36; Dan. 7:2; Rev. 7:1). One symbol – the chariots and their horses – is being explained by another, more obvious symbol. These are the forces which shape events in the world. What is more they are forces that carry out the Lord’s purpose throughout the earth.

**Lindsey:** The divine title, *the Lord of the whole world*, is a millennial designation describing the universal rule of Messiah over the earth during the future Kingdom Age (cf. Micah 4:13).

C. (:6) The Explanation of the Four Groups of Colored Horses

1. Red Horses – skipped – must be self-explanatory – no need to mention
2. Black Horses  
*“with one of which the black horses are going forth to the north country”*
3. White Horses  
*“and the white ones go forth after them”*
4. Strong, Dappled Horses  
*“while the dappled ones go forth to the south country”*

**III. (:7-8) THE BASIC EXECUTION OF THEIR MISSION – GOD’S WRATH WILL BE SATISFIED**

A. (:7) Mission Defined = Patrolling the Earth for Judgment

*“When the strong ones went out, they were eager to go to patrol the earth. And He said, ‘Go, patrol the earth.’ So they patrolled the earth.”*

B. (:8) Mission Executed = Appeasing the Wrath of God

*“Then He cried out to me and spoke to me saying, ‘See, those who are going to the land of the north have appeased My wrath in the land of the north.’”*

**MacArthur:** As a result of God’s judgment of His enemies, His wrath can rest. God has been avenged by this action, particularly in regard to the power from the N being judged finally. This likely refers to the final Babylon (cf. Rev 17, 18). Until this judgment is done and God’s wrath rests, the kingdom can’t be established (Rev 19, 20) with the Messiah on His throne.

\* \* \* \* \*

**DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:**

- 1) Does our view of God allow for such a militaristic approach to judgment?
- 2) Does this passage increase the depth of our appreciation for the propitiation provided by our Lord Jesus Christ?
- 3) Why should God’s enemies beware of what is in store for them?
- 4) How secure are we in the knowledge of God’s absolute control over history as He works out His sovereign program for subduing the rebellious nations and establishing

His kingdom on earth? How does this give us confidence to carry out the mission with which He has charged us?

\* \* \* \* \*

### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Mackay:** The final vision brings the series to an end by returning to the same theme as was found in the first: the Lord's supremacy over the whole earth, and the outworking of his providential control for the good of his people. The similarity of theme is reflected in the similarity (but not identity!) of the imagery. The intervening visions had been concerned with Israel's own relationship with the Lord, and now that that has been dealt with, it is time to resume what had seemed to be the delayed intervention promised in the first vision. The Lord's people could not expect to see their foes vanquished and the kingdom of God ushered in until their own relationship with the Lord had been put on a right footing. God's timetable is not determined by the need to punish the peoples who reject his rule, but by the need for his own people to be purified and ready to enjoy all he has prepared for them. When that is accomplished, he will ensure that no outside power will disrupt their peace and their enjoyment of fellowship with him

**Constable:** Because of the geography of Palestine all of Israel's enemies came against her from the north or from the south; the Mediterranean Sea on the west and the Arabian Desert on the east prohibited major foreign invasions from those directions. Since the chariots went in compass directions we should probably understand their judgment to be universal (cf. 2:6; Jer. 49:36; Ezek. 37:9; Rev. 7:1). They went north and south out of Palestine, but they executed judgment in every direction. The total picture is of God executing His judgments against all nations that oppose Israel.

**Carl Jones:** (audio sermons)

Brass serpent referred to in John 3 – judgment that God hung on the pole; judgment will come out of Jerusalem in the last days – Mt. Olive and Mt. Kidron

Same group of angels referred to in chap. 1

Rev 6 – the 4 horsemen of the Apocalypse –

Babylon – main persecutions have come from the north; they will catch the worst of it; political, economic and religious system

Ezek 36-39 – great battle of Armageddon – invade Israel from North

**Richard Holdeman:** God Goes on Offense (audio sermons) (amil perspective)

When evil prevails, we are tempted to think, "I can't believe God let that happen!" We question whether God is paying attention. God does see what is going on and He is involved and He is actively ruling over all the affairs of men and nations for the sake of His people. We can continue to serve God in confidence, knowing that this is the case. God's people were seeking to rebuild in difficult circumstances while their enemies round about them seemed to be resting comfortably. That is not the end of the story. God does have His eye on His people. This is part of His plan. Sermon Points:

- God is aware of all things
- He is actively involved in bringing these things about
- God's Providence includes His active governance of all men and nations; His activity is comprehensive
- The Purpose of God's Involvement in the World is to Bring Peace to His People and Glory to Himself

**Dolphin:** God will execute His judgment over the nations of the world in two ways:  
 A. By Appeasing God's Wrath Against the Gentile Nations 6:1-8  
 B. By Installing God's Priest-King as Ruler Over All Nations (6:9-15).

The mission of the horses and chariots supplies the central theme to all eight visions, for they acted as a pair of book-ends at the front and back of the visions. Together, the eight visions say more than that the temple must be rebuilt and the leadership revived; they argue that God's kingdom in the whole world would be renewed and governments that had opposed His kingdom would be totally vanquished. . .

The colors of the horses figure prominently in the eighth vision, as they did in the first. *"With the first chariot were red horses, with the second chariot black horses, with the third chariot white horses, and with the fourth chariot dappled horses--strong steeds"* (vv. 2-3). These horses bear a strong resemblance to the four horsemen of Revelation 6:1-8. Generally it is said that red indicates martyrdom, white stands for victory, black stands for famine, and dappled (or "pale"), a mixture of some white on a darker background, points overall to death. In spite of what some allege, more seems to be implied by the vividness of such detail than the four comers of the globe. . .

*"The one with the black horses is going to the north country"* (v. 6a). If the vision has both a now (fulfilled) and a not-yet (fulfilled) aspect about it, as many prophecies do, then this text points both to ancient Babylon (a country north and east of Jerusalem, approached from a road leading north out of Jerusalem) and to an eschatological country (or countries) where God would prepare for His concluding acts by sending first a time of deep famine--either in modern Iraq (ancient Babylon) or, perhaps, Syria--then a victory over one or more of these countries--with "the white [horses which] are going after [the black ones]" (v. 6b)--in the latter days, i.e., the time connected with the second coming of our Lord.

**T. Michael Crews:** The idea is these nations angered God by their treatment of His people Israel and now God is satisfied because He has sovereignly defeated His enemies. The exiles Zechariah saw this happen when Babylon, the nation who once thought they were running the show, were defeated by the Persians. The Babylonians hadn't been defeated by military might: God defeated them. Zechariah reminds them God is running the show because He defeats all of His enemies. Does God defeat all of His enemies? Oh yes. There is no enemy that can stand against our Sovereign God. In this present world, God is defeating all of His enemies. Satan would like you to believe He is running this show, but over and over God defeats the devil's plans by bringing good even out of the worst circumstances. The Cross of Christ is the best example of

God's sovereign victory over the devil. Death seems to run the show in this world, snuffing out the lives of the young, the innocent, the helpless. But God defeated death at the resurrection of Christ, opening the door for all who believe to be resurrected too. Every time throughout history when it seems goodness will die and evil will triumph, God comes through and sovereignly brings victory. The Bible reminds us that there will come a day when God's victory will be final and complete, and all of His enemies will be destroyed forever. It may look dark and grim, we may sometimes be alarmed or confused, but always remember: God is running this show: He is undefeated and will always remain undefeated.

\* \* \* \* \*

### **Various Interpretations of the Significance of the Two Mountains:**

**Constable:** The next thing Zechariah saw in his night visions was four chariots coming out from between two bronze mountains. Chariots were instruments of judgment, and bronze is a color that often carries this connotation in Scripture (cf. Exod. 27:2; Num. 21:9). Bronze was used to defend against attackers (Isa. 45:2; Jer. 1:18), so perhaps impregnability is also in view. Perhaps the mountains represent the gateway to heaven from which these agents of judgment come. Another view is that they were Mount Zion and the Mount of Olives with the valley between being the Kidron Valley. A third possibility is that they are the two parts of the Mount of Olives that will split apart when Messiah returns to the earth (cf. 14:1-8). Nevertheless they are "bronze."

**MacArthur:** *two mountains . . . bronze.* Representing the reality of God's judgment on the nations who attack Israel, the two mountains are probably Mt. Zion and the Mt. of Olives, where the Lord will return and judge (cf. Joel 3:2, 12, 14; Zec. 14:4). This valley, called Jehoshaphat ("Jehovah judges") could refer to the Kidron Valley between these two mountains. Jews, Christians, and even Muslims have long taught that the last judgment will be there. The bronze has a symbolic relationship to judgment as in the case of the bronze serpent (Nu 21:9) and/or the bronze altar (Ex 27:2), where sin was dealt with by God.

**Lindsey:** Bronze seems to symbolize righteous divine judgment against sin (cf. Rev. 1:15; 2:18). . . It is doubtful that actual mountains are intended since these were made of bronze. In the first vision God was angry with the nations that felt secure (Zech 1:15); in this vision He was satisfied with their just judgment (cf. Rev. 19:2, 15-19).

**Collins:** The mountains of brass are symbols of immutability and strength. "The Prophet no doubt understood by these mountains the providence of God, or His hidden counsel, by which all things have been decreed before the creation of the world; and hence he says, that they were mountains of brass, as they could not be broken" (Calvin).

TEXT: Zechariah 6:9-15

TITLE: CROWN HIM WITH MANY CROWNS – THE ULTIMATE KING-PRIEST

**BIG IDEA:**

**THE COMING MESSIAH WILL REIGN AND MINISTER PEACE AS BOTH KING AND PRIEST FROM THE TEMPLE WHICH HE WILL BUILD**

**INTRODUCTION:**

The difficult work of the remnant in the days of Zechariah had tremendous significance. For the rebuilding of the temple prefigured that future eschatological day when the Messiah would return to build His glorious temple and reign as both king and priest – an amazing confluence of these two very exalted anointed offices. (cf. how our system of government maintains its checks and balances between the executive, legislative and judicial branches) The Messiah would come as the prophesied Branch to powerfully extend his reign over all the earth. He would establish peace and righteousness and confirm the prophetic Word of the Lord.

**I. (:9-11) THE CROWNING -- THE SYMBOLIC CORONATION OF JOSHUA**

A. (:9) Divine Authority of the Symbolic Coronation

*“The word of the Lord also came to me, saying”*

Important section – dealing with the culmination of all of history

B. (:10a) Important Role of the Returning Remnant

*“Take an offering from the exiles, from Heldai, Tobijah and Jedaiah”*

**MacArthur:** Jewish exiles who remained in Babylon, but who had come bearing gifts for the building of the temple are identified.

C. (:10b) Urgency of the Acting Out of the Drama

*“and you go the same day”*

D. (:10c) Privileged Setting of the House of Josiah

*“and enter the house of Josiah the son of Zephaniah, where they have arrived from Babylon”*

E. (:11a) Value of the Symbolic Crown

*“Take silver and gold, make an ornate crown”*

Required great sacrifice in terms of the cost of the offering;

Not fashioned like any ordinary crown

**MacArthur:** Zechariah was to make not a High-Priest’s crown or turban, but an ornate crown, one constructed of many circlets, a majestic crown (like the one on the returning Messiah in Rev 19:12).

**Mackay:** The word “*crown*” in the original is a plural noun, but it is improbable that more than one crown is meant. Sometimes plurals are used in Hebrew to indicate a superlative, so that the idea would be of the ultimate or supreme crown. The mention of the two metals, moreover, makes it likely that what is described is a crown consisting of multiple rings of metal.

It is possible that 2 crowns were made: one of gold and one of silver; one for Joshua and one for Zerubbabel; and that the text goes on to just give the details about the prophetic crowning of Joshua ...

**Merrill:** But the text before us makes perfectly good sense with the double personality and double crown perspective it presents. What the narrative is saying is that crowns are made, only one of which is to be worn by Joshua. One could even translate the relevant passage, “Take silver and gold and make crowns, placing one on the head of Joshua the high priest” (v. 11). This admittedly presupposes an elliptical expression of something like “make crowns (and of these one is Joshua’s) and place it,” etc. Such ellipsis is a common feature of biblical Hebrew.

F. (:11b) Surprising Coronation of a Priest

*“and set it on the head of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest.”*

## **II. (:12-13) THE COMING BRANCH -- THE MESSIANIC SIGNIFICANCE OF THE BRANCH = THE ULTIMATE PRIEST-KING**

A. (:12a) Divine Interpretation of the Symbolic Coronation

*“Then say to him, ‘Thus says the Lord of hosts’”*

B. (:12b) Significance of the Designated Prophetic Name of Branch

*“Behold, a man whose name is Branch,  
for He will branch out from where He is”*

**Feinberg:** The thought is rather the growth of the Messiah, the King-Priest, from lowliness and obscurity to note and eminence from His own nation and country.

**Mackay:** It seems to point to the Messiah as a legitimate descendant to David. He will not be a foreigner.

C. (:12c-13a) Repeated Emphasis on His Divine Mission = Building the Temple

*“and He will build the temple of the Lord.  
Yes, it is He who will build the temple of the Lord”*

D. (:13b) The Combined Role of King and Priest

1. Reigning as King

*“And He who will bear the honor and sit and rule on His throne”*

**Feinberg:** The first verb speaks of the dignity of the office, and the second speaks of the exercise of its authority. He sits! Priests never sat in their ministry. There was no seat

in the tabernacle nor in the temple for the priests. Theirs was an unfinished work; His is a gloriously complete one.

2. Ministering as Priest

*“Thus, He will be a priest on His throne”*

3. Administration of Peace Via His Combined Role

*“and the counsel of peace will be between the two offices.”*

**Mackay:** *“counsel of peace”* here is that deliberate policy which procures peace”

**Appleby:** Never again will the King lead the people astray against the warnings of the priests. Never again will the king need to keep the priests in order. Both roles will be exercised by the one person.

**Whitcomb:** He is one person, with two distinct functions, yet in total harmony.

### **III. (:14-15) THE CULMINATION OF PROPHECY -- THE MEMORIAL CROWN AND VALIDATION OF DIVINE PROPHECY**

A. (:14) The Crown of Remembrance

*“Now the crown will become a reminder in the temple of the Lord to Helem, Tobijah, Jedaiah and Hen the son of Zephaniah.”*

B. (:15a) The Certainty of the Fulfillment of the Mission = the Building of the Temple

*“Those who are far off will come and build the temple of the Lord.”*

Even though the temple will be built by the Messiah; He will use human Instruments; Some commentators take this as a reference to the wealth of the Gentiles being used in the building of the temple; but in context it seems to be a reference to the regathering of the Jewish people

C. (:15b) The Confirmation of the Lord’s Word

*“Then you will know that the Lord of hosts has sent me to you.”*

D. (:15c) The Condition of Obedience for Participation in the Project

*“And it will take place if you completely obey the Lord your God.”*

\* \* \* \* \*

#### **DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:**

1) How can believers argue so strongly against the future rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem in light of the forceful language used in this prophecy?

2) What are the characteristics of a Branch and why is that name applied to the



Messiah?

3) Are we presently submitting to the rule of the Lord and availing ourselves of His high priestly ministry on our behalf?

4) How can obedience be set forth as a condition in vs. 15 if the Lord is assuring His people that He will accomplish this important mission?

\* \* \* \* \*

#### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Laney:** The Crowning of Joshua

1. The symbolic action (6:9-11)

2. The Messianic significance (6:12-15)

The crown was probably ornate, made up of several circlets, and had commemorative significance.

“Branch” = a messianic term used by the prophets in referring to both royal and priestly functions (cf. Isa. 4:2; Jer. 23:3-5; 33:14-26; Zech. 3:8).

He will be what his name implies – one who shoots up and branches out as a strong, vigorous plant.

Although the fulfillment of the prophecy is certain, it is only through obedience that those promises will be realized personally.

**Hartman:** The crown to be made would honor Helem, Tobijah, Jedaiah, and Hen (or Josiah), who had given the materials to make it. They would not be given the honor of wearing it, however, for the crown was to be placed in the Temple and left there. According to Jewish tradition, this crown was hung in a window at the very top of the Temple as a reminder of God’s promises regarding the coming of an eternal King-Priest who would rule over the earth. All the visions of Zechariah, as well as the Word of the Lord given to him in chapter 6, point prophetically toward the ultimate coronation of the Messiah King-Priest. This event will be the consummation of all Jewish hopes and aspirations. With the crowning of the Messiah, sin and unrepentant sinners will have been destroyed, and the curse upon the earth will have been removed. The Messiah will rule over the entire world, and creation will rejoice and cry out, Victory at last!

**Baron:** This is one of the most remarkable and precious Messianic prophecies, and there is no plainer prophetic utterance in the whole Old Testament as to the Person of the promised Redeemer, the offices He was to fill, and the mission He was to accomplish.

**Feinberg:** Those who do not differentiate between the Church and Israel tell us that we are to take this temple as a spiritual one, namely, the Church of Christ spoken of in the

New Testament. This is undoubtedly the millennial temple referred to in Isaiah 2:2-4; 56:6, 7; Micah 4:1-7; Ezekiel 40-48.

**Meyer:** Through a branch the fullness of the Root is carried to the fruit, which swells in ruddy beauty on its extremity, and presently falls into the hand of the wayfarer; so Jesus is the blessed channel of communication between the fullness of God, and the thirsty wastes of human need. We sit under his shadow with great delight, and his fruit is sweet to our taste.

**Meyer:** Man's nature demands a Priest. Conscious of sin and defilement, he rears an altar wherever he pitches his tent; and, selecting one of his fellows, he separates him from the ordinary duties of life, and bids him stand as mediator and priest between God and himself. . .

Man also requires a King. God had designed to meet this need by Himself by being Israel's King, that they should not be "like other nations," but a peculiar people unto Him. They were following natural promptings, when the Israelites came to Samuel and said: "We will have a king over us, that we also may be like the other nations, and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles." Man needs a leader – one whom he may admire and obey; from whom he may receive indisputable commands; and in whom his faculty of veneration may find satisfaction. The days when there was no king in Israel, and every man did what was right in his own eyes, were far from being either contented or prosperous. . .

As Priest, Jesus pleads the merit of his blood; as King, He exerts power on our behalf. As Priest, He pacifies the guilty conscience; as King, He sends thrills of his own victorious life into our spirits. As Priest, He brings us nigh to God; as King, He treads our enemies under his feet. It is of great importance to us all to think of our Saviour in this dual aspect. On the one hand, we get all the benefit of his Cross and Passion; on the other, all the benefit of his resurrection and session at the right hand of God.

**Roper:** Zechariah is given, in this series of visions, a number of truths related to what the New Testament calls our "sanctification"--how we are set apart for God. And I see here a series of levels of truth, almost like a layer cake, or a sandwich--four principles which carry all the way through the Scriptures, from beginning to end. The first is the principle of law. God says, "You shall be holy, for I am holy," and he has never rescinded that command. It is true that we are not under the specific statements given to Israel; we need to be clear about that. We do not have to keep the sabbath literally, although we do keep it in its spiritual sense now--the sabbath rest. We do not need to abstain from eating an ossifrage any longer. You can eat one if you can find out what it is! We are not under that specific law; but we are under law to God, in the sense that his character is still there. He has not removed that. We are to be holy because he is holy, and this principle runs right through the Scriptures.

Right under that is the next layer, the repeated statements of the resources of God, the power that is available In Christ. How do you respond to the law? You lay hold of Christ. This is shown in the symbol of the lamp stand. Grace is extended to us at any

time. Whatever the requirement, there is always an adequacy in Christ.

Then, underneath that, there is this picture of the principle of sin itself having been dealt with. This too is found all through the Scriptures. "Sin shall not have dominion over you.' You have been set free from the dominion of the flesh--the habits and the old way of doing things which have dominated your life for so long.

And underneath that, going back to the picture of Joshua the high priest, is the astounding forgiveness of God. Even when you have failed in everything--when you look at the law and turn your back on it, or look at the law and try to keep it in your own flesh and you fail--beneath everything else is this wonderful forgiveness of God. He picks you up, brushes you off, says, "Let's have another go at it, but let's do it the right way this time." All these truths are evident repeatedly throughout Scripture.

This is saying that for the first time in history, there will be a King and a Priest on the throne at the same time. For the first time in history it has been sanctioned by God that a Priest/King will rule. And the crown, which is taken from the exiles, is to be placed on his head. He is to be the King among God's people, and he is called the Branch. If you go back to the other prophets in the Old Testament--Isaiah, Jeremiah--you find that the Branch is Messiah, the Lord Jesus himself. He is the One who makes it possible. He does it all, when we are willing to crown him as King, and to keep that crown in the temple. You notice that the crown is to remain in the temple as a memorial to the exiles. And it is to remain in our lives as a memorial of the time when we crowned Jesus Christ as Lord in our lives. If we have never done that, then these truths are not available to us. But if we have, if we have genuinely made him King and Lord of our life, then all of the resources portrayed for us in this visual way are ours.

**Merrill:** chiastic structure:

- A Joshua the priest is crowned (11b)
  - B The Branch sprouts up (12a)
    - C The Temple is built (12b)
    - C The Temple is built (13a)
  - B The Branch is enthroned (13b)
- A The priest is enthroned (13c)

**Steven J. Cole: The Coming King-Priest**

Big Idea: Since God will judge all nations and send His King-Priest to reign, we must completely obey Him.

1. God will judge all nations: The vision of the chariots and horses (6:1-8).
  - A. The fact that God will triumph over and judge all His enemies should bring us, His people, great comfort.
  - B. The fact of God's judgment should terrify all that do not know Him.
  - C. The certainty and thoroughness of God's judgment should warn everyone that no one will escape.
2. God will send His King-Priest to reign: The coronation of Joshua (6:9-15).

- A. Christ will be both king and priest.
- B. Christ will build His temple.
- C. Christ will be worshiped by all peoples.

**Dr. John C. Whitcomb**: High priests were from Levi and wore no crowns; kings with crowns were from Judah. No mix between the two lines was allowed by God. Uzziah king of Judah wanted to be king-priest and marched into the temple. He was withstood by the high priest Azariah, and was immediately struck with leprosy by God (2 Chron. 26).

TEXT: Zechariah 7:1-14

TITLE: HEARTS LIKE FLINT

**BIG IDEA:**

**HARD HEARTS CLOSE THEIR EARS TO GOD'S COMMANDS AND  
SUBSTITUTE RELIGIOUS RITUAL FOR LOVING OBEDIENCE**

**INTRODUCTION:**

In the parable of the soils in the New Testament (Mark 4:20), Christ taught that there is only one type of heart that is truly good and fertile – that is the heart that submits to God's revelation and carries out His commands. But too often people become stubborn and hard-hearted. They shut their ears to God's revelation – not allowing the truth to penetrate into their conscience. They selfishly choose to indulge their own flesh and seek after pleasure rather than sacrificially loving others and pursuing righteousness and justice. To excuse themselves, they engage in external religious rituals while all of the time hardening their hearts against the pleadings of the Spirit of God. Exposure to God's Word means nothing apart from obedience. Dedication to God's Word means nothing apart from obedience. Just look at the Woes Christ proclaimed against the Pharisees – the teachers of God's Law in His day. One thing God demands: and that is a soft and broken heart that is sensitive to His Word and committed to doing justice, to loving mercy and walking humbly before God (Micah 6:8). This passage exposes the desolation and ruin that will result from hardened hearts that close their ears to God's commands and substitute religious ritual for righteous obedience.

**I. (:1-3) THE SELF RIGHTEOUS QUESTION – ISN'T IT TIME NOW FOR  
ME TO ENJOY SOME WELL-DESERVED RELIEF FROM GOD'S  
BURDENSOME COMMANDS?**

3 Incriminating Characteristics of this Self Righteous Jewish Delegation:

A. (:1) Comfortable in Their Progress -- Historical Context – Rebuilding Work  
Progressing

*“In the fourth year of King Darius, the word of the Lord came to Zechariah on the fourth day of the ninth month, which is Chislew”*

B. (:2-3a) Commending Themselves – feeling of entitlement

*“Now the town of Bethel had sent Sharezer and Regemmelech and their men to seek the favor of the Lord, speaking to the priests who belong to the house of the Lord of hosts, and to the prophets, saying”*

B. (:3b) Clueless -- Haven't Got a Clue

*“Shall I weep in the fifth month and abstain, as I have done these many years?”*  
Commemmorating the burning of the first temple by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 BC  
(Jer. 52:12-13)

Viewed the service of God as burdensome.

1. Misrepresenting the Intent of God's Command

2. Misrepresenting the Extent of Their Obedience

**Parallel texts** referring to the service of God as burdensome:

1 John 5:3 *"For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome."*

Matt. 23:4 *"They tie up heavy burdens and lay them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are unwilling to move them with so much as a finger."*

The Pharisees are the best example of self righteous Jews

Mal. 3:13-15 *"You have said, 'It is vain to serve God'"*

## **II. (:4-10) THE SCATHING RESPONSE FROM AN ANGRY GOD – YOU HAVE TRIED TO SUBSTITUTE RELIGIOUS RITUAL FOR LOVING OBEDIENCE**

"scathing" = bitterly severe

How do we know God is angry with them here? Vs. 12 *"great wrath"*

A. (:4-7) Response #1 – Your Motivation and Perspective Are All Wrong

1. (:4-6) Your Motivation Is Selfish

*"Then the word of the Lord of hosts came to me, saying, 'Say to all the people of the land and to the priests, When you fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh months these seventy years, was it actually for Me that you fasted? When you eat and drink, do you not eat for yourselves and do you not drink for yourselves?'"*

cf. 1 Cor. 6 – *the body is for the Lord and the Lord for the body*

**MacArthur**: Zechariah pointed out that they were not fasting out of genuine sorrow and repentance, but out of self-pity (cf. Is 1:10-15; 58:3-9).

**Mackay**: The question is not focusing on the origins of their fasts, but the religious motivation behind them. . . This note of contrition and self-humiliation seems to have been absent in the practice of the exiles. They were sorrowing for what they had lost, but in an exercise of self-pity, rather than with due recognition of the righteousness of God's judgment against them and their nation. They should rather have acknowledged that they were rightly afflicted by God. Fasting was an exercise designed to induce a right perception of their spiritual condition as before God.

2. (:7) Your Perspective (Your Understanding of History) Is Flawed

*"Are not these the words which the Lord proclaimed by the former prophets, when Jerusalem was inhabited and prosperous along with its cities around it, and the Negev and the foothills were inhabited?"*

**MacArthur**: The important matter is not ritual, but obedience. It is obedience to God's Word that brought in the past great joy, peace, and prosperity to Israel, and that covered the land during the time of David and Solomon. If the present generation in Zechariah's time substitutes ritual for obedience, they too will lose the joy, peace, and prosperity they were enjoying.

B. (:8-10) Response #2 – You Have Missed the Heart of God's Commands --  
It's not about external religious ritual . . . but about loving others in a practical way  
(cf. the Sermon on the Mount)

Introduction:

*"Then the word of the Lord came to Zechariah saying, 'Thus has the Lord of hosts said'"*

1. Positively – What God Requires (chiastic structure: A B B A)

a. Summary: Justice

*"Dispense true justice"*

b. Specifics: Kindness and Compassion

*"and practice kindness and compassion each to his brother"*

2. Negatively – What God Forbids

a. Specifics: Don't Take Advantage of the Helpless

*"and do not oppress the widow or the orphan, the stranger or the poor"*

b. Summary: Don't Seek to Harm Others

*"and do not devise evil in your hearts against one another."*

### **III. (:11-14) THE STUBBORN REJECTION OF GOD'S WORD – DON'T EXPECT GOD TO BAIL YOU OUT (COME TO YOUR AID) WHEN YOU CLOSE YOUR EARS AND HEART AGAINST HIS COMMANDS**

A. (:11-12a) Process of Stubborn Rejection of God's Word

1. (:11) Turned a Deaf Ear

*"But they refused to pay attention"*

*"and turned a stubborn shoulder and stopped their ears from hearing."*

2. (:12a) Hardened Their Hearts

*"they made their hearts like flint so that they could not hear the law and the words which the Lord of hosts had sent by His Spirit through the former prophets."*

Look at all that we learn about God's gracious provision of His revelation in this verse and His employment of human spokesmen

B. (:12b-14) Provoking of God to Severe Judgment

1. (:12b-13) Description of God's Response

a. (:12b) God's Response Described as Great Wrath

*"therefore great wrath came from the Lord of hosts"*

b. (:13) God's Response Described as Reciprocal

*"And just as He called and they would not listen, so they called and I would not listen," says the Lord of hosts"*

3. (:14) Demonstration of God's Response

a. Dispersion among the Gentile nations

*"but I scattered them with a storm wind among all the nations whom they have not known."*

**Feinberg:** Up to that hour they had been scattered primarily to Assyria and Babylonia. If the text is to be permitted to have its full significance and plain sense, it must look on to the world-wide dispersion of the Jews, consequent upon their rejection of their Messiah, the greatest exhibition of their obdurate disobedience to the words of the Lord and his messengers.

b. Desolation where there had been great blessing

*"Thus the land is desolated behind them so that no one went back and forth, for they made the pleasant land desolate."*

\* \* \* \* \*

**DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:**

- 1) In what area do we struggle with stubbornness and pride in refusing to soften our heart and listen to God's words of instruction and reproof and correction?
- 2) Are we more focused on external ritual or on the internal obedience of the heart and God's command to love Him and to love our neighbor?
- 3) How does God work to soften our hearts? How can we evaluate whether our hearts are hardened or soft?
- 4) Do we serve God from the right motivation and from the right perspective?

\* \* \* \* \*

**QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:**

**MacArthur:** The temple was more than half done; all obstacles to the construction were



removed by the decree of Darius confirming the decree of Cyrus (cf. Ezr 6:1-14); and all was going very well. This gave rise to a question by the delegation from Bethel. The questions involved the continuation of a national fast to mourn the fall of Jerusalem and the destruction of the temple. Though Jerusalem had no walls yet and there were many ruins (cf. Hag 1:4), now that the temple was being finished, they were sent to inquire of the Lord and the priests whether they needed to continue the fast. The question is answered negatively in chap. 7 with two messages and positively in chap. 8 with two messages. Each of the 4 messages was given to impress upon the people the need to live righteously. As with chaps. 1-6, the prophet began historically and then moved prophetically to the time of the Second Advent of Christ.

**Mackay:** Here we have a narrative concerning an incident that took place two years after Zechariah's night visions. The Temple was by then half-completed, and people were wondering about how this should affect their pattern of living and worship. By asking if it was permissible to stop certain fasts which had been instituted in the aftermath of the fall of Jerusalem, they exposed themselves to a searching divine critique of their heart motivation.

**Merrill:** What may have appeared to be an innocent question about the propriety of fasting was instead a question fraught with hypocrisy, as YHWH's response puts beyond any doubt. It therefore appears that the query to Zechariah by the Bethelites may not have been so much a matter of piety as it was of posturing. May it not be that the delegation was trying more to impress the prophet than to gain instruction from him? . . .

The Negev was in the south of Judah and consisted largely of desert. For the Negev to be populated, one must envision times of unusually suitable climatic conditions and freedom from hostility. This is even more true of the Shephelah, the "lowlands" between Judah and the western plains. Its towns were historically in constant danger from the Philistines and other marauders who could easily penetrate their relatively weak and vulnerable defenses. Only when Israel and Judah were unusually strong could the conditions Zechariah describes prevail. His point is very apparent: If mighty and prosperous Jerusalem and Judah were overthrown for failing to heed the words of warning of earlier prophets, how much more important was it for his own audience to pay strict attention to those words in a day when their community was struggling for its very survival. This is no time for hypocritical self-indulgence.

**Ryrie:** The fast in the seventh month commemorated the assassination of Gedaliah, the Jewish governor of Judah (2 Kings 25:23-25). Though done from good motives, these fasts were nevertheless man-made, were not commanded by God, and were observed self-righteously (v. 6). Had the people heeded God's word through the prophets; they would not have experienced captivity and would have had no need for the fasts (v. 7).

**Laetsch:** The Searcher of hearts saw the germ of self-satisfied, hypocritical work-righteousness sprouting in the hearts of the people. The root of self-righteousness, like that of idolatry, is self-service, placing one's own efforts, one's own pleasure or pride,

above the service of God and complete submission to His will, His Law and His Gospel. This self-righteousness, unless nipped in the bud, would prove even more ruinous to the nation than the coarse idolatry of which the fathers had been guilty.

**T. Michael Crews:** Making God Glad

You make God glad when:

I. WHEN YOU DO WHAT YOU DO FOR HIM. (v. 1-7)

II. WHEN YOU DO UNTO OTHERS WHAT'S RIGHT. (v. 8-10)

III. WHEN YOU DO WHAT HE TELLS YOU TO DO. (v. 11-14)

**Paul T. Murphy:** The Contradiction of True Religion [www.sermonaudio.com](http://www.sermonaudio.com)

**Context:** Why are chaps. 7-8 here? **God's People must be Faithful to God's Covenant --**

Questions about fasting? Zechariah's name means "*God Remembers*" – God has not forgotten His people. God has remembered His covenant and the people must remember what is required of them in that covenant. The exile happened because they had failed to obey fully (as at end of chap. 6). So these promises of blessing in chap. 8 hinge on their obedience.

Fasts in 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> month for 70 years (2 Kings 25);

Note the tone of the question; Now that we are back in the land do I still have to do this? Apparently they were tired of it all. They had had enough. They were indifferent to all of these things.

(:4-7) Error of Empty Formalism – doing it for all the wrong reasons; your life must be consistent with God's Word; He demands obedience, not ceremonial ritual;

Your prayers are useless

**Steven J. Cole:** **Avoiding Spiritual Sclerosis**

Big Idea: Outward religion without inward reality results in spiritual sclerosis.

To avoid this disease, we need to know three things:

1. Outward religion is a danger for all of God's people.

Our text reveals three warning signs that tell us we're drifting into outward religion:

A. Manmade: We focus on rules and rituals not ordained by God.

B. Motions: We go through meaningless activity in the name of spirituality.

C. Motive: We need to ask why we do what we do spiritually.

2. Outward religion leads to spiritual sclerosis.

A. Signs of developing spiritual sclerosis:

(1) Refusal to pay attention to God (7:11).

(2) Refusal to submit to spiritual authority (7:11).

(3) Refusal to hear God's Word (7:11).

B. The results of spiritual sclerosis:

(1) Your heart grows hard toward God's Word (7:12).

(2) You incur God's fierce discipline (7:12).

(3) God is silent when you cry for help (7:13).

(4) God turns our prosperity into desolation (7:14).

(5) God visits our sins on our descendants.

Outward religion without inward reality leads to spiritual sclerosis.

What's the solution?

3. Inward reality with God is the prescription for spiritual health.

A. Inward reality means living unto the Lord, not for self.

B. Inward reality with God results in outward obedience in our relationships with people.

TEXT: Zechariah 8:1-23

TITLE: GOD'S FAVOR EXTENDED TO BOTH JEWS AND GENTILES (IN CONNECTION WITH HIS PRESENCE)

**BIG IDEA:**

**THE BLESSINGS ASSOCIATED WITH THE FUTURE RESTORATION OF THE JEWS WILL ATTRACT THE ALLEGIANCE OF THE GENTILES**

**INTRODUCTION:**

Only the presence of the Lord can guarantee our ultimate blessing. Here we have a tremendously encouraging passage as God points to the reality of His curses upon disobedient Israel as the guarantee that future restoration and blessing will be just as certain. Everything centers around the sovereign decree of God who alone can motivate the obedience of His people that is essential for blessing. This blessing for restored Judah will then spill over and attract the attention of the Gentiles who will flock to Jerusalem in pursuit of that same blessing.

**2 MESSAGES**

**I. (:1-17) MESSAGE #1 – GOD GUARANTEES FUTURE RESTORATION TO ZION AS THE CENTER OF TRUTH AND PEACE IN HIS KINGDOM – GOD'S SEVEN CONFIDENT ASSERTIONS --**

Introductory Formula:

*"Then the word of the Lord of hosts came, saying,"*

These are things that God is going to do without fail; you can count on God.

A. (:2) Jealous for Zion – God is exceedingly jealous for Zion

Introductory Formula:

*"Thus says the Lord of hosts"*

1. Jealous to reconcile Zion to her privileged position of intimacy

*"I am exceedingly jealous for Zion,"*

2. Jealous to punish all of Zion's enemies with great wrath

*"yes, with great wrath I am jealous for her."*

**Mackay:** There had been times when this jealousy worked for judgment against the people because of their waywardness which God could not allow to undermine his relationship with them (Ps. 78:58). But now this jealousy is operative for their good. It will not allow anyone or anything to disrupt his desire to see them blessed (Ezk. 36:5-6; Joel 2:18; Nah. 1:2). Zechariah is assuring the disheartened people of the fundamental fact of God's disposition towards them for good, and his determination to see all that he has promised to them come true. Nothing will be allowed to interfere with his purpose.

B. (:3) Dwelling in Zion – God will return to dwell in the midst of Zion

Introductory Formula:

*“Thus says the Lord of hosts”*

1. Relocation of the Presence of God

*“I will return to Zion and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem.”*

2. Renaming based on the Character of God

a. City of Jerusalem -- Truth

*“Then Jerusalem will be called the City of Truth”*

b. Mountain of Zion -- Holiness

*“and the mountain of the Lord of hosts will be called the Holy Mountain.”*

C. (:4-5) Safety in Zion – God will make all people safe and secure in Zion

Introductory Formula:

*“Thus says the Lord of hosts”*

1. Safe for the Old Folks

*“Old men and old women will again sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each man with his staff in his hand because of age.”*

2. Safe for the Young Children

*“And the streets of the city will be filled with boys and girls playing in its streets.”*

D. (:6) Omnipotence (God is Able) in Zion – Don’t doubt God’s ability to pull this off. God is able! There is nothing too difficult for God.

Introductory Formula:

*“Thus says the Lord of hosts”*

1. Human Inability

*“If it is too difficult in the sight of the remnant of this people in those days,”*

2. Divine Ability

*“will it also be too difficult in My sight?” declares the Lord of hosts.”*

E. (:7-8) Restoration in Zion – God will regather His people and live in their midst in Zion.

Introductory Formula:

*“Thus says the Lord of hosts”*

1. Deliverance

*“Behold, I am going to save My people from the land of the east and from the land of the west”*

2. Regathering  
*“and I will bring them back”*
3. Establishing  
*“and they will live in the midst of Jerusalem;”*
4. Fellowship – Enjoyment of the relationship
  - a. Beloved People  
*“and they shall be My people”*
  - b. Loyal God  
*“and I will be their God.”*
  - c. Based on the Character of God  
*“in truth and righteousness.”*

F. (:9-13) Blessing (Prosperity) in Zion – God will turn the tables on the fortunes of His people.

Introductory Formula:

*“Thus says the Lord of hosts”*

1. Beginning Exhortation – Keep working Hard / Fulfill your Ministry / Persevere  
*“Let your hands be strong, you who are listening in these days to these words from the mouth of the prophets, those who spoke in the day that the foundation of the house of the Lord of hosts was laid, to the end that the temple might be built.”*
2. The Blessed Future will be different than the Cursed Past
  - a. The Cursed Past
    - 1) No Reward for Labor  
*“For before those days there was no wage for man or any wage for animal”*
    - 2) No Peace or Security  
*“and for him who went out or came in there was no peace because of his enemies”*
    - 3) No Friendship or Partnership  
*“and I set all men one against another.”*
  - b. The Change in Treatment  
*“‘But now I will not treat the remnant of this people as in the former days,’ declares the Lord of hosts.”*

c. The Blessed Future

1) (:12) Peace and Prosperity

*“For there will be peace for the seed;  
the vine will yield its fruit,  
the land will yield its produce  
and the heavens will give their dew;  
and I will cause the remnant of this people to inherit all  
these things.”*

2) (:13a) Blessing to the Nations

*“It will come about that just as you were a curse among  
the nations, O house of Judah and house of Israel, so I  
will save you that you may become a blessing.”*

3. (:13b) Concluding Exhortation -- Do Not Fear /  
Persevere – Keep Working Hard

a. Take Courage

*“Do not fear;”*

b. Work Hard

*“let your hands be strong.”*

G. (:14-17) Responsibility in Zion – God will motivate the obedience that surely leads  
to blessing

Introductory Formula:

*“For thus says the Lord of hosts”*

1. (:14-15a) Sovereign Decree of the Lord – You Can Count on God’s Blessing

a. Sovereign Decree to Curse

*“Just as I purposed to do harm to you when your fathers  
provoked Me to wrath,’ says the Lord of hosts, ‘and I have not  
relented,’”*

b. Sovereign Decree to Bless

*“so I have again purposed in these days to do good to Jerusalem  
and to the house of Judah.”*

2. (:15b) Simple Command of Encouragement

*“Do not fear!”*

3. (:16-17) Streamlined List of God’s Requirements (chiastic structure ABBA)

a. (:16) What One Must Do – Love what God loves (and Do that)

*“These are the things which you should do: speak the truth to one  
another; judge with truth and judgment for peace in your gates.”*

b. (:17) What One Must Avoid – Hate what God hates (and Don't do that)

*“Also let none of you devise evil in your heart against another, and do not love perjury; for all these are what I hate,” declares the Lord.”*

**MacArthur**: As always, the promised blessings are connected with obedience to God's righteous standards. Such obedience can only be brought about by the power of the Spirit in the life of one who has been transformed by God's grace through faith. These standards are reminiscent of Pss. 15:1-5; 24:4; Pr 6:20-22.

## **II. (:18-23) MESSAGE #2 -- THE BLESSING ON THE JEWS WILL SPILL OVER TO THE GENTILES WHO SEEK GOD'S FAVOR**

Introductory Formula:

*“Then the word of the Lord of hosts came to me, saying,”*

A. (:18-19) Fasting Turned Into Feasting for Judah – Pursuit of Truth and Peace

Introductory Formula:

*“Thus says the Lord of hosts”*

*“The fast of the fourth, the fast of the fifth, the fast of the seventh and the fast of the tenth months will become joy, gladness, and cheerful feasts for the house of Judah so love truth and peace”*

B. (:20-22) Favor of God Sought by the Gentiles – Pilgrimage to Jerusalem

Introductory Formula:

*“Thus says the Lord of hosts”*

*“It will yet be that peoples will come, even the inhabitants of many cities. The inhabitants of one will go to another, saying, ‘Let us go at once to entreat the favor of the Lord; and to seek the Lord of hosts; I will also go. So many peoples and mighty nations will come to seek the Lord of hosts in Jerusalem and to entreat the favor of the Lord.”*

C. (:23) Fellowship of Gentiles with Jews – Pathway to the blessings associated with the Presence of God

Introductory Formula:

*“Thus says the Lord of hosts”*

*“In those days ten men from all the nations will grasp the garment of a Jew, saying, ‘Let us go with you, for we have heard that God is with you.”*

\* \* \* \* \*



## DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) How does God demonstrate His jealousy for the total allegiance of His people?
- 2) What characteristics of restored Jerusalem are mentioned in this passage?
- 3) How can we be sure that God will fulfill what He has promised here?
- 4) What does the assurance of God's presence with us mean to us today?

\* \* \* \* \*

## QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**MacArthur:** Israel restored in millennial glory will be the means of blessing to all the world (cf. Is 2:2-4; Mic 4:1-5). Gentiles from around the world will make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem to entreat the Lord. This signifies salvation of people from all over the world during the kingdom, fulfilling Ps 122. In the days in which the messianic kingdom on earth is inaugurated the Jews will truly be God's messengers as originally intended, and will bring multitudes to Christ. The 10 to 1 ratio represents a vast number of Gentiles who will come (cf. Ge 31:7; Lv 26:26; Nu 14:22; 1Sa 1:8; Ne 4:12). The Messiah, in the midst of millennial Israel, will be the attraction of the world. People seeing the Jews so blessed in their kingdom, will demand to go and meet the Savior King.

**Mackay:** vs. 6 – No Reason for Incredulity

*'The remnant of the people'* are of course the descendants of the community which had experienced God's judgment (Ezr. 9:8, 13; Isa. 10:20; Jer. 23:3; Mic. 2:12; Hag. 1:12). They considered God's promises of prosperity to be quite out of touch with the everyday realities around them (Hag. 1:5-11; 2:15-19). What was *'marvelous'* was what was hard to do, something that seemed incapable of realization. Such skepticism breeds when the situation is assessed only in terms of worldly resources and possibilities, and faith fails to grasp the reality of God's power (Gen. 18:14; Num. 11:23; 2 Kgs. 7:2; Mk. 10:23-26). The attitude to be adopted is always that of Abraham, the father of the faithful. *'He did not waver through unbelief regarding the promise of God, but was strengthened in his faith and gave glory to God, being fully persuaded that God had power to do what he had promised'* (Rom. 4:20-21).

**Merrill:** This continuation of the long oracle on fasting commences with a reversal of the tragic circumstances with which the previous section ended. There YHWH had described the scattering of the pre-exilic covenant people to the four winds and the empty desolation of the land that ensued (7:14). This had been done because of the hypocritical infidelity of the nation down through the years (7:9-12). Zechariah's own contemporaries were guilty of the same perfidy, especially with regard to a falsely pious and self-interested practice of commemorating the collapse of Jerusalem and the Temple by a ritual of fasting. They were therefore in danger of suffering the same

consequences.

But this is not what YHWH plans or desires for His people. Rather, He is “zealous” for them, so much so that He will display His great wrath on their behalf. Throughout this passage there are the overtones of YHWH’s guardian protection of Judah. A dominant motif reflecting this concern and his capacity to achieve it is the self-ascription “YHWH of hosts.” As noted previously, this epithet, which is a favorite of the postexilic prophets speaks of YHWH’s omnipotent and universal sovereignty. In an age when tiny Judah had nearly been swallowed up by the mighty empires of the day and when even after her restoration from Babylonia she had found life to be tenuous at best, it was important that her prophets assure her that YHWH, her God, was the commander of the empire of heaven. The leader of hosts was sufficient for the times.

Of a total of 36 occurrences of “YHWH of hosts” in Zechariah, 15 are in this one oracle, the highest concentration of the phrase in the OT with the possible exception of Malachi. Even more remarkable, it occurs six times in the present passage alone, a passage that focuses narrowly on eschatological restoration. So humanly impossible will that be, it can come to pass only by the resources of the Almighty One.

**Bruce Ray: Love Truth and Peace** (Juanita Community Church)

**Introduction:**

Answers the question of chapter 7 regarding “Do I need to continue the fast of the fifth month?” They should have known that this was a time for rejoicing. Their hearts were not right. They had been fasting not for the Lord, but for themselves. They were concerned with form over substance; outward ritual over inward character; these rituals made them feel better about themselves; but God looked upon their hearts; more concerned with how they lived their lives day by day. The question which they asked revealed the hearts of those who asked it. The answer reveals much about the heart of God.

**I. (:1-8) Rejoice in the Knowledge of how much God Loves You**

God is very jealous for His people = sense of intense love; His fierce commitment to His people even when they turn from Him. The essence of God’s covenant = vs. 8. (Eph. 3:17ff – love of Christ for us; John 16:25ff – “the Father Himself loves you”; Rom. 5:5 – love of Triune God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit) How will you respond to the love of God? Don’t overly analyze it. Believe it; accept it; appreciate it; love God back – 1 John 3:1. Do not fear. Amazing love, how can it be! We don’t deserve it; we can’t understand it.

**II. (:9-19) Rejoice in the Knowledge of what God has Planned for You**

Plans ultimately to prosper us; not to harm us; gives us hope; focus on the future; God is determined now to bless you materially and spiritually; people living to ripe old ages as well as youth enjoying their chance to play; Don’t be afraid of the future; don’t dwell in the past; don’t allow our past to cripple us; enjoy the freedom we have as God’s children; What you believe about the future (Eschatology) shapes how you live in the present; God is determined to bless you; God is going to bless you; love the truth

### **III. (:20-23) Rejoice in the Knowledge of how God will Use You**

The salvation of the Lord is going to extend from Israel to many peoples and nations; We see this fulfilled in the first fruits of harvest at Pentecost; people from every language heard the gospel message and responded; But we see it especially in the evangelistic and missionary efforts of the church throughout the ages as it obeys the Great Commission; the command is not just to proclaim, but to invite; God has changed my life; He has worked in my heart; let us go seek the Lord together; Come with me; Will the nations really come? Sounded ridiculous to the Jews of Zechariah's day. They certainly were not influential people in the world's eyes. What difference can we make by our personal testimony? (Rev. 11:15)

#### **Steven J. Cole: Blessed to Bless**

Big Idea: Because God has promised to bless us abundantly, we should be a blessing to others.

1. God has promised to bless His people abundantly.
2. God's blessed people should be a blessing to others.

TEXT: Zechariah 9:1-17

TITLE: REJOICE IN THE COMING KING

**BIG IDEA:**

**GOD'S PEOPLE SHOULD REJOICE IN ANTICIPATION OF THEIR COMING KING WHO WILL VANQUISH ALL ENEMIES AND ESTABLISH PEACE AND PROSPERITY**

**INTRODUCTION:**

Chapter 9 begins the final section of the prophecy of Zechariah which consists of two oracles introduced by the phrase "*The burden of the word of the Lord*" (9.1, 12:1). Many of the earlier themes are revisited and expanded upon. But the focus shifts to the coming Messiah – the preparation for that coming in the judgment of the Gentile nations, the character of the Messiah, and all that He will accomplish in restoring and blessing His people. He is a just King who will reign in peace from Jerusalem over the entire world. Even Gentiles will flock to align themselves in submission under His rule. But first there must be judgment against those wicked nations that had oppressed His chosen people. God's elect should rejoice in anticipation of their coming King.

**I. (:1-8) THE PREPARATION FOR THE COMING OF THE MESSIAH – THE MILITARY EXPLOITS OF ALEXANDER THE GREAT FORESHADOW GOD'S END-TIME JUDGMENTS AGAINST GENTILE NATIONS AND PRESERVATION OF HIS REMNANT PEOPLE**

(Prophetic passage which has both near and far fulfillment)

A. (:1-7a) Neighboring Nations Laid Waste – Military Campaigns of Alexander the Great – Note the glory of God as He lays waste to the false glory of human kingdoms --

1. (:1-2a) Advance Through Aram (Syria)

*"The burden of the word of the Lord is against the land of Hadrach, with Damascus as its resting place (for the eyes of men, especially of all the tribes of Israel, are toward the Lord), And Hamath also, which borders on it"*

- Ultimate accountability to the sovereign Lord

**MacArthur:** Re "*Damascus*" – This city was to be the main target of the judgment of God through Alexander upon the capital of Syria, one of Israel's worst enemies from ca. 900-722 B.C.

2. (:2b-4) Advance Through Phoenicia

*"Tyre and Sidon, though they are very wise:  
For Tyre built herself a fortress  
And piled up silver like dust, and gold like the mire of the streets.  
Behold, the Lord will dispossess her and cast her wealth into the sea;  
And she will be consumed with fire."*

- Futility of human Wisdom
- Futility of human Power
- Futility of human Wealth and Materialism

**MacArthur:** Re “Tyre” – This city was occupying an island one half mile off-shore, and thought itself to be invincible (cf. Is 23:1-4). With walls 150 ft. high in some places, it was such an impregnable city that the Assyrian Shalmaneser besieged it for 5 years and failed to conquer it. Nebuchadnezzar tried for 13 years unsuccessfully. But Alexander, God's judgment instrument, using the rubble of the mainland city destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, built a causeway out to the island and destroyed it in 7 months (ca. 334-332 B.C.)

3. (:5-7a) Advance Through Philistia

*“Ashkelon will see it and be afraid.  
Gaza too will writhe in great pain;  
Also Ekron, for her expectation has been confounded.  
Moreover, the king will perish from Gaza,  
And Ashkelon will not be inhabited.  
And a mongrel race will dwell in Ashdod,  
And I will cut off the pride of the Philistines.  
And I will remove their blood from their mouth  
And their detestable things from between their teeth.”*

- Futility of human Security
- Futility of human Leadership
- Futility of human Dynasties and Offspring
- Futility of human Pride
- Futility of human Idolatry

**MacArthur:** This judgment put an end to idolatry for many Philistines who turned to the God of Israel. In the imagery of this verse, the nation is seen as a man with blood in his mouth (from eating sacrifices to idols) and abominations (the other defiled food of idol worship) which are removed. The picture is of conversion to worship the true God.

B. (:7b-8) Remnant in Jerusalem is Spared

1. (:7b) Establishment of a Remnant

*“Then they also will be a remnant for our God,  
And be like a clan in Judah, and Ekron like a Jebusite.”*

2. (:8a) Protection of the Remnant

*“But I will camp around My house because of an army,  
Because of him who passes by and returns;  
And no oppressor will pass over them anymore.”*

3. (:8b) Prophetic Confirmation

*“For now I have seen with My eyes.”*

## **II. (:9-10) THE PROPHECY OF THE COMING RIGHTEOUS MESSIAH TO REIGN IN PEACE OVER THE WORLD FROM JERUSALEM**

### A. (:9a) Announcement of the Coming Messiah

#### 1. Anticipatory Tone of Triumphant Rejoicing

*“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion!*

*Shout in triumph, O daughter of Jerusalem!”*

#### 2. Long-Awaited Physical Union of Covenant Ruler and Covenant People

*“Behold, your king is coming to you”*

**MacArthur:** The two advents of Christ are here compressed as though they were one as in Is 61:1-3 (cf. Lk 4:16, 21). Actually, v. 9 refers to His first coming and v. 10 is His second. OT prophets didn't see the great time period between the two comings. The church age was a “mystery” hidden from them (cf. Eph 3:1-9; Col 1:27).

### B. (:9b) Snapshot of the First Coming of the Messiah

#### 1. His Unblemished Character = Righteous

*“He is just”*

There are no character flaws that anyone could criticize;

Cf. the requirements for an elder – here you have one who is truly blameless

**Mackay:** Kings were often arbitrary and unfair in their actions – not least Alexander whose vanity often caused him to act inequitably. But the rule of the Messiah will be fair and just, because he himself desires to do God's will and has his law within his heart (Ps. 40:8). The character of his official actions is determined by his inner attitude towards God (Jn. 5:30). Such righteousness had long been associated with the Messiah (2 Sam 23:3; Ps. 45:6-7; Isa. 11:3-5; 32:1; 45:23; 53:11; Jer. 23:5; 33:15). In his reign the injustices and perplexities of this world would be eliminated, and equity would prevail. In particular, the Messianic king would meet and fulfil all the requirements of the covenant.

#### 2. His Noble Mission = Accomplishing Salvation

*“and endowed with salvation”*

#### 3. His Humble Demeanor (cf. Philippians 2)

*“Humble, and mounted on a donkey,*

*Even on a colt, the foal of a donkey.”*

**Mackay:** It describes one who knows suffering and misery, and who lives in outwardly insignificant circumstances. When such earthly misfortunes are rightly improved on, they foster an attitude of humble dependence on the Lord (Isa. 66:2), and of taking him

as a refuge (Ps. 14:6). The spirit of the humble sets them apart from those whose eyes are haughty (Ps. 18:27) and from proud mockers (Prov. 3:34). What they have experienced makes them sensitive to the situation of others. Even if they could, they would not employ force to get their way. Hardly a characteristic of earthly kings!

**Piper:** So what Jesus meant when he chose that donkey to ride on was this: I am meek and lowly in heart; I am approachable; you can find rest for your souls here; I am not against you, I am for you; I did not come to condemn but to save; I come on behalf of God, my Father in heaven, to reconcile you to him -- to make peace between you and your Maker.

### C. (:10) Snapshot of the Second Coming of the Messiah

#### 1. Establishment of Peace

*"I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim and the horse from Jerusalem; And the bow of war will be cut off. And He will speak peace to the nations"*

#### 2. Exercise of Worldwide Dominion

*"And His dominion will be from sea to sea, And from the River to the ends of the earth."*

## **III. (:11-17) THE PICTURE OF DELIVERANCE AND PROSPERITY FOR THE PEOPLE OF GOD**

### A. (:11-12) Deliverance of God's People -- Redemption from Bondage

#### 1. (:11a) Rescuing by the Blood of the Covenant

*"As for you also, because of the blood of My covenant with you"*

Study Hebrews for the substitutionary, atoning death of Christ, the Passover Lamb slain for us

#### 2. (:11b) Resulting in Deliverance from the Despair of Prison

*"I have set your prisoners free from the waterless pit"*

Study the bondage of sin and of the kingdom of darkness

**MacArthur:** Prisoners in ancient times were often kept in dry wells or pits, like Joseph was (Ge 37:24, 28). The exiles of Israel, pictured as being in a dry well of captivity, suffering, and despair, will be freed because of His unbreakable covenant with them.

#### 3. (:12a) Re-establishing Hope in the Stronghold of the Lord

*"Return to the stronghold, O prisoners who have the hope"*

#### 4. (:12b) Restoring their Abundant Fortunes

*"This very day I am declaring that I will restore double to you."*

B. (:13-14) Deployment of God's People as Weapons of God's Wrath  
Delivered to be used as instruments to serve God's purposes

1. (:13a) The Bow

*"For I will bend Judah as My bow,  
I will fill the bow with Ephraim."*

2. (:13b) The Sword

*"And I will stir up your sons, O Zion, against your sons, O Greece;  
And I will make you like a warrior's sword."*

3. (:14a) The Arrow

*"Then the Lord will appear over them,  
And His arrow will go forth like lightning;"*

4. (:14b) The Warpath – The Military Procession

*"And the Lord God will blow the trumpet,  
And will march in the storm winds of the south."*

C. (:15a) Defense of God's People

*"The Lord of hosts will defend them."*

D. (:15b) Devouring of God's Enemies

*"And they will devour and trample on the sling stones;  
And they will drink and be boisterous as with wine;  
And they will be filled like a sacrificial basin,  
Drenched like the corners of the altar."*

E. (:16-17) Delight of God's People

1. (:16a) Pastoral Flock

*"And the Lord their God will save them in that day  
As the flock of His people"*

2. (:16b) Precious Stones

*"for they are as the stones of a crown,  
Sparkling in His land."*

3. (:17a) Pretty Picture

*"For what comeliness and beauty will be theirs!"*

4. (:17b) Prosperous Feasting

*"Grain will make the young men flourish"  
and new wine the virgins."*

\* \* \* \* \*



## DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) What type of false securities and human dependencies have I been delivered from by the Lord?
- 2) Am I living right now in expectation that the King is coming – rejoicing in anticipation of His arrival?
- 3) From studying the details of the military campaigns of Alexander the Great, what specific details are reflected in this prophecy here?
- 4) What type of prosperity will regathered and restored Israel experience in the end times?

\* \* \* \* \*

## QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Mackay:** The task given to Zechariah was to encourage the people to remain true to the Lord by showing them what still lay in the future. This was not achieved by presenting an optimistically unreal picture of their future prospects, but by looking forward realistically and presenting some basic Scriptural truths. Though there seemed from their perspective to be delay, the future glory is no less certain. Themes that had been touched upon in passing in the earlier messages are now dealt with more extensively, and the Messianic focus of the prophetic message is seen even more clearly. These chapters [9-14] are frequently employed in the Gospels and in the book of Revelation, where they are in part fulfilled by Christ's first coming and in part await his return.

**Dr. John C. Whitcomb:** The judgment of God will not be total at the Second Coming. Isaiah 19 tells of the *remnants* among the Gentiles whom God will save. *Assyrians* (19:23ff.) and *Egyptians* (19:18-22) will join in the worship of God. There will also be *Ethiopean* and *Babylonian* believers (Ps. 87:4); *Ammonites* (Jer. 49:6), and *Moabites* (Jer. 48:47), **but no Edomites** (Jer. 49:7-22; Obad. 1-21; Mal. 1:2-4).

**Lindsey:** The final division of the book consists of two oracles that look forward to the messianic King and kingdom. . . These two oracles contain numerous passages which are counterparts to major themes of the eight visions, thus giving testimony to the unity of the entire Book of Zechariah. The future prosperity of Israel and Jerusalem (first vision, 1:7-17) parallels 10:6-9 (in the first oracle) and 12:6-8 and 14:11 (in the second oracle). The destruction of the nations (second vision, 1:18-21) is reaffirmed in 9:1-8 (first oracle) and in 12:1-6 and 14:1-3 (second oracle). The divine protection and exaltation of Jerusalem (third vision, chap. 2) are further developed in 9:9-17 (first oracle) and in 12:7-9 and 14:4-11 (second oracle). The spiritual cleansing of Israel (fourth vision, chap. 3) is clarified in 10:2-3 (first oracle) and in 12:10-14 and 14:8 (second oracle). The divine enablement of Israel (fifth vision, chap. 4) is explained in 10:1-6 (first oracle) and in 13:1-6 (second oracle). Divine judgment on sinners (sixth

vision, 5:1-4) is elaborated in chapter 11 (first oracle) and in 13:7-9 and 14:12-15 (second oracle). The removal of iniquity from the land of Israel (seventh vision, 5:5-11) results in a condition of holiness in Jerusalem and Judah (14:20-21, second oracle). God's judgment on and rule of the whole world (eighth vision, 6:1-8) are reflected in 14:16-19 (second oracle).

### **Bruce Ray: The King is Coming**

**Introduction:** The key verse is verse 9. The remaining chapters of Zechariah (9-14) focus on the character and mission of the coming Messiah. "The last 6 chapters of this prophecy constitute an incomparable treasury of prophetic truth." **Charles Feinberg** God's people should rejoice greatly. Give free expression to that joy. Why? Because the King is coming. Focus our attention on the coming King. (Matt. 21 – entrance of Christ into Jerusalem to fulfill a portion of this prophecy – royal carpet laid down on Palm Sunday; "Hosanna" = "Save now!")

#### **1. Rejoice because your King is Coming to you**

"Behold" = invitation to look and linger; to drink in the whole scene; vv. 1-8 prepare the way for v. 9 – announcing a series of divine judgments against places not very well known to us today. Land of Hadrach located in Syria near Damascus – but not known until recently when some documents were discovered that mentioned an ancient city by that name.

Zechariah describes exactly the path taken by a young military commander named Alexander the Great almost 200 years later. His troops traveled east from Greece; came into Asia Minor; came to the coast of the Mediterranean and swept south towards Egypt. That's the route they followed. After 2 major defeats, the Persians who were in command of much of the world of that time (under Darius III – following a progression of kingdoms); the Persians disengaged and retreated; instead of pursuing them, Alexander swung south along the coast of the Mediterranean; he added all of these countries to his column. He took Syria (vv. 1-2); he took Lebanon and Phoenicia; he took the cities of the Philistines in the south. He took the king of Gaza, tied him behind a horse and dragged him around the city a few times. But after an 11 year deployment, his troops were reluctant to continue on with the military campaigns. After a night of excessive drinking (after he came down with a fever) in the city of Babylon at the age of 32, Alexander the Great died; but recorded incredible accomplishments – his military exploits are only part of his story.

These verses call attention to 2 specific things I want to stress:

- **Battle over Tyre (vv. 2-3)** -- port city of the Phoenicians; commercial center, trade center for routes; very prosperous; built an impregnable fortress that could never be taken; put 2 walls around the entire island; 150 feet high inner and outer walls; they weren't too afraid of Alexander; had withstood a 5 year siege by the Assyrians and 13 year siege by the Babylonians; when the Greeks came they weren't too concerned. But Alexander took the new city of Tyre in 7 months; despite a half mile of sea between old Tyre and new Tyre; he had his troops take the rubble and debris of old Tyre and throw it into the sea; built a causeway to the new Tyre; swept the city clean; marched out to

the new Tyre and captured it; put 10,000 people to death; shipped out 30,000 in bondage to other places; old Tyre was literally scraped flat like Ezekiel prophesied; the old city would never be rebuilt; but the causeway is still there

**- Taking of Judah (vs. 8)** *“I will defend my temple”* —Will not this temple we just built be in danger against such a commander as Alexander the Great? God assured the people that He will keep it safe. Alexander was arrested by a dream and spared Jerusalem and conferred upon it great privileges. Josephus is very specific here; Alexander the Great bowed down to the Jewish high priest; dream of God going before him; *“I have made this mission under divine guidance.”*

Alexander’s greatest impact was not military; but cultural; he was a passionate kind of missionary for all things Greek; committed to the creation of a world united by Greek language and culture; a policy followed by his successors; left behind Greek teachers in all the lands they conquered; Why is that important?? Hellenization = his policy. This prepared the way for the future worldwide proclamation of Jesus Christ some 200 years later; Greek culture became the main influence in all of the Mediterranean region; rapid spread of gospel in early NT era; easy to move from one country to another – good roads made for rapid transit between towns; OT itself was translated into Greek = the most common Bible in use at the time of Lord Jesus Christ; What was future to Zechariah is past to us

## **2. Rejoice because your King is Righteous and He has or Dispenses Salvation**

a) He is Just in all that He does; not doing what is best for his own advantage; not selfish; the Lord our Righteousness

b) He has Salvation to give to others John 5:21

Col. 1:13-14 – transfers us from domain of sin and darkness into the kingdom of His dear Son; light; characterized by righteousness; How can He do that? By providing that righteousness that God can offer because Christ kept the law perfectly for us; by satisfying divine judgment from the sins we have committed; offering himself as our substitute for our guilt; because of the blood of the covenant he is able to save us from the judgment of God

## **3. Rejoice because your King is Gentle and Peaceable**

a) Few kings are gentle; most want to amass power; this king comes not riding a war horse or driving a chariot, but gentle, riding a colt, the foal of a donkey; approachable; doesn’t strike fear into our hearts to make us want to run away; draws us to Him; not physical force or power that is to impress us but the power of his character; Heb. 7:26; such a high priest meets our need; 4:15 – can sympathize with our weaknesses; yet without sin. Can identify with us in our weakness; can understand our struggles; has come to deliver us

b) Came to Proclaim Peace; the gospel we proclaim is Good News; Christ came not to condemn, but to save; Zechariah promises us that many will believe and will come to Him

**Mackay:** It would be wrong to take this portion simply as a prophecy of Alexander and what he did as the Lord's instrument in the affairs of the land. There is no mention of Alexander or any human agency at all. The emphasis in this passage is on the fact that it is the Lord that is at work. He determines the outcome of the events of history, and this culminates in the Messiah. We are summoned to look beyond Alexander's day. What happened then is used to teach concerning the Lord's cleansing and restoration of his inheritance, which ultimately issues in the inviolable security of "*Never again will an oppressor overrun my people*" (9:8). That was not true of Jerusalem after Alexander's day.

**MacArthur:** Re vv. 13-15 Reminiscent of the Exodus (Ex 19:16-19; Hab 3:13-15), the Lord will protect and empower them (cf. Is 11:11-16; Zec 12:6,8). The initial historical fulfillment of this prophecy came when the Maccabees defeated the Greeks ca. 167 B.C.; the final, complete fulfillment will occur at His Second Advent. The Maccabean triumph is only a pledge and a preview of final triumph over all enemies.

Re "*trample on . . . sling stones.*" This may mean the Jews will easily subdue their enemies as David did Goliath (Jdg 20:16). Or better, it could mean they will contemptuously tread on the harmless missiles cast at them by their enemies. This could depict the futility of Armageddon when the armies of the God-hating world gather in Israel and are destroyed by the Messiah (cf. Rev 16:12-16; 19:11-16). The bloodshed of the godless will be visible in that day, from one end of the land of Palestine to the other, like blood splattered on the corners of the altar of sacrifice from basins which caught it when the animal was slain (cf Rev 14:20).

**Merrill:** What has traditionally been overlooked is that this is eschatological literature which, though being grounded in the present time of the prophet (hence, well-known place names), views the future in very stylized and conventional patterns. The point here is that YHWH, like many conquerors before Him in human history, will manifest Himself in the last days as a vanquishing hero. Because most conquests of Palestine originated in the north, He will come from the north as well, smashing all hostile powers before Him until He comes to Zion, the city where He is pleased to live among men. One should not, therefore, look to precise historical events of which this is an account, nor should one even anticipate a future scenario in which God will literally march from Hadrach to Jerusalem, establishing his dominion over all opposition. What is at hand is a formulaic way of asserting an unquestionably literal establishment of YHWH's kingship in the end times, a suzerainty to be achieved in the pattern well known to Zechariah and his fellow countrymen on the human level.

#### **Encyclopedia reference to Alexander the Great:**

Shortly before he died, Alexander ordered the Greek cities to worship him as a god. Although he probably gave the order for political reasons, he was, in his own view and that of his contemporaries, of divine birth. The order was largely nullified by his death shortly after he issued it.

<http://entireworld.blogspot.com/2007/02/alexander-great.html>

## Map of Military Conquests of Alexander the Great



<http://cache.eb.com/eb/image?id=64954&rendTypeId=4>

### Steven J. Cole: Rejoice! Your King is Coming

Big Idea: Because Jesus Christ is King and He is coming to reign, we who are subject to Him should rejoice greatly.

1. Jesus Christ is King.
2. Jesus Christ is coming to reign.
3. Our response to Jesus the coming King should be to rejoice and shout in triumph.

May I ask, "How's your joy in Jesus?" I have to fight the flesh to gain this joy, just as you do. Remember, joy is a fruit of the Spirit (Gal. 5:22). Octavius Winslow wrote ("The Sympathy of Christ," at [http://www.gracegems.org/2/religion\\_of\\_joy.htm](http://www.gracegems.org/2/religion_of_joy.htm)):

The religion of Christ is the religion of JOY. Christ came to take away our sins, to roll off our curse, to unbind our chains, to open our prison house, to cancel our debt; in a word, to give us the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. Is not this joy? Where can we find a joy so real, so deep, so pure, so lasting? There is every element of joy; deep, ecstatic, satisfying, sanctifying joy in the gospel of Christ. The believer in Jesus is essentially a happy man. The child of God is, from necessity, a joyful man. His sins are forgiven, his soul is justified, his person is adopted, his trials are blessings, his conflicts are victories, his death is immortality, his future is a heaven of inconceivable, unthought of, untold, and endless blessedness. With such a God, such a Savior, and such a hope, is he not, ought he not, to be a joyful man?

Are you pursuing that kind of joy? You should be, because your King is coming!

TEXT: Zechariah 10:1-12

TITLE: *STRENGTHENED IN THE LORD FOR VICTORY*

**BIG IDEA:**

**THE COMPASSIONATE GOD WILL ULTIMATELY STRENGTHEN HIS REGATHERED REMNANT LED BY THE MESSIAH TO TREAD DOWN THEIR ENEMIES AND BE FIRMLY ESTABLISHED IN THE PROMISED LAND**

**INTRODUCTION:**

Often people look for blessing and strength in all of the wrong places. False prophets come along and make all types of seductive promises of health and prosperity. The wicked seem to prosper and go unpunished despite their rebellion. But the end is fast approaching when God will wrap up His kingdom program for this earth, defeat all enemies and establish His remnant in His promised land. The Messiah will ride forth in majesty on His war horse and lead His people to ultimate victory. In a spiritual sense, we need to be strengthened in the Lord right now to fight the battles against our enemies and enjoy the blessing and fruitfulness that God wants for us.

**I. (:1-2) BLESSING AND FRUITFULNESS CAN ONLY COME FROM GOD – CONTRAST BETWEEN THE FULL RAIN CLOUDS OF DIVINE BLESSING AND THE EMPTY RAIN CLOUDS OF FALSE PROPHETS**

A. (:1) The Full Rain Clouds of Divine Blessing

1. Seek Genuine Blessing from God Alone at the Appropriate Time

*“Ask rain from the Lord at the time of the spring rain”*

It is always the appropriate time to seek blessing from God  
He loves to give good gifts to His children – James 1:16-17

2. God is the Sufficient Source of All Blessing

*“The Lord who makes the storm clouds”*

3. God’s Gracious Blessing Brings Particular Abundant Fruitfulness to Each Individual

*“And He will give them showers of rain, vegetation in the field to each man”*

B. (:2) The Empty Rain Clouds of False Prophets

1. False Prophets Speak Lies that Promote Sin

a. Teraphim

*“For the teraphim speak iniquity”*

**Tenney:** They were household gods ranging from rather small (Gen 31:34, 35), to nearly life-sized (1 Sam 19:13, 16). Recent archeological discoveries at Nuzi in Iraq have illuminated the function and significance of these idols. Their possession



constituted the headship of the household with all of the rights attendant thereto. . . The function of teraphim of which the prophets most disapproved was divination. As divinatory objects they often are mentioned with ephods, also used for divination.

b. Diviners

*“And the diviners see lying visions and tell false dreams”*

2. False Prophets Offer False Security

*“They comfort in vain.”*

Many passages speak of the futility of following after false prophets.

Jer. 2:13

3. The Void of Faithful Shepherding Leaves a Vulnerable, Neglected Flock

a. No Direction

*“Therefore the people wander like sheep”*

b. No Deliverance

*“They are afflicted”*

c. No Shepherding

*“because there is no shepherd”*

**II. (:3-5) VICTORY OVER OUR ENEMIES CAN ONLY COME FROM GOD – GOD EQUIPS HIS PEOPLE TO WAGE WAR VICTORIOUSLY – PRIMARILY THROUGH THE LEADERSHIP OF THE MESSIAH = THE TRUE SHEPHERD**

A. (:3a) The Anger of God Unleashed in Judgment Against False Prophets

*“My anger is kindled against the shepherds and I will punish the male goats.”*

B. (:3b-5) The Equipping by God to Fight as Victorious Warriors

1. (:3b) Transforming Vulnerable Sheep Into a Majestic War Horse

*“For the Lord of hosts has visited His flock, the house of Judah, And will make them like His majestic horse in battle.”*

The equipping presence of the Lord with His people is the key

Cf. Picture of Messiah returning on singular war horse

2. (:4) Transforming Them Into Weapons of Warfare Led by the Messiah

a. Cornerstone – Stability of Leadership (**Mackay**) (Is. 28:16)

*“From them will come the cornerstone”*

b. Tent Peg – Reliability of Leadership

*“From them the tent peg”*

c. Bow – Military Success of Leadership (Ps. 45:5)

*“From them the bow of battle”*

d. Summary

*“From them every ruler, all of them together”*

**Lindsey:** These terms emphasize the strong, stable, victorious, and trustworthy nature of Messiah’s rule. The Lord will not do all the fighting but will empower His people to conquer like mighty men. His presence will enable them to be victorious.

3. (:5) Transforming Them Into Victorious Warriors

a. Characterized as Mighty Men

*“They will be as mighty men”*

b. Relentless and Victorious in the Trenches

*“Treading down the enemy in the mire of the streets in battle”*

c. Energized by Divine Assistance

*“And they will fight, for the Lord will be with them”*

d. Overcoming Incredible Odds

*“And the riders on horses will be put to shame”*

You have a picture of foot soldiers defeating the cavalry

**III. (:6-12) REDEMPTION, REGATHERING AND RE-ESTABLISHING CAN ONLY COME FROM GOD – GOD STRENGTHENS HIS PEOPLE TO BE FIRMLY ESTABLISHED IN THE PROMISED LAND**

**Mackay:** The theme of this section is indicated by the repetition of *“I will strengthen them”* (10:6, 12). This divine empowering is the means by which the fortunes of his people will be restored.

A. (:6) Promise of Restored Remnant

1. Reunion -- Reunited as One Kingdom

a. Southern kingdom

*“I will strengthen the house of Judah”*

b. Northern kingdom

*“And I will save the house of Joseph”*

2. Restoration -- Restored to the Land

*“And I will bring them back”*

3. Reason = Compassion

*“Because I have had compassion on them”*



4. Reversal of Rejection  
*“And they will be as though I had not rejected them.”*
  5. Responsiveness of Personal God  
*“For I am the Lord their God and I will answer them.”*
- B. (:7-8) Prosperity of Restored Remnant – Strength / Joy / Numbers
1. Strength  
*“Ephraim will be like a mighty man”*
  2. Joy  
*“And their heart will be glad as if from wine;  
 Indeed, their children will see it and be glad,  
 Their heart will rejoice in the Lord.”*
  3. Numbers  
*“I will whistle for them to gather them together,  
 For I have redeemed them,  
 And they will be as numerous as they were before.”*
- C. (:9-10) Providence of the Restored Remnant
1. (:9) Renewed Allegiance  
*“When I scatter them among the peoples,  
 They will remember Me in far countries,  
 And they with their children will live and come back.”*
  2. (:10) Sovereign Disposition  
*“I will bring them back from the land of Egypt  
 And gather them from Assyria;  
 And I will bring them into the land of Gilead and Lebanon  
 Until no room can be found for them.”*
- D. (:11) Pathway for the Restored Remnant – Defeating all Obstacles  
*“And they will pass through the sea of distress,  
 And He will strike the waves in the sea,  
 So that all the depths of the Nile will dry up;  
 And the pride of Assyria will be brought down  
 And the scepter of Egypt will depart.”*
- MacArthur**: Similar to Israel crossing the Red Sea, God will remove both geographical and political obstacles to Israel’s return for the kingdom of Messiah. Assyria and Egypt, traditional enemies of Israel, symbolize any nation that would try to withstand God from fulfilling His will (cf. Is 11:11,12).
- E. (:12) Plan for the Restored Remnant – Strengthened to walk in righteousness

*“And I will strengthen them in the Lord;  
And in His name they will walk,’ declares the Lord.”*

**Feinberg:** Their entire life and conduct will be controlled by the desire to honor the Lord. Such is the goal of prophecy for the nation Israel.

\* \* \* \* \*

#### DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:

- 1) Are we quick to turn to the Lord for blessing and persevere in faith that He will provide what we need?
- 2) What are some examples today of false prophets offering false security?
- 3) Are we confident that the Lord is with us in our battles to equip us for victory?
- 4) How has God showered His compassion on us?

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#### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Ed Anderson:** (sermonaudio.com) **Blessings 101 – The Panorama of Blessings**

##### **I. The Pathway of Blessings (:1-2)**

Prayer with faith in God is the foundation for blessing. Sometimes Jews had sought blessing from the wrong sources – from idols, from diviners, etc. Certainly there are all types of prophets today claiming to have a word from God. You must seek blessing from the right source. Don't seek any additional revelation. Rev. 22:18; Gal. 1:8

##### **II. The Person of Blessings = the Lord Himself (v.3-5)**

Millennial significance of the various pictures of the Lord.

A. Cornerstone = Christ – Eph 2:20 – not simply for decoration; the angles of the walls were dependent upon that cornerstone; we take the direction from our lives from Him

1 Cor. 3:11

B. Tent Peg – the one upon whom we can hang all of our hopes

C. Battle Bow – represents the power of life and death; implements of war and might;

Rev. 19:11 – He will be the military commander of His people

D. Gets rid of the Opposition – has nothing to do with the word “ruler”

Opposing all oppressors of Israel and banishing them completely

E. The people of Israel will be empowered to tread down their enemies

They will defeat cavalry armies

**III. The Promises of Blessing (v.6-12)** We may trust His promises without hesitation (Num. 23:19; 2 Pet. 3:9; Ps. 147:5)

A. Nation of Israel Restored as a United Nation – not two kings and two kingdoms

B. Regathered (:8) – whistling sound to summon the bees – I am going to give a signal for Israel to return to their land

C. Multiplied – reversing their worldwide dispersion; they will occupy both sides of the Jordan River; this prophecy has never yet been fulfilled

D. God will take away all Hindrances to their Return (:11)

E. (:12) Nation of Israel Regenerated

Rom. 9-11 temporarily blinded; God saving the Gentiles to make the Jews jealous of His blessing; Zech 12:10

Result: Israel will walk in obedience to the Lord

**Merrill:** Zechariah turns first of all to the problem of evil leadership in the historical community of Israel, dividing his attention between the spiritual and political aspects. Things have been bleak, indeed, as the whole history of Israel and Judah could attest, but there was hope now in light of the restoration from exile and particularly in light of God's gracious promises concerning the age to come. All his people need do is ask for rain, that is, the showers of His blessing (v. 1), and it was certain to come. The "latter-rain" (malqos) refers, in the context of the agricultural cycles of Palestine, to the renewal of sustained rains in the spring of the year, commencing usually about March or April. The "former rains" were those of the autumn, following the harvest-time.

"Latter rain" is also a term with eschatological significance, referring to the pouring out of divine blessing in the coming age. Hosea, speaking of YHWH's reviving of His people at the end time, puts it in terms of YHWH's coming "as the rain, as the latter rain that waters the earth" (Hos. 6:3). Joel associates it with a time of abundant harvest, the wheat, vineyards, and olive trees having soaked up its nourishment so as to yield their fruit. All this is to make up for the years devastated by the ravages of pest and insect (Joel 2:21-25). This is a reference to Israel's historical experience, one to be succeeded by a time of blessing in the latter day . . .

Continuing in the same imagery but with a strong mixture of messianic language, YHWH foresees Judah as the source of four elements: the cornerstone, the peg, the bow, and the ruler. These should be interpreted in the context of holy war that prevails here and not in that of architecture or construction or something else. "Cornerstone" or "corner tower" (pinna) occurs as a metaphor for a leader such as a king or governor (Judg. 20:2; 1 Sam. 14:38; Isa. 19:13). With that in mind it seems quite clear that Zechariah is alluding to a future human figure who will provide the very foundation for a revived kingdom structure. Paul understood this one to be Christ, "the chief cornerstone" (Eph. 2:20). As for the peg (yated), the word can refer to a tent peg or, as is likely here, to a peg in the wall from which items could be suspended. It must be sturdy, for, as Ezekiel notes (15:3), one would hardly use wood from a vine in its manufacture.

Eliakim ben Hilkiyah is described as such a peg in Isa. 22:15-25. With the predicted removal of Shebna from office the weight of the Davidic government would rest upon the major-domo Eliakim, servant of King Hezekiah (Isa. 36:3). But he would not be capable of supporting such a load and so would be torn from the wall (22:25). This no

doubt was to signify the impending doom of the royal house itself.

In his famous prayer of confession Ezra rejoiced that God had shown the postexilic community grace in preserving a remnant and in providing a “peg” in the holy place. The collocation of remnant and peg here (Ezra 9:8) suggests that they share much in common, just as they do in Zechariah. In the latter it is the eschatological remnant that will give rise to the peg, the stout hook on which all of Judah’s hopes for the future can be suspended.

“Battle bow” as a personal epithet is otherwise unknown in the OT, though Babylonia is called “battle mace” by Jeremiah (Jer. 51:20). Zechariah himself uses the term with reference to the conquest by the messianic king who will break the battle bow of the enemy (9:10). A more helpful reference, however, is that of 9:13 where YHWH says He will “bend” Judah as a warrior bends a bow. Since Judah is in view in 10:3-5 as the source of the bow, it cannot be Judah as a whole but someone who comes from Judah. This idea is, of course, consistent with OT messianic theology (cf. Gen. 49:10).

Finally, that “every ruler” shall come from Judah (v. 4c) is not a matter of surprise, for that too is a major OT theme. David and all his descendants were, after all, sons of Judah. Zechariah uses a rather strange word for ruler here, however, the participle form of (nagas), “to oppress.” Normally one would expect “king” (melek), “prince” (nas), or the like, but here occurs a term usually reserved for oppressive, tyrannical rule (Ex. 3:7; 5:6, 10; Isa. 3:12; 9:3; 14:2, 4; Dan. 11:20). Zechariah already used the same participle to describe cruel, despotic rulers (9:8). The reason for its use here appears to be the harsh tone of the language of conquest throughout the pericope. When YHWH achieves His final hegemony He will, through His appointed Davidic rulers, ruthlessly put down all opposition. To His foes His total, violent domination of them will cast Him as an oppressor, a dictator to whom they must submit against their will.

**Mackay:** The emphasis is on the provision the Lord alone can make: **fertility** (10:1-2), **leadership** (10:3-5), **restoration** (10:6-12).

### **Steven J. Cole: Praying in the Promises**

Big Idea: God’s abundant promises for His people should motivate us to pray for their fulfillment.

1. God has promised abundant blessings for His people (10:2-12).
  - A. God promises to deliver His people from their enemies (10:2-5).
  - B. God promises to restore and strengthen His people (10:6- 12).
  
2. God’s promises should motivate us to pray for their fulfillment (10:1).
  - A. We should pray for God’s promises because He commands us to pray.
  - B. We should pray for God’s promises to acknowledge our dependence on Him.
  - C. We should pray for God’s promises to remember the Lord alone as the source of all our blessings.
  - D. We should pray for God’s promises to realize the fulfillment of His purposes.

**Dr. John C. Whitcomb**: **Isaiah 11:16** is the foundation for Zechariah 10 – “*like as it was to Israel in the day that he came up out of the land of Egypt.*” In the first return **all** Jews left Egypt. God accomplished the Exodus with great supernatural interventions. Therefore, the return from Babylon under Zerubbabel was not the second return (Isa. 11:11), for it was neither **total** nor **supernatural** (most of the Israelites remained in Babylon, only a remnant returned, and no miracles occurred).

TEXT: Zechariah 11:1-17

TITLE: THE REJECTION OF THE WORTHY SHEPHERD

**BIG IDEA:**

**GOD'S JUDGMENT ALWAYS ACCOMPANIES THE REJECTION OF HIS WORTHY SHEPHERD AND ALLEGIANCE TOWARDS UNGODLY FALSE SUBSTITUTES**

**INTRODUCTION:**

Before opening the window to give us a glimpse of Israel's promising future, Zechariah shows the utter folly of the nation and its leaders in rejecting their Messiah. This scene speaks mainly of Christ's first coming and the events leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD.

**FOUR KEY PLAYERS IN THIS DRAMA OF HUMAN SHEPHERDING**

**I. (:1-3) THE WAILING SHEPHERDS –  
As God's Judgment Sweeps Through the Land**

A. Judgment on the Glorious Cedars of Lebanon

*“Open your doors, O Lebanon,  
That a fire may feed on your cedars.  
Wail, O cypress, for the cedar has fallen,  
Because the glorious trees have been destroyed”*

**Constable:** The prophet announced in vigorous poetic language that Lebanon's famous cedars would perish. The Israelites referred to the royal palace in Jerusalem as Lebanon because it contained so much cedar from Lebanon (Jer. 22:23; cf. 1 Kings 7:2). The Talmud spoke of the second temple as Lebanon for the same reason.<sup>241</sup> The cedar also became a symbol of the royal house of Judah (Ezek. 17:3-4, 12-13).

B. Judgment on the Impenetrable Oaks of Bashan

*“Wail, O oaks of Bashan,  
For the impenetrable forest has come down.”*

C. Judgment on the Pride of Jordan

*“There is a sound of the shepherds' wail,  
For their glory is ruined.  
There is a sound of the young lions' roar,  
For the pride of the Jordan is ruined.”*

**Merrill:** Attention to the following verses makes it rather apparent that the objects mentioned under the guise of trees and animals are the same as the shepherds. As already noted “*shepherd*” is a common way of referring to kings in the ancient Near East and the OT, an epithet particularly favored by Zechariah (10:2, 3; 11:3, 5, 8, 15, 16, 17; 13:7). The lament of the poem, then, introduces the occasion for the lament,

namely, the destruction of the evil shepherds (11:8, 17).

Perhaps next in prominence to shepherd as metaphor for king is that of a plant, especially a tree. One thinks of the parable of Jotham, a son of Gideon who tried to warn his countrymen of the danger in allowing his brother Abimelech to become king over them after Gideon's death (Judg. 9:7-15). He said that the trees sought one who could lead them, and they first asked the olive tree to do so. He refused, so the trees next asked the fig tree, who also declined. The vine similarly refused the invitation, but at length the bramble agreed to serve if they would meet his harsh terms. To Jotham, Abimelech was the bramble.

**MacArthur:** Those three verses are judgmental. They identify three different locations: Lebanon, Bashan, and Jordan. In the geography of Israel, that list begins in the north and descends to the south. It pictures judgment sweeping down like fire burning the vegetation in Lebanon and Bashan on down to the foliage around the Jordan Valley, where lions dwelt. The Holy Spirit used dramatic imagery to describe the ravaging of the whole land of Israel.

Zechariah was describing a fire of judgment that would consume the ungodly as a conflagration consumes trees. The trees symbolize portions of land. Lebanon was known for its cedars. The wood that was used to build Solomon's Temple was from the cedars of Lebanon (1 Kings. 5).

Moving down from Lebanon, which is on the northern border of Israel, we come to the area of Bashan, which is east of the sea of Galilee. It was known for its oak trees. Descending further south we come to the Jordan Valley, in which runs the Jordan River, which extends from the Sea of Galilee to the Dead Sea. At one time there appears to have been dense, jungle-like foliage along both sides of the river.

I believe that the judgment God is speaking about here is an actual devastation. Although a literal fire that burns trees may not be involved, the devastation is not limited to spiritual judgment only. It includes the death of people as the land of Israel is being judged.

There's an inevitability to this judgment. In verse 1 Lebanon is told to open its doors, as if there's no sense in resisting. The fir and oak trees might as well because if the mighty cedars, which are relatively inaccessible, go up in flames the other trees aren't going to be able to stand. When the high and the mighty are fallen, every lesser tree is going to be unable to escape. Some people have likened these trees to the leadership of Israel, assuming this is a spiritual judgment on the hierarchy of Israel, which includes the priests, elders, scribes, and runs all the way down to the common people.

## **II. (:4-6) THE WATCHING SOVEREIGN – As God's Pity runs out and He withholds Deliverance**

### **A. (:4-5a) The Doomed Flock**

*“Thus says the Lord my God, ‘Pasture the flock doomed to slaughter.  
Those who buy them slay them and go unpunished,*

*And each of those who sell them says,  
Blessed be the Lord, for I have become rich!”*

**Constable:** Those who bought sheep slew them (Heb. feminine) and went unpunished. This was bad because these were female sheep, ewes, intended for breeding and not for butchering. The slayers represent the foreign rulers who took over the Israelites, persecuted them, and had not paid the full penalty for their abusive treatment of them (Gen. 12:3). Those who sold the sheep were Israel's former rulers and leaders who, by their sins, had set the people up for divine judgment by foreigners.

B. (:5b-6a) The Disinterested Shepherds

*“And their own shepherds have no pity on them. For I will no longer have pity on the inhabitants of the land,’ declares the Lord;”*

C. (:6b) The Devastated Land

*“but behold, I will cause the men to fall, each into another’s power and into the power of his king; and they will strike the land, and I will not deliver them from their power.”*

**Merrill:** On balance, it appears best to understand this passage (v. 6) to mean that YHWH will withhold His compassion for His people Israel, delivering them instead to neighboring peoples and their kings who will beat down the land of Israel with no interference from YHWH. This, of course, is precisely what took place in the last decades of Israel's and Judah's history leading up to their respective captivities by the Assyrians and Babylonians, and on into the future as well.

### **III. (:7-14) THE WORTHY SHEPHERD = ZECHARIAH PREFIGURING THE MESSIAH –**

#### **As God's anointed shepherd is betrayed for 30 pieces of silver**

A. (:7-8) Commitment to Shepherding Symbolized by the Taking of Two Staffs

*“So I pastured the flock doomed to slaughter, hence the afflicted of the flock. And I took for myself two staffs: the one I called Favor, and the other I called Union; so I pastured the flock. Then I annihilated the three shepherds in one month, for my soul was impatient with them, and their soul also was weary of me.”*

**Constable:** The two shepherd's staffs that he named "Favor" (Heb. *no'am*, pleasantness, graciousness) and "Union" (Heb. *hobhelim*, binders, unifiers) represented God's blessing and the unity of the flock (Israel; cf. Ezek. 37:15-28).

**Merrill:** Zechariah says he shepherded the flock that, because it was destined for slaughter, was the most afflicted of the flock (v. 7). In this way he distinguishes between Israel as a whole and the oppressed remnant within Israel that had maintained its covenant faith. An indispensable instrument in shepherding was the shepherd's staff, so Zechariah says he took two of them, one named "pleasantness" and the other



“binders.” With these, he says, he shepherded the flock (v. 7). The former name speaks of the relationship between YHWH and His people (v. 10) and the latter of that between Israel and Judah (v. 14).

**MacArthur:** Verse 8 is difficult to interpret. I agree with those who say the three shepherds refer to the priests, elders, and scribes of Israel. I believe the Lord fulfilled the symbolism of bestowing grace and unity upon the populace, but when it came to the religious leaders He confronted their hypocrisy (Matt. 23). He "cut off" or disowned them with scathing denunciations. The time period of "one month" is best understood as referring to a short period of time.

B. (:9-11) Breaking of the First Staff = Favor (Beauty)

*“Then I said, ‘I will not pasture you. What is to die, let it die, and what is to be annihilated, let it be annihilated; and let those who are left eat one another’s flesh.’ And I took my staff, Favor, and cut it in pieces, to break my covenant which I had made with all the peoples. So it was broken on that day, and thus the afflicted of the flock who were watching me realized that it was the word of the Lord.”*

C. (:12-13) Contempt Shown to the Worthy Shepherd and the Word of God

*“And I said to them, ‘If it is good in your sight, give me my wages; but if not, never mind!’ So they weighed out thirty shekels of silver as my wages. Then the Lord said to me, ‘Throw it to the potter, that magnificent price at which I was valued by them.’ So I took the thirty shekels of silver and threw them to the potter in the house of the Lord.”*

**Silversides:** Initially it speaks of Zechariah – but ultimately fulfilled in Christ. Here is the shepherd of Israel giving you the Word of God. What value do you place upon it? They should have said it is priceless to have the Word of God and His covenant blessings. But they valued it as 30 pieces of silver (Ex. 21:32) = the price of a slave gored by an ox. It was twice as much for a free man. Like saying “throw it to the dogs.” Matt. 27:3 Judas preferred 30 pieces of silver to Christ Himself – despising the goodness of God and the truth of God.

D. (:14) Breaking of the Second Staff = Union (Bands)

*“Then I cut my second staff, Union, in pieces, to break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel.”*

**Constable:** Zechariah then symbolically broke his second staff, "Union," indicating the end of the unity that bound the Jews together. Just before the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 the Jews broke up into parties that were very hostile to one another. This condition accelerated their destruction by the Romans.<sup>262</sup> Evidently fighting among the Jews will also be common in the Tribulation. The order of events is significant, and it was historical: the breaking of God's favor on His people, their rejection of the Shepherd, and the breaking of their unity.<sup>263</sup> We know that this

destruction would not be permanent, however, because of other promises that God would reunite and restore His people and that He would not cast them off permanently (e.g., Rom. 11).

**III. (:15-17) THE WORTHLESS SHEPHERD = ROMAN EMPIRE  
PREFIGURING THE ANTICHRIST – (CONTRASTED WITH THE WORTHY)  
As God’s flock is ravaged by the shepherd instead of protected**

A. (:15) His Equipment – False Shepherd vs True Shepherd

*“The Lord said to me, ‘Take again for yourself the equipment of a foolish shepherd.’”*

As a faithful pastor, how should you be equipped?

B. (:16) His Ministry – False Shepherd vs True Shepherd

1. Related to Nurturing

*“For behold, I am going to raise up a shepherd in the land who will not care for the perishing, seek the scattered, heal the broken, or sustain the one standing,”*

2. Related to Devouring

*“but will devour the flesh of the fat sheep and tear off their hoofs.”*

As a faithful pastor, how should you nurture your flock?

C. (:17) His Reward – False Shepherd vs True Shepherd

*“Woe to the worthless shepherd who leaves the flock!  
A sword will be on his arm and on his right eye!  
His arm will be totally withered and his right eye will be blind.”*

Arm indicates strength and eye indicates his intelligence

As a faithful pastor, what type of reward can you expect?

\* \* \* \* \*

**DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:**

1) What do we glory in that could prove to be unreliable like the cedar trees of Lebanon?

2) What value do we place upon God’s shepherding of us by providing us with the Word of Truth and the Shepherding of the Good Shepherd? What effort do we expend in trying to understand passages like this that superficially seem so difficult to

understand?

3) What causes the Lord to come to an end of His pity and compassion towards a group of people?

4) What measurements of a faithful pastor-shepherd can be found in this passage?

\* \* \* \* \*

### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

**Merrill:** This climax to the long oracle beginning with chapter 9 ends the oracle on a pessimistic note indeed. Throughout chapter 11 the theme has been that of the sheep and the shepherds. The sheep are God's chosen people, Israel and Judah, and the shepherds the evil kings who abandoned their subjects in their times of greatest need, particularly just prior to the Babylonian conquest and deportation. Zechariah, playing the role of and speaking for YHWH, has done all he can as the good shepherd to minister to the flock but to no avail. They have spurned him utterly, counting his service to them as of no more value than the service of a slave. He therefore broke his covenant with them in terms of their appropriation of its benefits and also broke off the brotherhood between Israel and Judah. The only hope now is for a shepherd who will come and in tender love and omnipotent power effect a reunion and restoration. Such a one will come, as Zechariah 9:9-10 makes clear, but not until the sinful rebellion of God's people runs its course. Before they can accept that Good Shepherd to come, they must have one last fling with a ruler who will utterly disappoint them. This is the shepherd on whom the prophecy now focuses. . .

### **David Silversides: Evaluating the Christ of God**

A warning of the dangers of apostasy and God's judgment. This passage finds its fulfillment both before the first coming of Christ, at His coming and after His coming.

#### **I. (:1-3) Fulfillment Before the First Coming of Christ**

The picture is of a storm that sweeps through Lebanon destroying the strong cedars. This storm is a picture of the period between the period of the Maccabees and the coming of Christ. Judea was deprived of all independence under the heavy hand of the Romans.

#### **II. (:4-14) Fulfillment at the First Coming of Christ**

Zechariah speaks of himself – but prefiguring Christ. Christ came as the great Shepherd of Israel to feed them and tend them. Describes what will happen when they reject their Messiah. There is a warning of both internal strife and a king that would come against them and destroy them. Two staffs: *Beauty*, favor or kindness and then *Union*; the Lord preserved the Jews from obliteration; gave them a measure of favor among the nations and preserved a measure of harmony among them. *Three shepherds* of verse 8 could refer to the offices of Prophet, Priest and King that all despised Christ at His first coming. After the death of Christ, the nation is abandoned to destruction. The favor is removed and the Romans devoured them. In A.D. 70 when the Romans came against Jerusalem, they stopped for a couple of days and the believing remnant

had an opportunity to flee because they remembered the words of Christ (Luke 21:20); but the self righteous did not flee but remained in the city.

### **III. (:15-17) Fulfillment after the Rejection of Christ**

Describes the wicked rulers into whose hands Judea would be delivered. The Roman Empire would be used to judge the Jews but then that kingdom would be weakened and cut off itself.

**Application:** Contempt for Scripture is contempt for Christ. You cannot say: "I love the person of the Book rather than the Book."

**Paul George:** In Christ's time the chief priests and the elders who were the possessors of the flock, by their traditions, the commandments of men, and their impositions on the consciences of the people, became perfect tyrants, devoured their houses, engrossed their wealth, and fleeced the flock instead of feeding it. The Sadducees, who were deists, corrupted their judgments. The Pharisees, who were bigots corrupted their morals, by making void the commandments of God (Matthew 15:16). It can be said they slew the sheep of the flock, sold them. They didn't care what became of them so they could gain their own ends and serve their own interests. They justified what they were doing. They could see no harm in what they were doing. They never thought they would be called to give an account for what they were doing by the chief Shepherd. They acted as if their power was given to them for destruction, which was designed only for edification. They believed because they sat in Moses's seat, they were not under the obligation of Moses's law but might dispense it at their pleasure. Those have their minds woefully blinded will do evil in the sight of the Lord and justify themselves in doing it. But God will not hold those guiltless who hold themselves guiltless.

<http://sermoncentral.com/sermon.asp?SermonID=62038>

**MacArthur:** Through Zechariah God has promised salvation to Israel--a regathering and restoration in the land. But suddenly in chapter 11, the prophet of hope turns into a prophet of doom and judgment. He turns from the glories of the Messiah at His Second Coming to the national apostasy and rejection that occurred at His first coming, which is the main theme of the chapter. It helps us understand why the promises of chapters 9 and 10 didn't come to pass when Jesus came the first time. . .

I've studied many chapters in the Bible but one of the most difficult I've ever studied is Zechariah 11. The chapter's poetic style is difficult to interpret; however, its main theme is clear in spite of our lack of our understanding of some of the details. An important key to the chapter is understanding its style of prophetic utterance. In the Old Testament, prophets often prophesied by acting out a symbolic scene. Verbalizing God's revelation was not the only means of prophesying. For example, God instructed Isaiah to "take a great roll, and write in it with a man's pen concerning Maher-shalal-hash-baz [which means, 'make haste to the spoils']" (Isa 8:1). That was the name of Isaiah's second son, a symbolic demonstration of judgment upon Damascus and Samaria. God told Ezekiel to take a tile, draw the city of Jerusalem, and dramatically besiege it (Ezek. 4:1-2). While onlookers may have thought the prophet had gone crazy, he was acting out a message from God to them. In Zechariah 11, God uses the prophet as an actor, playing the part of a shepherd to illustrate the true Shepherd, Jesus Christ,

and the rejection He encountered. . .

The message of Zechariah is clear. Before the destruction of Jerusalem, God Himself would appear in the person of Jesus Christ, the True Shepherd, and attempt to feed His flock of slaughter. Only the poor of the flock would follow His Word and the rest, especially the leaders, would reject it. The good Shepherd would have no more value to them than a common slave. As a consequence the people were given over to severe judgment, which included death, famine, war, civil strife, and the destruction of the nation. The nation went out of existence and the Jewish people were scattered all over the world because they rejected the true Shepherd. . .

The book of Zechariah is of tremendous prophetic importance in viewing history from the time of Zechariah to the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. One of the most significant prophetic events is the rise of an individual commonly known as the Antichrist. Although that it is not specifically his title in the Old Testament, it certainly fits him well. The apostle John said there were many antichrists present in his day (1 John 2:18), but spoke of one who would be the most vehement adversary of God to ever live, apart from Satan himself (1 John 4:3).

As we come to Zechariah 11:15-17, we come face to face with this being. He's not a demon or a fallen angel, but an evil person whom the prophet identifies as a foolish shepherd (v. 15). In verse 17, he is called an impostor (KJV, "idol," archaic for "pretender"). He is a false shepherd, a contrast to the true Shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ.

The apostle John, writing in the first century to a wide circle of believers, said, "Little children ... ye have heard that antichrist shall come" (1 John 2:18). So the coming of the Antichrist was common knowledge. . .

Having just played the part of Christ, Zechariah now plays the part of the Antichrist. "The instruments of a foolish shepherd" might have been a broken staff or a club with metal on it used to beat stubborn sheep into submission. Whatever the instruments were, they would clearly be inappropriate for a shepherd who wanted to tenderly care for his sheep.

The Hebrew word translated "foolish" in the Old Testament is a synonym for "wicked." The book of Proverbs in many places equates the wicked person with the fool. Proverbs 5:22-23 says, "His own iniquities shall take the wicked himself, and he shall be held with the cords of his sins. He shall die without instruction, and in the greatness of his folly he shall go astray." Psalm 14:1 says, "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God." The fool lives in rebellion against God. Foolishness doesn't mean that he's mentally incompetent, but that he is wicked.

The world will willingly accept the Antichrist as its shepherd, but will recognize too late that he doesn't carry a staff in his hand, but a club. He will allow the false church to exist (Rev. 17:1-6) once the true church has been raptured and taken to heaven. He will

slaughter not only the false church after a period of toleration (Rev. 17:7-18), but also two-thirds of the Jewish people (Zech. 13:8).

<http://www.biblebb.com/files/MAC/sg2167.htm>

**Mackay:** Shepherds in the East commonly had two staffs (“*your rod and staff*”, Ps. 23:4), one a stout cudgel to ward off attacking predators from the flock, and the other corresponding more to the traditional idea of a shepherd’s staff with a crook at the end to help rescue the sheep from difficult situations. The two staffs are given symbolic names which sum up the two main aspects of the shepherd’s ministry. The prophet called the one staff **Favour**, “pleasantness”, a symbol of the Lord’s care and protection of his people, providing them with fellowship with himself and all the bounty of his covenant (Ps. 23; 27:4-5; 90:17). The other staff he called **Union**, literally a plural expression, “bindings” or “ties”, expressing the unifying effect of Christ’s ministry, “*there shall be one flock and one shepherd*” (Jn. 10:16), particularly here in connection with the union of Judah and Israel (11:14). These two aspects of union and blessing had been brought together previously by Ezekiel in connection with the coming rule of David as the Lord’s servant over his people (Ezk. 37:15-28). With both these blessings, **I pastured the flock** (repeating the expression at the beginning of the verse), acting as the representative of the Lord caring for his people.

### **Steven J. Cole: The Tragedy of Rejecting Christ**

Big Idea: The greatest tragedy possible is to reject Christ, the Good Shepherd.

1. Rejecting Christ results in great tragedy, both personally and nationally.
  - A. Rejecting Christ results in being exploited by ruthless shepherds.
  - B. Rejecting Christ results in being exploited by your fellow man.
  - C. Rejecting Christ results in the devastation of the land.
  - D. Rejecting Christ results ultimately in being abandoned by God.
2. To reject Christ means not to value Him properly.
3. The alternative to rejecting Christ is to value Him properly.

TEXT: Zechariah 12:1-14

TITLE: ISRAEL PROTECTED AND TRANSFORMED IN THE DAY OF THE LORD

**BIG IDEA:**

**THE DAY OF THE LORD WILL BRING SUPERNATURAL DESTRUCTION TO ISRAEL'S ATTACKERS AND DIVINELY INITIATED REPENTANCE TO ALL THE JEWS WHO NOW RECOGNIZE THEIR MESSIAH**

**INTRODUCTION:**

"*In that day*" (12:3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 11) is the emphasized time reference for this prophecy that speaks of the consummation of God's great program for His people Israel. The reference is to the eschatological Day of the Lord. Just as God sovereignly created the heavens and the earth and breathed into man the spirit of life, He will fulfill all of His promises regarding the future conversion and deliverance of His chosen people Israel. The enemy nations who attack Israel (and specifically Jerusalem) with such great overpowering numbers and superior military force will be shocked to find that God will turn the tables on them and make Israel the scene of their ultimate defeat. The key will be the repentance that the Spirit of God will bring about as all of regathered Israel now is granted insight into the recognition of their Messiah = the one whom they pierced. They mourn in repentance as they come to grips with their great sin in rejecting their Messiah at His first coming.

**I. (:1-5) THE FRUSTRATION OF ISRAEL'S ATTACKING ENEMIES**

A. (:1) Introduction – the Lord deserves to be Heard

1. The Weighty Message

*"The burden of the word of the Lord concerning Israel"*

2. The Worthy Credentials

*"Thus declares the Lord:*

*who stretches out the heavens,*

*lays the foundation of the earth,*

*and forms the spirit of man within him"*

**Dr. John C. Whitcomb:** He created the whole universe, and the uniquely inhabitable earth; but the most spectacular of all His creations are human beings.

Jeremiah 10:11 – "***Thus you shall say to them, The gods that did not make the heavens and the earth shall perish from the earth and from under the heavens.***" -- the only verse in the whole book of Jeremiah which is not in the Hebrew language but in the common Aramaic, the language the Gentiles understood. Why? Because God wanted them to hear too. [Jeremiah includes the first two qualifications, and Zechariah adds the third, the creation of mankind. The Lord Jesus is thus thrice qualified to be worshipped as God.]

B. (:2-3) Two Images of God Turning the Tables on Israel's Attacking Enemies

1. (:2) Incapacitated by Drunkenness

*“Behold, I am going to make Jerusalem a cup that causes reeling to all the peoples around; and when the siege is against Jerusalem, it will also be against Judah.”*

Expectation of enemies of Israel: they could drink victoriously – Wrong!

2. (:3) Injured by Lifting a Heavy Stone

*“It will come about in that day that I will make Jerusalem a heavy stone for all the peoples; all who lift it will be severely injured. And all the nations of the earth will be gathered against it.”*

Expectation of enemies of Israel: they could defeat Jerusalem – Wrong!

C. (:4-5) Contrast Between Frustration of Enemy Nations and Encouragement of Israel

1. (:4) Divine Intervention – to Frustrate Israel’s Enemies and to Protect Israel

*“In that day,’ declares the Lord, ‘I will strike every horse with bewilderment and his rider with madness. But I will watch over the house of Judah, while I strike every horse of the peoples with blindness.’”*

2. (:5) National Encouragement -- based on the Special Bond Between Jerusalem and Her Covenant God

*“Then the clans of Judah will say in their hearts, ‘A strong support for us are the inhabitants of Jerusalem through the Lord of hosts, their God.’”*

**II. (:6-9) THE DESTRUCTION OF ISRAEL’S ATTACKING ENEMIES**

A. (:6) Destruction of Enemies Leads to Security for God’s People in Jerusalem

1. Two Images of Destruction

a. A Firepot

*“In that day I will make the clans of Judah like a firepot among pieces of wood”*

b. Flaming Torch

*“and a flaming torch among sheaves”*

2. Contrast between the Devastation of Israel’s Enemies and the Security of God’s People

a. Devastation of Israel’s Enemies

*“so they will consume on the right hand and on the left all the surrounding peoples,”*

b. Security of God’s People

*“while the inhabitants of Jerusalem again dwell on their own*



*sites in Jerusalem.”*

B. (:7) Jerusalem Not Magnified Above Judah

*“The Lord also will save the tents of Judah first, so that the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem will not be magnified above Judah.”*

Lesson: Salvation is from the Lord – not from the fortified capital city of Jerusalem

C. (:8) Jerusalem – the City of David -- Magnified

*“In that day the Lord will defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and the one who is feeble among them in that day will be like David, and the house of David will be like God, like the angel of the Lord before them.”*

Lesson: The Lord can make both the weak and the strong to be victorious warriors (like King David) under the leadership of the Sovereign Messiah

D. (:9) Enemies of Jerusalem Destroyed

*“And in that day I will set about to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.”*

Lesson: The Lord will fulfill His promise of destruction.

Transition: Turning from Physical Deliverance to look at their Spiritual Salvation:

**III. (:10-14) THE REPENTANCE OF ISRAEL’S REGATHERED INHABITANTS AS THEY TRULY RECOGNIZE THEIR MESSIAH**

A. (:10) National Conversion of Israel = Accomplished by the Spirit of God

1. Divinely Targeted towards Israel

*“I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem,*

2. Divinely Initiated

*“the Spirit of grace and of supplication”*

3. Divinely Focused – Looking Upon their Rejected Messiah and Bitterly Mourning

*“so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn.”*

Firstborn or an only son = of highest value; most precious

B. (:11-14) Great Mourning Throughout the Land = Godly Repentance

1. (:11) Intensity of the Mourning

*“In that day there will be great mourning in Jerusalem, like the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the plain of Megiddo.”*

**David Guzik:** This refers to the mourning over King Josiah's death (2 Kings 23:29 and 2 Chronicles 35:20-25). He was such a godly king that the whole nation wept bitterly at his death.

2. (:12-14) Pervasiveness of the Mourning

a. General Introduction

*“The land will mourn, every family by itself;”*

b. House of David

*“the family of the house of David by itself and their wives by themselves;”*

c. House of Nathan

*“the family of the house of Nathan by itself and their wives by themselves;”*

d. House of Levi

*“the family of the house of Levi by itself and their wives by themselves;”*

e. Shimeites

*“the family of the Shimeites by itself and their wives by themselves;”*

f. Summary – all families

*“all the families that remain, every family by itself and their wives by themselves.”*

\* \* \* \* \*

**DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:**

- 1) What are our credentials for spiritual ministry?
- 2) Why do Israel’s enemies persist in their attacks and opposition in light of the clear testimony of God regarding their ultimate defeat?
- 3) Why are the wounds of Christ still visible in His resurrection body?
- 4) How is godly sorrow differentiated from the type of worldly sorrow that does not lead to genuine repentance?

\* \* \* \* \*

**QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:**

**MacArthur: Israel's Final Deliverance** (see web reference below for full notes)

### **Introduction:**

The Bible teaches there is coming a great day for the nation of Israel-- a day of tremendous spiritual salvation and political victory. That has been prophesied repeatedly in the Old and New Testaments, and is detailed for us in Zechariah 12. The tragic history of Israel will be reversed to culminate in a future of unprecedented joy.

## **I. THE SIEGE OF ISRAEL (vv. 1-3)**

### **A. The Burden for Israel (v. 1)**

#### **1. Its object**

This prophecy is directed toward Israel. It begins by describing a siege against the nation. A siege is a military attack by an army, usually in the form of a blockade, against a city. There will be a great attack by the Gentile nations against Israel in the future. It will be another world war-- the battle of the centuries, the greatest war of history. It is commonly referred to as the Battle of Armageddon. All the nations of the world will converge on Israel in an effort to destroy it and prevent the Messiah's return to establish His Kingdom.

#### **2. Its source**

Furthermore the burden is from God Himself. He is proclaiming in the first person through Zechariah what He will do. God sovereignly directs the course of events of history, whether through raising up a false shepherd or establishing His messianic Kingdom.

### **B. The Battle in Israel (vv. 2-3)**

#### **1. The symbolism explained**

Verses 2 and 3 are parallels. They begin with God making Jerusalem "a cup of trembling" and "a burdensome stone," respectively, and state that the future siege of Jerusalem will make an impact on "all the peoples."

##### **a) Intoxication**

"Cup of trembling" refers to a large basin everyone can drink from (Heb., saph) rather than an individual cup (Heb., kos). This verse pictures the nations as a person who drinks too much wine and finds himself staggering. The trembling is not associated with nervousness, but with intoxication.

When the nations converge on Israel and besiege Jerusalem, they will find themselves as ineffective as a drunkard trying to walk a straight line. By the time the nations make their way to Jerusalem, they will become figuratively drunk with their over inflated sense of power. Their overconfidence will so disorient them, they will be unable to claim their coveted prize, becoming easy prey for divine judgment. Revelation 17:6 is another example of a figurative use of drunkenness. It mentions that Satan's evil world system will become drunk "with the blood of the martyrs of Jesus."

##### **b) Injury**

Verse 3 presents a second metaphor: that of "a burdensome stone" (lit., "a stone of burden"). That refers to a heavy stone that was used in weightlifting contests. The analogy is simple. Like a heavy weight, Jerusalem will give a hernia to any nation that

tries to gain victory over it. The phrase "shall be cut in pieces" is best understood in context to mean they shall grievously injure themselves. It refers to a rupture or other internal injuries sustained from lifting something too heavy. The proud Gentile nations won't be able to subdue Israel.

## 2. The setting examined

The phrase "in that day" refers to the time during the Tribulation when the nations gather together to besiege Jerusalem. It's an eschatological term that is also referred to as "the day of the Lord." The attacking nations will find themselves reeling around in a drunken stupor of confusion and irreparably injured because they try to do something that's impossible--destroy the people of God.

## **II. THE SHIELDING OF ISRAEL (vv. 4-9)**

### A. The Panic of the Defiant (v. 4)

God is comforting His people, explaining how He will protect them in that day. Since horses were the symbol of strength in ancient times, verse 4 emphasizes God's superior power over Israel's enemies as He smites the horses with terror and confusion. Furthermore, He inflicts their riders with madness, putting them into a wild and helpless state of panic.

When the great armies of the world converge on Jerusalem, their weapons and soldiers will be rendered helpless. Although they will think victory is at hand as they attack the seemingly vanquished Jews, they will find themselves rushing to their own destruction. The phrase "I will open mine eyes upon the house of Judah" assures Israel that He will be concerned and actively involved in what's happening to His people. God will open His eyes of love and forgiveness toward Israel as He brings about their deliverance.

### B. The Preservation of the Defenseless (v. 5)

The people in Israel who lived outside the city of Jerusalem were the most vulnerable in war in ancient times, being without the protection of fortified city walls. But knowing that God had chosen Jerusalem to be the city of His special affection will give confidence to future denizens of the surrounding countryside. They will recognize that they have been preserved because God has chosen Jerusalem. His promises to Jerusalem, which is the heart of the nation, will assure them of their divine invincibility.

### C. The Paradox of the Defeated (v. 6)

The prophecy compares the Gentile armies to kindling or sheaves that the governors of Judah as firepots or torches that devour wood in flame. The relatively weak and outnumbered leaders of Israel are going to devour their enemies "round about on the right hand and on the left." That will allow Jerusalem to "be inhabited again in her own place." In the final battle nothing will be able to ultimately destroy the city of Jerusalem, which shall again be peacefully inhabited.

### D. The Priority of Deliverance (v. 7)

God will first deliver the defenseless country folk. That will show those in the well-defended capital, which is delivered last, that the battle was not won by their military might or strategizing.

#### E. The Power of David (v. 8)

The strong, represented by the house of David, shall be like God. More specifically they'll be like the angel of the Lord, who is Christ. They will be infused with the energy of the Messiah Himself, implying that He will be there leading His people to victory.

#### E. The Promise of Destruction (v. 9)

God is going to wipe out those who seek to attack His people. The Hebrew term translated "will seek" speaks of the concentration of the marksman, who focuses on his target without being distracted. Revelation 16 and 19 chronicle the wrath of God and the judgment of Christ as He comes out of heaven in glory and power to conquer His foes.

Zechariah 12:1-9 prophetically describes Israel's great deliverance and the destruction of the armies of the world gathered against her. That's a political victory that will cause Israel and her enemies to recognize God at work. Verse 10 now makes a transition into the spiritual transformation of Israel.

### **III. THE SORROW OF ISRAEL (vv. 10b-14)**

#### A. Its Cause

While Israel's spiritual eyes are focused on God and His deliverance, they will see God incarnate, their Lord and Savior Jesus Christ coming as their victor--the very One they once rejected. That realization will cause national mourning among every family and individual. The Hebrew word translated "mourn" means "to strike the breast in deep grief." That men will mourn apart from their wives indicates individual acts of repentance that permeate the entire nation. How ironic that after winning their greatest victory they will mourn. But that's the anguish of true repentance.

#### B. Its Comparison

The mourning and bitterness Israel will experience at that time is similar to that which took place when good king Josiah was mortally wounded at Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddo. (Although not mentioned in 2 Chronicles 35:20-24, the scriptural account of Josiah's defeat, the name Hadadrimmon was apparently preserved by tradition and later recorded by Zechariah.) Pharaoh Neco of Egypt killed Josiah in battle, and the nation of Judah mourned its great loss. So Zechariah prophesies that the mourning of Jerusalem and Israel in the day that Christ returns will be reminiscent of the mourning over the death of King Josiah.

#### C. Its Contrast

Commentator David Baron explains the singling out of the families of David, Nathan, Levi, and Shimei: "Through these ... aristocratic and privileged lines, the rulers and the priests, who, alas! in times past often set an evil example to the whole nation, will now be foremost in their self-contrition and mourning over the great national sin, their example for good will now also be followed by all the rest of the people" (The Vision & Prophecies of Zechariah [Grand Rapids: Kregel, 1972], p. 453).

Israel's deep mourning reminds me of Jesus' statement, "Blessed are they that mourn; for they shall be comforted" (Matt. 5:4). Israel's mourning of true repentance is coming, but she will be comforted.

#### **IV. THE SALVATION OF ISRAEL (v. 10a)**

##### **A. Stated**

God's pouring forth of His Spirit is the evidence of salvation because He never gives His Spirit to unbelievers (Rom. 8:9). The Holy Spirit is identified as the "Spirit of grace" (cf., Heb. 10:29) because He given out of grace, and the Spirit "of supplication" because God's grace toward the remnant will result in repentant prayer. Zechariah is saying that just as God pours out refreshing showers on thirsty and parched ground, so will He pour out the Spirit of grace and supplication on repentant, needy Israel.

##### **B. Supported**

Joel prophesied essentially the same thing when he said, "It shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, your young men shall see visions; and, also, upon the servants and upon the handmaids in those days will I pour out my Spirit" (Joel 2:28-29). That prophecy will be completely fulfilled at the Second Coming of Christ. Peter cited it at the birth of the church on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:15-21), but then the church was getting just a little taste of it. Joel's prophecy is similar to Ezekiel's saying that God would replace Israel's stony heart with a heart of flesh and would put His Spirit within them (Ezek. 36:26-27).

Israel's repentance happens only because "they shall look upon [Him] whom they have pierced." Because God is speaking in first person in verse 10 as the One who was pierced--whom we know to be Christ--we not only have an affirmation of the deity of Christ, but also an implication of the Trinity as the perspective shifts from the first person to the third person in the phrase "they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him." There God sees Himself as well as the incarnate Son of God as the object of Israel's attention.

Don't let anyone tell you that Jesus is less than God or that the Jewish people weren't responsible at least in part for His death. God tells Israel that it was Him in the Person of His Son whom they pierced. They may have used a Roman spear and a cross (John 19:34), but it was their plotting of their religious leaders that put Him there. Yet God in His great mercy can forgive anything--even the murder of His Messiah.

#### **Conclusion**

Zechariah 13:1 reiterates the promise of salvation for Israel: "In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness." God is going to wash away the sins of the nation. When they see Jesus and cry out, "My Lord and my God," they will realize it was the God of Israel whom they had pierced. And then God will turn on the fountain of spiritual cleansing and wash His people clean as He pours out His Spirit.

In any age, repentance like that--true, honest repentance--will lead to spiritual cleansing. The fountain is open today. The apostle Paul said, "Now is the day of salvation" (2 Cor. 6:2). While we as Christians look expectantly to the day of national mourning and blessing for Israel, meanwhile we can tell every Jew and Gentile that they don't need to wait until then, because the fountain of salvation is open right now. <http://www.biblebb.com/files/MAC/sg2169.htm>

## **Steven Cole: God the Mighty Savior**

### **Introduction:**

Zechariah 12-14 contains the second "burden" that the prophet received from God (see 9:1). This burden focuses on Israel, and specifically on Jerusalem (22 times in these chapters). The phrase "that day" occurs 17 times and "the nations" occurs 14 times, pointing to the period of time when God brings His purpose for Israel and the nations to culmination. As we saw last week, chapter 11 predicts Israel's rejection of Jesus, the Good Shepherd, and her subjection during the Tribulation to the worthless shepherd. This will plunge the nation into a time of severe testing, described by Jeremiah (30:5-7) as "the time of Jacob's distress." Daniel (12:1) calls it "a time of distress such as never occurred since there was a nation until that time."

This time of testing culminates in the Battle of Armageddon (Joel 3:9-16; Rev. 16:16-21; Zech. 12:1-9; 14:2-3), when God will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle. At the last minute, just before Israel is annihilated, God will supernaturally rout the enemy and deliver His people. Our text describes the physical deliverance of Israel in verses 1-9, and the spiritual deliverance of Israel in verses 10-14. The great military victory that God will achieve for His helpless people illustrates the great spiritual salvation that He also brings. Both sections emphasize the truth that God is mighty to save His people according to His purpose.

### **1. God is mighty to save His people physically (12:1-9).**

- A. God's supreme authority and power are seen in His sure word and in His role as creator and sustainer of the universe (12:1).
- B. God's mighty power to save is seen in the way that He will deliver Israel from all her enemies (12:2-9).

### **2. God is mighty to save His people spiritually (12:10-14).**

- A. God often prepares us for salvation through trials.
- B. God brings us to salvation through the Holy Spirit.
- C. God's salvation brings us to see the Savior accurately.
- D. God's salvation requires that we look to the Savior in faith.
- E. God's salvation produces genuine repentance in the hearts of His people.

### **Conclusion:**

Why did God give this remarkable prophecy to people who lived at least 2,500 years before it would take place? It was not so that they could draw up prophecy charts and read books about how soon these things would take place. He gave these prophecies

to comfort His people as they went through trials and faced threatening enemies with the solid truth that He is a mighty Savior, and that no one can touch His elect apart from His purpose.

**David Guzik:** The section begins with praise for God's creative power, reminding us that He is in control and completely able to accomplish what He predicts. God says that in a coming day Jerusalem will intoxicate and stupefy the surrounding peoples. If Jerusalem will be a cup of drunkenness to all her surrounding peoples, it will be a heavy stone - a burden - for all peoples, presenting a problem that cannot be solved (all who would heave it away will surely be cut in pieces). King David was renowned for his fighting ability, courage, and success. God promises a day when the weakest in Jerusalem will be as mighty as David - and the leaders can only be compared in might to God!

**Robert Morgan:** Studying the subject of prophecy in the Bible is like throwing firewood into our internal furnaces of hope and anticipation. The more we study God's plan for the future, the greater will be our excitement and sense of expectancy. And that's why we're devoting two or three weeks to the final chapters of the prophet Zechariah. . .

God is telling us all this not to frighten us, but to reassure us. He knows the end from the beginning. If He formed the heavens over our head and the earth under our feet and the spirit inside our bodies, He knows what's ahead on our calendars. He sees beyond the horizon of human history, and He is in control.

And Lord, haste the day when my faith shall be sight;  
The clouds be rolled back as a scroll.  
The trump shall resound and the Lord shall descend,  
Even so, it is well with my soul.

<http://www.donelson.org/pocket/pp-050529.html>

**Eugene Merrill:** Once YHWH has accomplished His work of judgment on the nations through Judah and Jerusalem and has secured His people against further danger from them, He will begin to work a work of grace among the redeemed. Whether or not there is a cause-and-effect relationship here—the act of judgment elicits a response of mournful repentance—is not clear. There can be no doubt, however, that the one follows the other, nor can there be any question as to the ultimate means whereby the contrition of this passage comes to pass. It is YHWH who pours out a spirit of grace and supplications. . .

In summary, v. 10 anticipates the day when the royal house of David and all Jerusalem will receive from YHWH a spirit of grace, enabling those people to seek His forgiveness for millennia of waywardness. Once this is granted, or simultaneous with it, they will look to YHWH, the one they have mortally wounded by their heartbreaking behavior, a look that produces in them a sense of great sorrow. The only sorrow comparable is that of the loss of a first-born son in death. Such sorrow is a sign of genuine repentance, as the following verses on into chapter 13 make clear.



**Mackay:** When Josiah died, all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for him. Jeremiah composed laments for Josiah, and to this day all the men and women singers commemorate Josiah in the laments. These became a tradition in Israel and are written in the Laments (2 Chr. 35:24-25). Josiah's death involved a bitter loss of hope as the last reforming king of Judah was taken from them, and the possibility of averting the course of events which ended in the exile of 586 B.C. was lost. So too the rejection of the good shepherd had fearful consequences (11:9, 11, 14) for the Jewish people.

TEXT: Zechariah 13:1-9

TITLE: NATIONAL CLEANSING FOR THE REMNANT OF ISRAEL

**BIG IDEA:**

**THE REJECTION OF THE GOOD SHEPHERD LEADS TO A REFINING PROCESS WHERE THE REMNANT OF ISRAEL IS EVENTUALLY CLEANSED AND RESTORED TO ITS LOYAL COVENANT RELATIONSHIP**

**INTRODUCTION:**

What does the future hold for the nation of Israel? Many Christians believe that God is finished dealing with Israel as a nation. They would attribute some type of allegorical interpretation to passages like this – making reference to God’s dealing today with His church. But the details revealed here must be given full weight and not spiritualized away. After Israel rejects her Messiah and the Good Shepherd has been pierced through with the sword, there will be a time of blindness and hardening upon the nation. But her setting aside will not be permanent. In the end times, the fountain of the Lord’s mercy and forgiveness and cleansing will be abundantly opened for the remnant of the nation of Israel. There will be a painful process of refining in the crucible of God’s judgment. But the end result will be restoration of the nation to its loyal covenant relationship.

**I. (:1) SUMMARY: CLEANSING AVAILABLE FOR ALL ISRAEL = THE FOUNTAIN OF GOD’S MERCY**

A. Anticipated Timeframe = Coming Day of the Lord

*“In that day”* = special emphasis in this whole section

B. Imagery of Abundant Cleansing

*“a fountain will be opened”*

- Fountain provided by the Lord; false fountains cannot cleanse
- Fountain available to all but the Lord must prepare the heart
  - remove spiritual blindness
  - initiate the response
- God’s mercy and grace in forgiving and cleansing is abundant; endless supply

C. Target Beneficiaries = All of Israel

*“for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem,”*

D. Need for Cleansing = Filthy Transgression

*“for sin and for impurity.”*

- No salvation apart from confessing sin and impurity; must call sin what it is
- No one excluded because they are too sinful; the fountain is sufficient
- Holy Spirit must convict of sin

## **II. (:2-3) RADICAL JUDGMENT OF ALL INIQUITY PURGES THE LAND**

### A. Anticipated Timeframe

*“It will come about in that day,’ declares the Lord of hosts”*

### B. Radical Purging of Idolatry

*“that I will cut off the names of the idols from the land, and they will no longer be remembered”*

### C. Radical Purging of False Prophets

*“and I will also remove the prophets and the unclean spirit from the land.”*

These were the two main areas of transgression for Israel = idolatry and false Prophecy

False doctrine always associated with unclean living

### D. Radical Support from the Parents of False Prophets

*“And if anyone still prophesies, then his father and mother who gave birth to him will say to him, ‘You shall not live, for you have spoken falsely in the name of the Lord’; and his father and mother who gave birth to him will pierce him through when he prophesies.”*

## **III. (:4-6) THE ASHAMED FALSE PROPHETS TRY TO HIDE THEIR IDENTITY**

### A. Anticipated Timeframe

*“Also it will come about in that day”*

### B. Despising Their Role as False Prophets

*“that the prophets will each be ashamed of his vision when he prophesies”*

### C. Denying Their Identity as False Prophets

#### 1. Disguising Their Appearance

*“and they will not put on a hairy robe in order to deceive”*

Cf. the mantle all the prophets wore around the neck = distinguishing Characteristic

#### 2. Denying Their Occupation

*“but he will say, ‘I am not a prophet; I am a tiller of the ground, for a man sold me as a slave in my youth”*

#### 3. Lying About Their Past Participation

*“And one will say to him, ‘What are these wounds between your arms?’ Then he will say, ‘Those with which I was wounded in the house of my*

*friends.’”*

#### **IV. (:7-9) PROVIDENTIAL REFINING PURIFIES A LOYAL REMNANT FOR THE GOOD SHEPHERD**

##### A. (:7) The Role of the Good Shepherd

###### 1. Relationship to God the Father

*“Awake, O sword, against My shepherd,  
And against the man, My Associate,  
Declares the Lord of hosts.”*

###### 2. Rejection of the Shepherd and its Effect on the Nation of Israel

*“Strike the Shepherd that the sheep may be scattered”*

###### 3. Rejection of the Nation of Israel for the Times of the Gentiles

*“And I will turn my hand against the little ones.”*

**Mackay:** *“little ones”* = They are the Lord’s *“little flock”* (Lk. 12:32).

The Lord is going to subject His people Israel to a time of rejection and blindness before the nation will be regathered, restored and cleansed.

##### B. (:8) The Remnant of Israel Protected from Destruction

*“It will come about in all the land,’ declares the Lord, ‘That two parts in it will be cut off and perish; but the third will be left in it.’”*

##### C. (:9s) The Refining of God’s People = a Painful but Necessary Process

*“And I will bring the third part through the fire,  
Refine them as silver is refined, and test them as gold is tested.”*

##### D. (:9b) The Reciprocal Loyalty Between God and His People

*“They will call on My name, and I will answer them;  
I will say, ‘They are My people,’ and they will say, ‘The Lord is my God.’”*

\*\*\*\*\*

#### **DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:**

- 1) How excited are we to tell others about the availability and sufficiency of God’s fountain of mercy and forgiveness and cleansing?
- 2) How serious is God about disciplining and refining His own people so that they are devoted to Him in purity and loyalty?
- 3) How was the sword deployed against God’s Good Shepherd?

4) What can we learn in this passage about making our boast in the Lord?

\* \* \* \* \*

### QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:

#### **Steven Cole: God's Fountain for Blessing**

God has graciously provided a fountain for sinners to be cleansed so that they may become His holy people.

1. We all need God's fountain to cleanse us from sin and impurity (13:1).
2. Cleansing from sin should lead to separation from sin (13:2-6).
3. God is the only one who can open a fountain for cleansing, and He has done so by killing His Shepherd (13:7a).
4. Those whom God cleanses from sin He purifies through the fires of affliction (13:7b-9).

Here are some questions to ask yourself to apply these verses:

- Have you come in faith to the fountain of Jesus Christ and His shed blood to cleanse your heart from sin and impurity?
- Are you regularly confessing and forsaking your sin in accordance with God's Word?
- Are you looking daily to Jesus, the Good Shepherd, who was willing to be put to death for your sins?
- Are you striving to grow in holiness?
- Are you growing to love and submit yourself to all of God's truth and growing to hate false teaching?
- Are you submitting to God as He refines you through trials, calling out to Him as your God, and knowing His assurance that you are His child?

**Thomas Constable:** The Restoration of Judah

#### **Israel's cleansing 13:1-6**

#### **The smiting of the Shepherd and the scattering of the sheep 13:7-9**

In that day God would open a fountain for the complete spiritual cleansing of the Israelites, both for their moral sins and for their ritual uncleanness (cf. Ezek. 47). The figure of a fountain pictures abundant cleansing that would continue indefinitely. This will be the fulfillment of God's promise to forgive the sins of His people Israel in the New Covenant (3:4, 9; Jer. 31:34; Ezek. 36:25; cf. Zech. 3:4, 9; Rom. 11:26). "The blood of Jesus . . . cleanses us from all sin" (1 John 1:7). The cleansing is available now, but God will cleanse multitudes of Israelites in the future, after they turn to their Messiah in faith (12:10-14). . .

In 11:17 it was the worthless shepherd whom the Lord would strike, but here it is the Good Shepherd. The one doing the striking is evidently God Himself since "strike" is masculine in the Hebrew text and agrees with "the LORD of hosts." If so, Zechariah presented Messiah's death as God's activity (cf. Isa. 53:10; Acts 2:23) as well as Israel's (12:10-14).

The striking (death) of the Shepherd would result in the scattering of the Shepherd's sheep (i.e., Israel, 11:4-14). The Lord Jesus quoted this part of the verse, claiming the role of the Shepherd, when he anticipated the scattering of His disciples following His death (cf. Matt. 26:31, 56; Mark 14:27, 50).

**David Guzik:** Idolatry and false prophecy were the two principle ways Israel was led astray from God. God not only provides a fountain to cleanse, but He also promises to cut off the source of uncleanness - in this case, idolatry and false prophecy. . .

"Those who posed as prophets will so fear exposure that they will deny ever having made such a claim" (**Baldwin**). They will put away the "uniform" of the prophets (a robe of coarse hair) and earn an honest living. . .

The man accused of being a false prophet insists the scars on his body are not the self-inflicted wounds often associated with false prophets, but merely the result of a brawl in his friend's house.

### **John MacArthur: The Cleansing of Israel**

I. CLEANSING FROM THE DEFILEMENT OF SIN (v. 1)

II. CLEANSING FROM THE DECEPTION OF SPURIOUS PROPHETS (vv. 2-6)

III. CLEANSING THROUGH THE DEATH OF THE SHEPHERD (v. 7a)

IV. CLEANSING FROM THE DISPERSION OF THE SHEEP (v. 7b)

V. CLEANSING FROM THE DEVASTATION OF SLAUGHTER (vv. 8-9a)

VI. CLEANSING THROUGH THE DECISION OF THE SOUL (v. 9b)

The cleansing of Israel is a sovereign act of God, but it occurs in concert with the will of the people of Israel. God does not sovereignly redeem His people apart from their faith in Him. The people that were "not my people" (Heb., *lo ammi*) will become "my people" (Heb., *ammi*), according to God's prophecy in Hosea 1:9-11. From the midst of their fiery ordeal the remnant of Israel will see Jesus Christ and they call upon Him as their Lord. Their decision will consummate their cleansing. Isaiah said, "The ransomed of the Lord shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads; they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away" (Isa. 35:10). What a blessed consummation!

Our God is a forgiving God who will forgive His people Israel even though they descended from those who killed His Son. Who is a pardoning God like that? Do you know of any other? Because we are sinners, we need a God who can take away our sin. The fountain is open for all who will come. There is no need to wait.

### **S Lewis Johnson: Israel's National Cleansing**

Reference is to false prophecy in the last days. Mutilation was a common practice for false prophets. Anticipation and excitement in light of the soon coming of the Lord. Israel is the outstanding phenomenon of our times. Israel must recognize that they have sinned against God. Not enough to believe in the coming Messianic Kingdom. There is coming a day when Israel will have a change of heart. In that one day the iniquity of

the land will be cleansed (3:9). Zechariah expands on that thought and gives us some more detail. National repentance (chap. 12) is to be followed by national cleansing – based on confession of having pierced the Lord of hosts. The fountain is something that is dug out (something that is pierced – direct reference to piercing of Chap. 12). That fountain was opened when Jesus died; but they will only experience the benefits of that fountain in the future. Israel has been blind to the facts right before their eyes; but God will remove the blindness of their eyes and the hardness of their hearts.

The false prophet is the second beast talked about in book of Revelation. These verses have their ultimate reference to the defeat of that false prophet. Prophets wore a mantle around their shoulders from animal hair. Today there are some outward signs that men put on as well to try to be identified as a prophet of the Lord. All of that anti God worship will pass out of the land.

The means for that righteous cleansing = the death of the Good Shepherd – spoken from God’s perspective. John 10 – It pleased the Lord to bruise Him. Reference to the deity of Christ – the God-man. Lord Jesus referred to this passage – the smiting of God’s shepherd and the scattering of all of the sheep.

In the last 2 verses the prophet speaks of the pathway to national cleansing. We are inclined to forget that sometimes many years may elapse between just a couple of verses. Between verses 7 and 8 lies the age in which we live right now. The process by which God will regain His people for Himself. There will be great tribulation in the future – bringing Israel back to faith in God. Only a third will turn. It is not true to say that all of Israel shall be saved – just all Israel when Jesus Christ returns. But on the way to that great event, the majority of the Jews shall fall to the judgment of God. If the time necessary for the refining be exceeded, the silver will be damaged. The silversmith knows the completion of the process when he can see his own image reflected in the silver as he intently looks at the crucible and watches the entire process.

How sad if there is a fountain and you still die unwashed -- something that bubbles up constantly with continual provision. It is approachable directly. You don’t have to go through any priest. It is for those who know they are sinners and unclean before God.

**F. Duane Lindsey:** The surviving remnant will have been purged and purified by the persecutions in the Tribulation, as well as by God’s judgment on living Israel at the Second Advent (cf. Ezek. 20:33-38; Matt. 25:1-30). They will **call on the name** of the Lord in faith (Zech. 12:10-13:1) and become a restored nation (Rom. 11:26-27). Their renewed covenant relationship with the Lord (Hosea 1-2; Jer. 32:38-41; Ezek. 37:23-28) will be reflected in God’s words, **They are My people** (cf. Zech. 8:8), and the people’s response, **The Lord is our** (lit. ‘my’) **God** (cf. Hosea 2:21-23).

TEXT: Zechariah 14:1-21

TITLE: KING OF THE HILL – TRIUMPHANT RETURN OF THE WARRIOR-KING

**BIG IDEA:**

**THE PROMISED MESSIAH WILL RETURN AS THE TRIUMPHANT WARRIOR-KING TO DEFEAT ISRAEL'S ENEMIES AND USHER IN THE MILLENNIAL KINGDOM**

**INTRODUCTION:**

Just as God fulfilled His detailed promises very literally regarding the first coming of the promised Messiah, the events surrounding His second coming and the Day of the Lord must also be taken at face value. Yes, there are figures of speech involved. But you cannot do justice to the text to spiritualize away the details that are revealed in this chapter or to try to substitute the church for the physical nation of Israel as the focal point of these promises. Just when things look the darkest for the nation of Israel and the city of Jerusalem, the Warrior-King will return in power and triumph to destroy all enemies and rescue His besieged remnant. The worship of the one true God will be exalted in the millennial kingdom with very severe judgments for those people who persist in the foolishness of rebellion.

*“And the Lord will be king over all the earth; in that day the Lord will be the only one, and His name the only one.”*

**I. (:1-5) THE LORD WILL HAVE HIS DAY AS THE ULTIMATE WARRIOR-KING – RESCUING HIS REMNANT**

A. (:1a) A Day is Coming for the Lord

*“Behold, a day is coming for the Lord”*

God-centered theology; not man-centered

**Constable:** The Lord announced through His prophet that a day was coming, for His benefit primarily, when the nations that had plundered Israel victoriously would divide their spoil among themselves in Jerusalem. This would be the Lords' day in which He would do His will, in contrast to man's day in which man conducts his affairs without divine interference.

B. (:1b-2a) A Day of Terrible Devastation for Israel -- Hopelessness

1. Jerusalem Plundered

*“when the spoil taken from you will be divided among you.”*

**Cole:** The first verses of chapter 14 go back to the last two verses of chapter 13, and to the battle mentioned in 12:2-9. The earlier description did not mention that Jerusalem would be overrun before the Lord would intervene, but that is the picture here (14:2-3). In 14:1, the enemies are leisurely dividing the spoil from Jerusalem in its streets,



thinking that they have defeated the Jews. Then Jesus will return, His feet will touch down on the very place from which He ascended, the Mount of Olives, it will be split in two, the surviving remnant will escape, and Jesus will rout His enemies.

**Mackay:** refers to the plunder that has been taken from the people of Jerusalem. This verse is a summary statement which anticipates what is spelled out more fully in following verse. The people will be overcome by their opponents and will have to watch helplessly as their own possessions are leisurely shared out by their conquerors before their very eyes. It is a picture of the seemingly hopeless situation of the people of God.

2. Judgment Initiated by the Lord

*“For I will gather all the nations against Jerusalem to battle,”*

3. Jerusalem Captured

*“and the city will be captured,  
the houses plundered,  
the women ravished  
and half of the city exiled,”*

C. (:2b) A Day of Deliverance for the Remnant

*“but the rest of the people will not be cut off from the city.”*

D. (:3) A Day of Conquering for the Ultimate Warrior-King

*“Then the Lord will go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fights on a day of battle.”*

He comes to rescue His remnant in the nick of time

E. (:4) A Day of Supernatural Upheaval Centered Around the Mount of Olives

*“In that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west by a very large valley, so that half of the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south.”*

F. (:5a) A Day of Desperate Escape for the Lord’s Remnant

*“You will flee by the valley of My mountains, for the valley of the mountains will reach to Azel; yes, you will flee just as you fled before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah.”*

**Dr. John C. Whitcomb:** In 760 B.C. Judah was hit by a gigantic earthquake, recorded in Amos 1:1. Josephus said this happened when Uzziah walked into the temple as a king-priest. 250 years later, Zechariah referred to that stupendous earthquake.

G. (:5b) A Day of Revelation of the Lord along with His Holy Ones

*“Then the Lord, my God, will come, and all the holy ones with Him!”*

**Constable:** The Israelites would flee for safety through this valley with mountains on either side (cf. 2 Sam. 15:16, 30; 2 Kings 25:4; Ezek. 11:22-25). The valley would reach as far as Azel (lit. "be joined to" or "be at the side of, near;" cf. Mic. 1:11), a site presently unknown but obviously some distance east of Jerusalem. They would flee as they did during the great earthquake that happened during King Uzziah's reign over Judah (cf. Amos 1:1).<sup>313</sup> Then the Lord would come with all His holy ones with Him, namely, Christians in heaven and angels (cf. Ps. 89:5, 7; Matt. 25:31; Col. 4:4; 1 Thess. 3:13; Jude 14; Rev. 19:11-16).

## **II. (:6-11) THAT DAY OF THE LORD WILL BE UNIQUE IN MANY RESPECTS**

### A. (:6-7) Unique Illumination -- Special Lighting and Darkening Effects

*"In that day there will be no light; the luminaries will dwindle. For it will be a unique day which is known to the Lord, neither day nor night, but it will come about that at evening time there will be light."*

### B. (:8) Unique Provision -- Continual Flow of Living Waters

*"And in that day living waters will flow out of Jerusalem, half of them toward the eastern sea and the other half toward the western sea; it will be in summer as well as in winter."*

**MacArthur:** The highest elevation of the temple mount in Jerusalem is more than 300 ft. lower than the Mt. of Olives, but the topographical alterations described in vv. 4, 10 will allow the spring to flow toward the Dead Sea (E) and the Mediterranean Sea (W). It will not dry up in summer, as most Palestinian streams do, but will flow all year, making the desert *"blossom like the crocus"* (Is 35:1).

**Constable:** The Israelites divided their year into two seasons instead of four: summer and winter (cf. Gen. 8:22; Ps. 74:17; Isa. 18:6). Probably the water will be literal, but it certainly has symbolic significance as well (cf. Ps. 46:4; 65:9; Isa. 8:6; Jer. 2:13; Ezek. 47:1-12; John 4:10-14; 7:38; Rev. 22:1-2).

### C. (:9) Unique God -- Enthronement of the Lord Alone Over all the Earth = Key Verse

*"And the Lord will be king over all the earth; in that day the Lord will be the only one, and His name the only one."*

### D. (:10) Unique Topography -- Topographical Changes Further Elevating Jerusalem

*"All the land will be changed into a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem but Jerusalem will rise and remain on its site from Benjamin's Gate as far as the place of the First Gate to the Corner Gate, and from the Tower of Hananel to the king's wine presses."*

**Mackay:** Geba was six miles north east of Jerusalem. Though it actually lay in the traditional territory of Benjamin, it was taken as the northernmost limit of Judah (1 Kgs.

15:22; 2 Kgs. 23:8). Rimmon was 35 miles south west of Jerusalem, and was on the southern border of Judah where the hill country merged into the Negev (Josh. 15:32; 19:7).

- E. (:11) Unique Security -- Security for those Living in Jerusalem  
*“People will live in it, and there will no longer be a curse, for Jerusalem will dwell in security.”*

### **III. (:12-15) THE LORD WILL STRIKE THE ATTACKERS OF ISRAEL WITH A DIVINE PLAGUE**

A. (:12a) Divine Plague Introduced

1. Divine in Origin  
*“Now this will be the plague with which the Lord will strike”*
2. Comprehensive in Scope  
*“all the peoples who have gone to war against Jerusalem”*

B. (:12b) Divine Plague Described

1. Upon their flesh  
*“their flesh will rot while they stand on their feet”*
2. Upon their eyes  
*“and their eyes will rot in their sockets”*
3. Upon their tongue  
*“and their tongue will rot in their mouth.”*

C. (:13) Divine Panic Attack – Confused so that they fight one another

*“It will come about in that day that a great panic from the Lord will fall on them; and they will seize one another’s hand, and the hand of one will be lifted against the hand of another.”*

D. (:14) Divine Victory

1. Unified Nation  
*“Judah also will fight at Jerusalem”*
2. Abundant Spoils  
*“and the wealth of all the surrounding nations will be gathered, gold and silver and garments in great abundance.”*

E. (:15) Divine Plague Spread to all the Animals

*“So also like this plague will be the plague on the horse, the mule, the camel, the donkey and all the cattle that will be in those camps.”*

#### **IV. (:16-19) THE GENTILE NATIONS IN THE MILLENNIAL KINGDOM WILL WORSHIP THE LORD IN JERUSALEM AT THE FEAST OF BOOTHS OR SUFFER THE CONSEQUENCES**

##### **A. (:16) Worship Requirement**

*“Then it will come about that any who are left of all the nations that went against Jerusalem will go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to celebrate the Feast of Booths.”*

##### **B. (:17-19) Divine Consequences**

###### **1. (:17) Impartial Judgment – Applies to all the nations**

*“And it will be that whichever of the families of the earth does not go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, there will be no rain on them.”*

###### **2. (:18) Example of Nation of Egypt**

*“If the family of Egypt does not go up or enter, then no rain will fall on them; it will be the plague with which the Lord smites the nations who do not go up to celebrate the Feast of Booths.”*

###### **3. (:19) Example Applied to All the Nations**

*“This will be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all the nations who do not go up to celebrate the Feast of Booths.”*

#### **(:20-21) CONCLUSION – TOTAL CONSECRATION TO THE LORD**

##### **A. Horses Consecrated to the Lord**

*“In that day there will be inscribed on the bells of the horses, ‘Holy to the Lord.’”*

**F. B. Meyer:** In the days which the prophet anticipated, the knowledge and love of God would be universally diffused. The method in which he expresses this is as significant as it is beautiful. Horses were forbidden under the Jewish law, because of the temptations they presented to pride and war; but they would become dedicated to God, and their furniture or trappings would be emblazoned with the same sacred words that shone of old from the high priest’s golden frontlet. So, the commonest utensils in the Lord’s house would become as sacred vessels.

##### **B. Common Cooking Utensils Consecrated to the Lord**

*“And the cooking pots in the Lord’s house will be like the bowls before the altar. Every cooking pot in Jerusalem and in Judah will be holy to the Lord of hosts; and all who sacrifice will come and take of them and boil in them.”*

**Guzik:** These were the cooking utensils used by worshippers to cook for their own the sacrificial meat intended for them from the peace offerings. The bowls before the altar were used to gather and sprinkle sacrificial blood on the altar. These show that animal sacrifice will continue in the millennium, but not as atonement for sin - which was

perfectly satisfied by the atoning work of Jesus. Sacrifice in the millennium will look back to the perfect work of Jesus.

C. No Unholy Heathens Allowed

*“And there will no longer be a Canaanite in the house of the Lord of hosts in that day.”*

**Constable:** The Canaanites throughout Israel's history represented people who were morally and spiritually unclean, reprehensible to Yahweh, and doomed to death (cf. Gen. 9:25; Isa. 35:8; Ezek. 43:7; 44:9; Rev. 21:27). Probably that is the significance of the name here, not just the ethnic Canaanites alone. There would be no more people like the Canaanites in the land because all would acknowledge Him as God and King.

\* \* \* \* \*

**DEVOTIONAL QUESTIONS:**

- 1) Why would the Lord send heathen nations against His people and then return personally to defeat those same nations and rescue His people?
- 2) What symbolism is involved in the special lighting effects and the outflow of the living waters?
- 3) When in history has Jerusalem been able to dwell in security?
- 4) What is the significance of the Feast of Booths?

\* \* \* \* \*

**QUOTES FOR REFLECTION:**

**MacArthur:** Chapter 14 is an amplification of 13:8,9. Prior to Israel's national conversion (cf. 12:10-13:1), the Jews will make a pact with a false messiah (cf. Da 9:27), known as the foolish shepherd (cf. 11:15-17) or Antichrist. In the middle of that 7-year covenant, Antichrist will break his treaty with Israel and require the worship of him alone (Da 9:24-27; Mt 24:15; 2Th 2:3,4). When Israel refuses, the armies of the world will gather to do battle, climaxing in a great siege of Jerusalem and the Battle of Armageddon (Rev 19). Following the Lord's victory at that battle (cf. Rev 19:11-16), will come the full restoration of Israel as anticipated in Hos 14:4-7; Joel 3:18-21; Am 9:13-15; Mic 4:1-3; Zep 3:14-20.

**Steven J. Cole: The Triumph of the Coming King**

**1. The return of Christ as King will mean the defeat of His enemies (14:1-15).**

- A. It will be a sudden defeat—Do not be deceived!
- B. It will be a powerful defeat—Do not despair!
- C. It will be a thorough defeat—Do not be wrongly aligned!

## **2. The return of Christ as King will mean the establishing of His righteous kingdom over all the earth (14:16-21, 8, 9,11).**

- A. A righteous reign means refreshment, peace, and joy for those who submit to Jesus Christ (14:8, 11, 16).
- B. A righteous reign means punishment on those who refuse to submit to Christ (14:17-19).
- C. A righteous reign means that every aspect of life is sacred for God's people (14:20-21).

The defeat of God's enemies at Armageddon will be accompanied by an awesome display of power. As we've seen, a powerful plague will rot off the flesh of His enemies while they are still standing. In addition, there will be frightening changes on the earth and in the heavens. The Mount of Olives will be split in half, creating a large valley (14:4). A new river will flow out of Jerusalem, half toward the Dead Sea and half toward the Mediterranean Sea. I understand this to be a literal river that also has a spiritual meaning (which I will explain in a moment). The land surrounding Jerusalem will be leveled into a broad plain, with Jerusalem elevated above it (14:10). While we cannot determine the exact locations of all these sites now, the specific names show that they should be taken literally.

There also will be cataclysmic changes in the heavens (14:6-7). (The NIV translation, "no cold or frost," is not based on the Hebrew text and should be rejected.) The sun, moon, and stars will be dimmed (Isa. 13:9-10; Joel 2:31; 3:15; Matt. 24:29; Rev. 6:12-14; 8:10-12; 16:8-10). It will be a kind of murky twilight, unlike any time before. The phrase "at evening time there will be light" probably refers to the end of that period of judgment when light from the heavenly bodies will be restored and the light of the glory of the Lord will illumine the earth. It will be an eerie, frightening time, demonstrating God's mighty power through His creation. . .

The Feast of Booths was the last of the feasts in the Jewish calendar year. It commemorated when Israel lived in temporary shelters after their deliverance from Egypt (Lev. 23:33-44). It was also a feast of ingathering, or harvest (Deut. 16:13-15). Thus was a joyous celebration (Lev. 23:40; Deut. 16:15) of God's salvation and provision for His people.

On the last day of this feast, the Jewish priests would leave the temple, go to the Pool of Siloam, draw water, and carry it back to the sanctuary. They would pour it out while the worshipers recited Isaiah 12:3, "You will joyously draw water from the springs of salvation." One day as they completed this ritual, a young man stepped forward and cried out loudly, "If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water'" (John 7:37-38). When that speaker, the Lord Jesus, reigns in holiness in your heart, His Holy Spirit, the living water, will fill you with refreshment, joy, and peace.

**MacArthur**: The Return and Reign of Jesus Christ – The Day of the Lord

## I. THE COMING OF THE DAY OF THE LORD (vv. 1-8)

- A. Declared (v. 1)
- B. Described (vv. 2-8)

## II. THE CORONATION OF THE LORD AS KING (vv. 9-11)

- A. The Primacy of the Potentate (v. 9)
- B. The Prominence of the Palatial City (v. 10)
- C. The Peace Among the People (v. 11)

The phrase "holiness unto the lord" was engraved on a gold plate attached to the high priest's turban. It signified that he was set him apart from every other man. He had a uniquely holy function. There was no one like the high priest. Zechariah prophesies that everything--even mundane and ordinary things like the bells that decorate horses and common pots and pans--will be as holy as the high priest and the altar bowls once were to Israel in days gone by. The Kingdom won't be like the world is today with its division between sacred and secular. Everything will be sacred.

The promise that there will no longer be "a Canaanite in the house of the Lord" is a euphemistic way of saying that the morally and spiritually unclean person will be excluded from entering the millennial Temple. Before Israel conquered the Promised Land, the vile Canaanites inhabited it. The term "Canaanite" became proverbial in Israel for a morally degenerate person.

In the Kingdom the whole world will be considered holy to the Lord. The Lord wants a holy people and He has called His church to be holy. In Ephesians 5 the apostle Paul tells believing husbands, "Love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it ... that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish" (vv. 25-27). God wants a holy church and a holy people. And in that day He's going to have it!

**S. Lewis Johnson:** The Consummation of the Plans of God for This Earth

The conclusion of the second great burden – chaps. 12-14.

### **3 Subjects: Battle for Jerusalem, Second Advent and Messianic Kingdom of God on Earth**

Some people find it very difficult to believe such details as are presented in Zech 14. Is it possible for us to believe something like this? Cf. the pronouncements of our politicians = they change from day to day when you examine the facts of history. Is it really true that these things are going to occur? We can count on God's faithfulness to His Word.

#### **I. The Battle for Jerusalem**

There is something in Jerusalem that the nations of the world desire – both materially and strategically. They hope to capture the booty of this important city. When they go to drink it, they will find it does more damage to them than they can handle. You cannot spiritualize this passage or it will be absolutely impossible to understand. Jer. 32:42 – in the same way that the Lord brought evil upon Israel, He will bring good upon

them as well – you cannot apply the second half to the church. Take Zech 14 in the plain, straightforward fashion in which it was written. We might find some figures of speech, but that does not justify allegorizing the entire passage. The message is very plain regarding these three primary subjects.

We must presuppose certain things from the previous chapters.

- Israel will be gathered into the land again in unbelief. Ezekiel 37 read in the context of Israel being reestablished in 1948. There is a twofold stage: first a return in unbelief; then ultimately they will come to personal faith in Jesus Christ. How was this scripture expounded before 1948)

- Must presuppose the rise of a world ruler who will succeed in uniting the nations

- This Antichrist will make a covenant with the Jews that will restore the ancient worship; the temple will be rebuilt

- In the midst of the tribulation period, the covenant with the Jews is broken by this ruler and he begins to persecute them

- Then there comes the Great Tribulation = the time of Jacob's trouble

- The kings of the earth struggle for power and there are campaigns involving the strategic locale of Jerusalem; the nations will unite against the city of God and against the Lamb of God; common antipathy to the Lord Jesus; the Lamb shall overcome them – the great wild beast loses! Surprising that man should attempt to overthrow God!

Proof of depravity.

The situation in Jerusalem appears utterly hopeless. Cf. Israelites penned up against the Red Sea by the Egyptians. *“Stand still and see the salvation of the Lord.”*

## **II. The Second Advent of the Lord Jesus** to provide ultimate victory

Acts 1 – As you saw Him ascend into heaven, so He will return. He comes personally and visibly and bodily to the Mount of Olives. After crossing the Red Sea, no one looked back and gave any credit to human effort; clearly seen to be a work of God. So it will be in this ultimate battle. No one will be taking the glory from God. Earthquake very plausible in that area given the great fissure researched by the geologists. All the believers will return with Him and stand on Mount of Olives with Christ. We will see with our own eyes the national conversion of Israel. When the Lord Himself becomes the light, there is no need for light from other luminaries.

## **III. The Messianic Kingdom**

The living waters are designed to be symbolic of the great redemption that have come through the Word of God. Beautiful picture of purification – purify the acrid waters of the Dead Sea.

The Lord shall be king over all the earth; the one greater than David; The famous petition *“Thy kingdom come”* will be fulfilled. All other gods are gone.

Annual celebration of the Feast of the Tabernacles = designed to represent their happiness over the gathering in of the harvest. Past: Celebrated God's care over Israel during the wilderness journey and bringing them into the promised land. Future: Also looked forward to the Messianic Kingdom promises. John 7:38 – spoke of the Holy Spirit – I am the one of whom this ceremony speaks!



Customary to light 4 candelabra – Jesus = light of the world;

All promises fulfilled in Messiah Himself.

The prophet's name means "*The Lord Remembers*" the promises He has made to Israel.

**Merrill:** The restoration and dominion cannot come until all the forces of evil that seek to subvert it are put down once and for all. Specifically, the redemption of Israel will be accomplished on the ruins of her own suffering and those of the malevolent powers of this world that, in the last day, will consolidate themselves against her and seek to interdict forever any possibility of her success. The nations of the whole earth will come against Jerusalem, and, having defeated her, will divide up their spoils of war in her very midst. . .

The order of events thus far appears to be as follows:

- (1) YHWH allows the nations to attack, despoil, and deport His people in Jerusalem (vv. 1-2);
- (2) He comes to their defense in a triumphant march that brings with it cosmic and terrestrial transformation (vv. 3-8).
- (3) He defeats the hostile nations and takes their treasures as booty (vv. 12-15).
- (4) Jerusalem is elevated and becomes the center of YHWH's universal reign (vv. 9-11).

Thus, vv. 12-15 logically and thematically follow vv. 3-8. Lamarche suggests that the present structure reflects a chiasm, one that alone is sufficient to account for the order of events. His approach (somewhat abbreviated here) is as follows:

- a) "A day is coming" (1-2a)
  - b) Jerusalem attacked and insecure (2a-b)
    - c) "in that day" (3-5)
      - d) "and it will come to pass in that day" (6)
        - e) "there will be a unique day" (7a)
          - d) "and it will come to pass in that day" (7b-8)
            - c) "in that day" (9-10a)
              - b) Jerusalem protected and secure (10b-11)
                - a) "it will come to pass in that day" (12-15)

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