

# Notes on Zechariah

2014 Edition

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## Introduction

### TITLE AND WRITER

The title of this book comes from its traditional writer, as is true of all the prophetic books of the Old Testament. The name "Zechariah" (lit. Yahweh remembers) was a common one among the Israelites, which identified at least 27 different individuals in the Old Testament, perhaps 30.<sup>1</sup> It was an appropriate name for the writer of this book, because it explains that Yahweh remembers His chosen people, and His promises, and will be faithful to them. This Zechariah was the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo (1:1, 7; cf. Ezra 5:1; 6:14; Neh. 12:4, 16).

Zechariah, like Jeremiah and Ezekiel, was both a prophet and a priest. He was obviously familiar with priestly things (cf. ch. 3; 6:9-15; 9:8, 15; 14:16, 20, 21). Since he was a young man (Heb. *na'ar*) when he began prophesying (2:4), he was probably born in Babylonian captivity and returned to Palestine in 536 B.C. with Zerubbabel and Joshua. He became a leading priest in the restoration community succeeding his grandfather (or ancestor), Iddo, who also returned from captivity in 536 B.C., as the leader of his priestly family (Neh. 12:4, 16). Zechariah's father, Berechiah (1:1, 7), evidently never became prominent.

The Lord Jesus referred to a Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, whom the Jews murdered between the temple and the altar (Matt. 23:35). This appears to be how the prophet's life ended.<sup>2</sup> This would make Zechariah one of the last righteous people the Jews killed in Old Testament history.

Some students of Scripture believe that the Zechariah to whom Jesus referred was the son of Jehoiada whom the Jews stoned in the temple courtyard (2 Chron. 24:20-22).<sup>3</sup> However, that man died hundreds of years earlier, before 800 B.C., and Jesus seems to have been summarizing all the righteous people the Jews had slain throughout Old Testament history chronologically. Zechariah ben Jehoiada was the last martyr in the last book of the Hebrew Bible, Chronicles, so Jesus may have been speaking canonically, the equivalent of "all the martyrs from Genesis to Revelation." Nevertheless that Zechariah was the son of Jehoiada, not Berechiah, and Jesus mentioned Berechiah as the father of the Zechariah He meant. "Son" sometimes means "ancestor," but there is no known Berechiah in the family line of the Zechariah of 2 Chronicles.

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<sup>1</sup>Robert Young, *Analytical Concordance to the Bible*, p. 1087. Cf. Ralph L. Smith, *Micah-Malachi*, p. 167.

<sup>2</sup>Gleason L. Archer Jr., *A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, p. 425.

<sup>3</sup>E.g., Eugene H. Merrill, *An Exegetical Commentary: Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, p. 95.

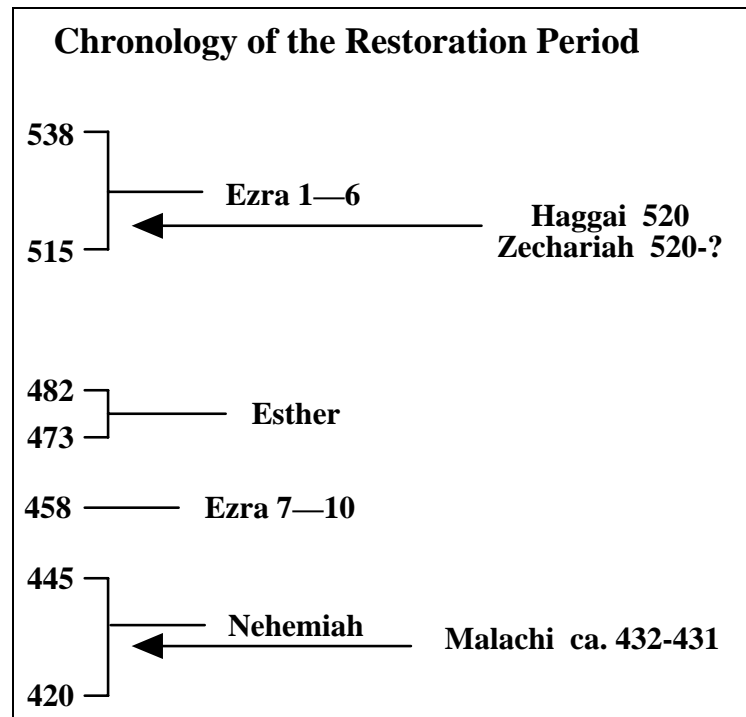
"According to some ancient versions Zechariah was a poet as well as a prophet. His name is in the titles of Pss 137, 145—50 in the LXX; in the titles of Ps 111, 145 in the Vulgate; and in the titles of Pss 125, 145—48 in the Syriac."<sup>4</sup>

### DATE

Zechariah's inspired preaching began in the eighth month of 520 B.C. (1:1). His eight night visions followed three months later in 520 B.C. (1:7), when he was a young man (2:4). He delivered the messages in chapters 7—8 in 518 B.C. (7:1). Nehemiah mentioned Zechariah as the head of a priestly family when Joiakim, who succeeded Joshua, was high priest (Neh. 12:12, 16). This may have been as late as during the reign of Artaxerxes I (465-424 B.C.).<sup>5</sup> Some scholars believe Nehemiah wrote chapters 9—14 during this later period of his life.<sup>6</sup> The exact length of his life and ministry is guesswork, however.

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Zechariah began ministering among the Jews who had returned from captivity in Babylon (i.e., the restoration community) two months after Haggai began preaching (1:1; 7:1; cf. Neh. 12:10-16; Hag. 1:1). In a sense, Zechariah's message supplements that of Haggai.<sup>7</sup>



<sup>4</sup>Smith, p. 168.

<sup>5</sup>See Joyce G. Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi: An Introduction and Commentary*, p. 60.

<sup>6</sup>E.g., Kenneth L. Barker, "Zechariah," in *Daniel-Minor Prophets*, vol. 7 of *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, p. 597; Merrill, p. 63; and Archer, p. 437.

<sup>7</sup>H. C. Leupold, *Exposition of Zechariah*, p. 3.

"Both prophets . . . contrast the past with the present and future, with Haggai stressing the rebuilt Temple as a sign and source of God's blessing and Zechariah emphasizing the role of repentance and renewal in achieving that end. The two prophets worked hand in glove, complementing each other's message."<sup>8</sup>

"There is a marked contrast between Haggai and his contemporary Zechariah. If Haggai was the builder, responsible for the solid structure of the new Temple, Zechariah was more like the artist, adding colourful windows with their symbolism, gaiety and light. To make sure that their symbolism is rightly understood an interpreting angel acts as guide, adding in some cases a message that goes far beyond what could be deduced from the visions."<sup>9</sup>

Haggai and Zechariah's ministries followed those of Ezekiel and Daniel, who ministered during the Captivity in Babylon.

<b>TABLE OF SOME POST-EXILIC EVENTS</b>		
Cyrus issued his edict allowing the Jews to return home.	538 B.C.	Ezra 1
About 50,000 Jews returned under Zerubbabel and Joshua's leadership.	536 B.C.	Ezra 2; Neh. 7
The altar was rebuilt and sacrifices resumed.	536 B.C.	
Work on the temple began but then halted.	536 B.C.	Ezra 3:1-4
The Jews became occupied with rebuilding their own homes.	536-522 B.C.	Hag. 1—2
Cyrus died, and his son, Cambyses II, succeeded him and ruled Persia.	530 B.C.; 530-522 B.C.	
Smerdis ruled Persia.	522-521 B.C.	
Darius I, the Great (Hystaspes), rescued Persia from civil war and ruled Persia.	521-486 B.C.	
Darius confirmed Cyrus' decree and encouraged the Jews to continue rebuilding the temple.	520 B.C.	Ezra 6:1-14
Haggai preached his first three sermons.	520 B.C., 6th and 7th months	Hag. 1:1, 15; 2:1
<b>Zechariah preached his first sermon.</b>	520 B.C., 8th month	Zech. 1:1
Haggai preached his fourth and fifth sermons.	520 B.C., 9th month	Hag. 2:10, 20

<sup>8</sup>Merrill, p. 62.

<sup>9</sup>Baldwin, p. 59.

<b>TABLE OF SOME POST-EXILIC EVENTS (CONT.)</b>		
<b>Zechariah received his eight night visions.</b>	520 B.C., 11th month	Zech. 1:7
<b>Joshua, the high priest, was crowned.</b>	520 B.C., 11th month	Zech. 6:9-15
<b>The delegation from Bethel arrived, and Zechariah preached again.</b>	518 B.C., 9th month	Zech. 7:1
The Jews completed the temple and dedicated it.	515 B.C., 12th month	Ezra 6:15
Xerxes I (Ahasuerus) reigned over Persia.	486-464 B.C.	Esth. 2:16
Artaxerxes I reigned over Persia.	464-424 B.C.	
About 5,000 Jews returned to Palestine under Ezra's leadership.	458 B.C.	Ezra 7:7
Artaxerxes I authorized Nehemiah to rebuild Jerusalem's walls.	445 B.C.	Neh. 2:1
Nehemiah led the third return to Palestine.	444 B.C.	Neh. 2:9
Malachi ministered.	ca. 432-431 B.C.	

### **PURPOSE AND THEMES**

Zechariah ministered to the restoration community to motivate those Jews to finish rebuilding the temple and to rededicate themselves to Yahweh with the prospect of His blessing. The central theme of the book is encouragement and hope.<sup>10</sup> The key to this hope is the coming of Messiah and his overthrow of ungodly forces and establishment of His kingdom on earth.

"The prophet is concerned to comfort his discouraged and pessimistic compatriots, who are in the process of rebuilding their Temple and restructuring their community but who view their efforts as making little difference in the present and offering no hope for the future."<sup>11</sup>

This prophet dealt with the future of Israel, and particularly its distant, eschatological future, to an extent that surpassed the other Old Testament prophets (cf. 12:1-3, 9; 14:1-5, 16-21). His revelations concerning a future day of the Lord are numerous.

"What former prophets revealed at length, Zechariah epitomizes for us in terse sentences or even clauses."<sup>12</sup>

<sup>10</sup>See Archer, pp. 423-24; Robert D. Bell, "The Theology of Zechariah," *Biblical Viewpoint* 24:2 (November 1990):55-61; and Robert B. Chisholm Jr., "A Theology of the Minor Prophets," in *A Biblical Theology of the Old Testament*, pp. 423-28.

<sup>11</sup>Merrill, p. 87.

<sup>12</sup>Charles L. Feinberg, *God Remembers: A Study of the Book of Zechariah*, p. 3.

This book also contains many messianic prophecies (cf. 3:8-9; 6:12-13; 9:9-10, 14; 11:12-13; 13:7; 14:4, 9, 16).

"Particularly prominent in the book is the Messianic element. With the exception of Isaiah, there is no other prophet whose book contains such a wealth and variety of this element, not only in proportion to the total amount of material offered, but also as a sum total of passages."<sup>13</sup>

"Few books of the OT are as difficult of interpretation as the Book of Zechariah; no other book is as Messianic."<sup>14</sup>

### CANONICITY AND UNITY

This book is the second to the last of the Minor Prophets in the second (Prophets) division of the Hebrew Bible. Neither Jews nor Christians seriously challenged its canonicity. One reason for this is the fact that the New Testament quotes and alludes to Zechariah so often, about 41 times.<sup>15</sup> The Gospel evangelists cited chapters 9—14 more frequently in their passion narratives than any other portion of the Old Testament. The Book of Revelation refers to the Book of Zechariah more frequently than to any other Old Testament book except Ezekiel. There are also few textual problems in the book; the text has come down to us well preserved.<sup>16</sup>

Until A.D. 1653, no one seriously questioned that Zechariah wrote the whole book. In that year, Joseph Mede suggested that Jeremiah may have written chapters 9—11, in view of Matthew 27:9. In succeeding years, other scholars proceeded to question the second part of the book (chs. 9—14), because of its differences in content and historical and chronological references as compared to the first part (chs. 1—8). Today almost all critical scholars regard this book as the product of two or three writers who wrote either before the exile or after Zechariah. Bruce Waltke, though conservative in most matters, dealt with this book by referring to "First Zechariah" and "Second Zechariah."<sup>17</sup> Similarly, critical scholars regard Isaiah as having two or three writers. Critics commonly divide Zechariah into chapters 1—8 and 9—14; or 1—8, 9—11, and 12—14. The presence of predictive prophecy in the last chapters of the book has encouraged those who deny the miraculous to relegate this part to a later time and writer(s).<sup>18</sup>

"We maintain it is impossible to confine or restrict the Spirit of God in His revelatory purposes. If He cares to predict an event three centuries off, He is sovereign; and if it pleases Him to foretell the plan of God a millennium before its materialization, He is just as sovereign. We emphasize this

<sup>13</sup>Leupold, p. 4.

<sup>14</sup>*The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, 1949 ed., s.v. "Zechariah, Book of," by George L. Robinson, 5:3136.

<sup>15</sup>E. Nestle and K. Aland, eds., *Novum Testamentum Graece*, pp. 670-71.

<sup>16</sup>See T. Jansma, "Inquiry into the Hebrew Text and the Ancient Versions of Zechariah ix-xiv," *Oudtestamentische Studiën* 7 (1950):1-142.

<sup>17</sup>Bruce K. Waltke, *An Old Testament Theology*, pp. 846-47.

<sup>18</sup>See Tremper Longman III and Raymond B. Dillard, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, pp. 487-90, for further discussion.

because we believe it to be the *sine qua non* of reverent, acceptable interpretation of Biblical prophecy."<sup>19</sup>

Competent conservative scholars have refuted the arguments of the radical critics adequately.<sup>20</sup>

"In the nature of the case it is not possible to prove conclusively who wrote chapters 9—14, but when every argument has been considered the fact remains that all fourteen chapters have been handed down to us as one book in every manuscript so far discovered. Even the tiny fragment of the Greek manuscript found at Qumran, which includes the end of chapter 8 and the beginning of chapter 9, shows no gap or spacing whatsoever to suggest a break between the two parts."<sup>21</sup>

### GENRE

Zechariah consists of a combination of poetry (chs. 9—10), exhortations (sermon material; 1:1-6), prophetic-apocalyptic visions (1:7—6:8), symbolic actions (6:9-15), and oracles (chs. 7—14), some of which concern eschatological salvation (chs. 9—14). Some of the oracles introduce or follow visions, and others do not. Along with Ezekiel, Daniel, and Revelation, Zechariah is one of the most apocalyptic books in the Bible.<sup>22</sup>

"In the present writer's judgment, his [Zechariah's] book is the most Messianic, the most truly apocalyptic and eschatological, of all the writings of the OT."<sup>23</sup>

"Apocalyptic literature is basically meant to encourage the people of God."<sup>24</sup>

"Only apocalyptic could express the utter transcendence involved in the radical transformations that would accompany the irruption of the kingdom of YHWH and the consequent shattering of all human and earthly systems in its wake."<sup>25</sup>

"The apocalyptic visions of Zechariah, though filled with symbolism, are not as complicated and bizarre as those of Ezekiel, but do require angelic interpreters, at least in chapters 1-6. He goes beyond Ezekiel and other early apocalyptists, however, in his declarations that what he envisions is

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<sup>19</sup>Feinberg, p. 10.

<sup>20</sup>See especially Baldwin, pp. 62-70; Leupold, pp. 6-13; Merrill F. Unger, *Unger's Bible Commentary: Zechariah*, pp. 13-14; R. K. Harrison, *Introduction to the Old Testament*, pp. 950-56; and Archer, pp. 425-30.

<sup>21</sup>Baldwin, pp. 69-70.

<sup>22</sup>For discussion of apocalyptic as a genre, see Ralph H. Alexander, "Hermeneutics of Old Testament Apocalyptic Literature" (Th.D. dissertation, Dallas Theological Seminary, 1968), p. 45; Elliott E. Johnson, "Apocalyptic Genre in Literary Interpretation," in *Essays in Honor of J. Dwight Pentecost*, p. 200; Merrill, pp. 69-74; and Baldwin, pp. 70-74.

<sup>23</sup>Robinson, 5:3136.

<sup>24</sup>Barker, p. 600.

<sup>25</sup>Merrill, p. 71.

as good as done, for it is only an earthly reflection of what has in fact come to pass in heaven."<sup>26</sup>

## **STRUCTURE**

"The 'shape' of a poem, the artistic arrangement of a book are instruments used by the Holy Spirit to convey His message."<sup>27</sup>

In the case of Zechariah, there are three large chiastic sections (1:7—6:15; 7:1—8:19; and chs. 9—14). These contain Zechariah's eight night visions and their accompanying oracles, his messages prompted by a question about fasting, and the two burdens (oracles) announcing the triumphant interventions of the Lord into history in the future. A brief section introduces the whole book (1:1-6).

Zechariah is the longest of the Minor Prophets. It contains 14 chapters with 211 verses, whereas Hosea, the second longest, has 14 chapters with 197 verses. Daniel, the shortest Major Prophet, contains 12 chapters with 357 verses.

## **OUTLINE**

- I. Introduction 1:1-6
- II. The eight night visions and four messages 1:7—6:8
  - A. The horseman among the myrtle trees 1:7-17
    1. The vision proper 1:7-15
    2. The oracle about God's jealousy for Israel 1:16-17
  - B. The four horns and the four smiths 1:18-21
  - C. The surveyor ch. 2
    1. The vision itself 2:1-5
    2. The oracle about enemy destruction and Israelite blessing 2:6-13
  - D. The cleansing and restoration of Joshua ch. 3
    1. The symbolic act 3:1-5
    2. The accompanying promises 3:6-10
  - E. The gold lampstand and the two olive trees ch. 4
    1. The vision 4:1-5
    2. Two oracles concerning Zerubbabel 4:6-10
    3. The interpretation of the vision 4:11-14
  - F. The flying scroll 5:1-4
  - G. The woman in the basket 5:5-11
  - H. The four chariots 6:1-8
- III. The symbolic crowning of Joshua 6:9-15

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<sup>26</sup>Ibid., p. 72.

<sup>27</sup>Baldwin, p. 74

- IV. Messages concerning hypocritical fasting chs. 7—8
  - A. The question from the delegation from Bethel 7:1-3
  - B. The Lord's rebuke 7:4-7
  - C. The command to repent 7:8-14
  - D. Israel's restoration to God's favor 8:1-17
  - E. Kingdom joy and Jewish favor 8:18-23
- V. Oracles about the Messiah and Israel's future chs. 9—14
  - A. The burden concerning the nations: the advent and rejection of Messiah chs. 9—11
    - 1. The coming of the true king ch. 9
    - 2. The restoration of the true people ch. 10
    - 3. The rejection of the true king ch. 11
  - B. The burden concerning Israel: the advent and acceptance of Messiah chs. 12—14
    - 1. The repentance of Judah ch. 12
    - 2. The restoration of Judah ch. 13
    - 3. The reign of Messiah ch. 14

### **MESSAGE**

This is the second post-exilic prophetic book. The historical background and audience are the same as those for Haggai. As Zechariah's contemporaries looked back, they saw former glory and recent shame. As they looked forward, they saw difficulty and felt discouragement. Zechariah ministered to inspire hope in the heart of this discouraged remnant of Israelites. That was his purpose.

Zechariah delivered his first message between Haggai's first and second messages, and his purpose was the same as Haggai's: to motivate the restoration community to finish rebuilding the temple. Zechariah followed this first message with eight visions to inspire hope in his hearers. Why should they rebuild the temple if there was no future? Zechariah then explained that the present sorrowful fasts that the people were celebrating would give way to future glorious feasts. The final two oracles also provided hope for the future by predicting the coming of Messiah and His glorious kingdom. Note the 8—4—2 structure of this book. This structure makes it easier to remember what is in it.

Many writers on Zechariah have called this book the apocalypse (Gr. for "revelation") of the Old Testament, because it unveils so much of Israel's future, particularly Messiah's place in her future. The whole book is a revelation of the pervasive power and the persistent purpose of Yahweh. Zechariah revealed things about the future of the Jews that gave his discouraged contemporaries hope.

People experiencing adversity frequently see only things that are close at hand. Zechariah provided hope from visions that he saw, and from voices that he heard, that encouraged his audience to lift their eyes to behold the larger plans and purposes of their God. The



permanent values of this book are, therefore, that it reveals the proper attitude and activity of God's people in all circumstances, as well as the pervasive power and the persistent purpose of Yahweh. To generalize, Haggai is more practical, and Zechariah is more theoretical.

The first three verses of the book stress the first of these values. The great appeal of the entire book appears in verse 3: "Return to Me that I may return to you, says the LORD of Hosts." Everything that follows illustrates and applies this promise.

As often is the case, the key to understanding a book of the Bible lies in the aspect of God that God stressed in revealing Himself to His people through its writer. The title "the LORD of Hosts" occurs for the first time in the Bible in 1 Samuel, when the people of Israel were concerned about armies, particularly the Philistine armies. This title rarely appears in the other historical books, but it is very common in the prophetic books. Zechariah used it more frequently than any other prophet: at least 35 times.

The word "hosts" in the Bible describes stars, angels, the people of Israel, and the armies of other nations. The title "the LORD of Hosts," then, describes Yahweh as the sovereign Lord and Master of the entire universe. As the prophets used it, they stressed Yahweh's sovereignty in action, not just in its abstract meaning. That is, they saw Yahweh as leading all armies—of stars, angels, and people. Zechariah lived when Israel had lost its army, had no military power, and had little political organization. Thus, by referring to Yahweh as "the LORD of Hosts," Zechariah was reminding his hearers of their God's abiding and active sovereignty.

The prophet referred to Yahweh as "the LORD of Hosts" three times in the opening paragraph of his book (vv. 1-3). The first reference (in v. 3) reminded the Israelites that their sovereign God had made His will known to His people; He had spoken (cf. 1:6). The Lord illustrated this truth in verse 4. The sovereign Lord had said, "Return to Me" (v. 3). This was the first part of Zechariah's prophetic burden. The second part was that Yahweh promised to return to His people (v. 3). He explained the work that He, as the Sovereign, would do to make this return possible. God Himself would provide the power necessary for the restoration of order, by coming to His people in His Son and by His Spirit.

Thus, Zechariah had a three-fold conviction. God reveals His will, He calls people back to Himself and provides the way for their coming, and He promises that if they will return to Him, He will return to them. God revealed His will to the returnees through the prophetic word. He promised to provide a way for people to return to Him through the "Branch," the second person of the Trinity (3:8). The revelation of this divine-human person occupies much of this book in proportion to its length. Second, God promised to return to people who return to Him through His Spirit, the third person of the Trinity. He would return "not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit," says the Lord (4:6).

The visions and oracles in Zechariah illustrate Yahweh's pervasive power. They draw attention to this.

In the first vision, God revealed the presence of His angel that was watching over His people in their depressed place. They knew about the depressed place, but the presence of the angel was news to them. The second vision revealed that forces would destroy the powers that opposed them. The people knew about these enemy powers, but they needed a reminder that God planned to destroy them. In the third vision, God revealed Jerusalem in its future large, secure condition. The people knew about Jerusalem; they were rebuilding it. But they were not sure about its future large and secure condition. The fourth vision revealed an adversary and an advocate. The people were aware of their adversary, but they were unaware of their divine advocate.

In the fifth vision, God revealed the people's responsibility to be lights in the world and their resource for doing so. The people knew their responsibility, but they did not fully appreciate that they had a supernatural resource that would enable them to fulfill their responsibility. The sixth vision revealed the purging of sin with divine revelation. The people were aware of the present sin, but they now learned that observing God's law would deal with it. The seventh vision illustrated ongoing evil and its final purging away. The people were aware of widespread evil, but they needed reminding that God would eventually remove it forever. The eighth vision revealed the need for divine control over present chaos and the provision of divine control. The people were very conscious of the need for divine control in their chaotic world, but they needed to remember that God would indeed exercise divine control in the world.

Each vision revealed an aspect of God's pervasive power to overcome what Zechariah's audience faced, and so gave them hope. Were they in a depressed place? God was watching over them. Were weapons being formed against them? He would break those weapons. Was the city they were rebuilding insecure? He would enlarge it even further and make it secure. Was their adversary going to be successful? God would be their Advocate. Was their responsibility heavy? He would prove to be a sufficient resource for them. Was sin present everywhere? He would give the power to overcome sin. Was evil ever going to end? He would end it. Would order ever come? He would bring it.

The two oracles in Zechariah 9—14 teach the same basic lesson: the pervasive power of "the LORD of Hosts." To summarize this briefly, the anointed King would be rejected initially, but He would return with the pervasive power of Yahweh.

The visions and oracles also illustrate the second major revelation of Zechariah: the persistent purpose of Israel's God.

The visions unfold God's dealings with Israel eschatologically, as well as contemporarily. While all the conditions of Israel described in the visions marked the restoration community, they will also mark the future of Israel. She was and would continue to be depressed among the nations. Enemies would attack her, but God would eventually defeat them. Jerusalem would be rebuilt and protected, and Israel would be cleansed to serve the Lord. Israel would fulfill her destiny as a light to the nations, and she would disseminate the knowledge of God in the world. Evil will be greatly constrained, and all of Israel's enemies will suffer defeat. All these predictions reveal the persistent purpose of God whereby He moves history toward His intended goal, despite human and Satanic opposition.

The oracles illustrate the same principle. Messiah's rejection would lead to His coronation. Some of Yahweh's purposes in salvation took place when Messiah came the first time, but the rest of His purposes in salvation will take place when He comes the second time.

What should be the attitude of God's people in view of these revelations? They should return to the Lord (1:3). They should believe these revelations, obey them, and work in view of them.

The people of God in Zechariah's day needed to complete the temple and reestablish right relations with Yahweh, even though they lived in a day of darkness and discouragement. They needed to abandon the fasts, that they had established to commemorate the destruction of Jerusalem, and prepare for feasts that would celebrate the glorious future that Yahweh promised and would provide.

Whereas Haggai called these people to be strong and to work, Zechariah revealed the secret of their strength. The Apostle Paul put it this way: "For momentary light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comprehension" (2 Cor. 4:17). That is the message of Zechariah in New Testament language.

The proof of vision is strength. What do we see as we look out over the church? We may see only the discouraging things that the restoration Jews saw as they viewed their situation. We need to be aware of the unseen things that God has said He is doing, and will do, in order to persevere in the work of building His church, that He has called us to do (cf. Matt. 16:18; 2 Cor. 2:14—5:21)

The secret of strength is vision. If God's people say they see these positive, encouraging things and that they believe them but do nothing, it is hard to believe them. The person who is conscious, through all the appalling defeat of the hour, of the immediate, pervasive presence and power of God, is the person who grabs ahold of the piece of desolation nearest to him or her, and works on it until it blossoms like a garden. The true demonstration of vision is taking ahold of the present situation and doing something about it, trusting in the unseen presence and promises of God. In our day, visionaries are a dime a dozen. It is the visionaries who follow through that are rare and successful.

The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews challenged his readers with words that are very appropriate in light of the message of Zechariah (Heb. 12:12-13). Some Christians seem to equate spirituality with pessimism. They consider others "visionary" who explore and deplore in great depth the difficulties of our days. We need to be realistic about our times, but we must also keep our eyes on the person of God and our ears open to His promises. We must also fall in line with His purposes and work in harmony with His principles of power. When we do this, we can rest assured that when the Rejected One is crowned, we will share in His triumph as we have shared in His travail.<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>28</sup>Adapted from G. Campbell Morgan, *Living Messages of the Books of the Bible*, 1:2:317-32.

## Exposition

### I. INTRODUCTION 1:1-6

That this pericope introduces the whole book seems clear, since verse 7 introduces the eight night visions that follow it (1:7—6:8). Its content is also foundational to all that follows.

"It strikes the keynote of the entire book, and is one of the strongest and most intensely spiritual calls to repentance to be found anywhere in the Old Testament."<sup>29</sup>

"The initial six verses of the first chapter of Zechariah constitute a synopsis of a sermon of the prophet. Its theme strikes the keynote of the entire book and forms an indispensable introduction to it. The truth it enunciates is one which runs throughout the revealed ways of God with man; namely, *the appropriation and enjoyment of God's promises of blessing must be prefaced by genuine repentance.*"<sup>30</sup>

". . . these introductory verses take the place of a call narrative [cf. Isa. 6; Jer. 1; Ezek. 1—2]."<sup>31</sup>

- 1:1           The writer identified the time when this first word from the Lord came to Zechariah, as well as his family origin. "The word of the Lord" is a technical term meaning the prophetic word of revelation. The eighth month of the second year of Darius was October-November of 520 B.C. Evidently Haggai began ministering two months earlier to the same audience and ended his prophetic ministry one month later (Hag. 1:1; 2:10, 20; cf. Ezra 5:1; 6:14). Since there was no human king of Israel then, the writer dated the prophecy in reference to Darius, a reminder that Israel was in "the times of the Gentiles" (Luke 21:24). "The times of the Gentiles" is the era of time when Gentiles control the destiny of Israel, namely, from the reign of Nebuchadnezzar until the future millennial reign of Christ. Zechariah's father was Berechiah, and his more prominent grandfather (or ancestor) was Iddo. Iddo was among the priests who returned from the Captivity with Zerubbabel and Joshua (Neh. 12:4, 16).
- 1:2-4        The Lord told Zechariah that He had been "very angry" with the Jews' forefathers. Therefore, the prophet was to preach repentance to his contemporaries as Yahweh's authoritative and faithful mouthpiece. If they turned back to the Lord (enabled by His grace), He would return to bless them (cf. Isa. 55:6-7; Jer. 3:12; Hos. 7:10; Joel 2:12-13; Amos 5:4, 6; Mal. 3:7). This is the clarion call that furnishes the background for this book's

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<sup>29</sup>George L. Robinson, *The Twelve Minor Prophets*, p. 150. Cf. Walter C. Kaiser Jr., *Toward an Old Testament Theology*, p. 253.

<sup>30</sup>Unger, p. 20.

<sup>31</sup>Longman and Dillard, p. 491.

message of hope.<sup>32</sup> And this was the reassurance that the restoration community needed after the discipline of the Exile. They were to "return to" Yahweh, to a personal relationship and allegiance to Him, not simply to a formal obedience to His law and covenant. Zechariah was to warn the Israelites not to be like their (pre-exilic) forefathers who refused to respond to the preaching of earlier (pre-exilic) prophets who urged them to repent (e.g., Isaiah, Jeremiah, et al.).

"It's one thing to ask God to bless us but quite another to be the kind of people He can bless!"<sup>33</sup>

1:5-6 Their ancestors had perished, and the former prophets who warned them were no longer alive to continue warning them. They would not have endless opportunities to repent. The punishments that the former prophets had warned the people about had overtaken them. The Lord had pursued and caught the evildoers like a hunter captures his prey. Then they acknowledged that the Lord had indeed done as He had warned them that He would do (cf. Deut. 28:15, 45; 2 Chron. 36:16). This would also be the experience of the contemporary Israelites if they, too, failed to heed Zechariah's exhortation (cf. 1 Cor. 10:11).

Even though the Israelites had failed God miserably in the past, this introductory message clarified that the Abrahamic Covenant was still in force. God promised to bless His people, but their enjoyment of that blessing in any given generation depended on their walking with Him in trust and obedience. "Repent" (Heb. *shub*) means "return." It presupposes a previous relationship with God from which His people had departed.

". . . Zechariah enumerates in his introductory address five great principles: (1) The condition of all God's blessings, verse 3. (2) The evil and peril of disobedience, verse 4. (3) The unchangeable character of God's Word, verse 6a. (4) God's governmental dealings with His people in accordance with their deeds, verse 6b ('according to our ways and according to our deeds'). (5) God's immutable purposes, verse 6b ('as Jehovah . . . determined . . . so did he with us')."<sup>34</sup>

## **II. THE EIGHT NIGHT VISIONS AND FOUR MESSAGES 1:7—6:8**

Zechariah received eight apocalyptic visions in one night (1:7). As the text shows, they concerned God's purpose for the future of Israel, particularly Jerusalem, the seat of the Davidic dynasty and the site of the temple, and Judah. They deal with issues of more immediate concern to the restoration community, though none of them was fulfilled in Zechariah's day. The broad theme of this section is the coming of the King. The purpose of these visions was to encourage the returnees to persevere in their work of rebuilding the temple.

<sup>32</sup>Unger, p. 20.

<sup>33</sup>Warren W. Wiersbe, "Zechariah," in *The Bible Exposition Commentary/Prophets*, p. 449.

<sup>34</sup>Feinberg, p. 21.

Certain features mark each of these eight visions: an introduction, an explanation of what the prophet saw, his request for clarification of its meaning, and the elucidation. Oracles accompany three of the visions, making their messages clearer (1:16-17; 2:6-13; 4:6-10). Some interpreters also connect the oracle in 6:9-15 to the vision in 6:1-8, but it seems to me, and others, that that oracle was separate from the preceding vision.

". . . The arrangement of the visions follows a chiasmic pattern [*abbcbbba*]. The first and last bear a strong resemblance to one another, the second and third, sixth and seventh are pairs, and the fourth and fifth, with their assurance of God-given authoritative leaders, form the climax. All eight visions are meant to be interpreted as one whole, for each contributes to the total picture of the role of Israel in the new era about to dawn."<sup>35</sup>

- A The horseman among the myrtle trees (1:7-17)
- B The four horns and the four smiths (1:18-21)
- C The surveyor (ch. 2)
- D The cleansing and restoration of Joshua (ch. 3)
- D' The gold lampstand and the two olive trees (ch. 4)
- C' The flying scroll (5:1-4)
- B' The woman in the basket (5:5-11)
- A' The four chariots (6:1-8)

### **A. THE HORSEMAN AMONG THE MYRTLE TREES 1:7-17**

This first vision emphasizes that God was lovingly jealous of His chosen people, and would restore them, even though they were troubled at present, and the nations that oppressed them were at ease (cf. Habakkuk). In the vision, an angelic patrol reported on the state of the whole earth. This vision presents hope for dispersed and downtrodden Israel.<sup>36</sup>

#### **1. The vision proper 1:7-15**

1:7 Zechariah received another revelation from the Lord three months after his previous one in Darius' second year, 520 B.C. The "second year of Darius" was 520 B.C., but the "eleventh month" would have been January-February. In our modern calendar this would have been 519 B.C.

"On the same day (24 Shebat), five months earlier, the rebuilding of the temple had been resumed (cf. Hag 1:14-15; see also 2:10, 18, 20). It was evidently a day in which God had special delight because of the obedience of his people."<sup>37</sup>

<sup>35</sup>Baldwin, p. 93.

<sup>36</sup>Unger, p. 25.

<sup>37</sup>Barker, p. 610.

"Also on that day two months previously Haggai had delivered a stern rebuke to the priests for their impurity and to the people for their delay in building the temple (Hag. 2:10-17). On that day, moreover, Haggai had received the far-reaching revelation (Hag. 2:20) of the destruction of Gentile world power previous to the establishment of millennial rule of the greater Zerubbabel-Messiah (Hag. 2:21-23)."<sup>38</sup>

1:8 The prophet saw a vision, and in his vision it was "night." He saw "a man" sitting "on a red (bay, reddish-brown) horse," among "myrtle trees in" a "ravine." He also saw "red, sorrel (Heb. *seruqim*, mixed color), and white horses behind" the man on the red horse. There were riders on these horses too (v. 11).

To Zechariah, who knew the Old Testament and who lived in a particular culture (Persian as well as Hebrew), the meaning of these symbols would have been more readily apparent than they are to the modern reader.

"Viewed from the perspective of a literary type, symbolism has a unique force, impressing itself on the mind and touching the emotions with greater facility and power than prosaic literary types."<sup>39</sup>

"Night" had connotations of gloom, obscurity, and foreboding. The present was such a period for the Israelites. The light of joy, clear sight, and security was yet to break for them. The "riders" evidently represent some of the Lord's angelic army (host) that serve as His scouts and report world conditions to Him (v. 10). "Horses" were instruments of war and prestigious possessions (10:3; 1 Kings 10:26), and the colors of these horses apparently represent their mission. The colors doubtless implied something to Zechariah, possibly bloodshed, a mixed mission (of judgment and blessing), and victory (cf. 6:2; Isa. 63:1-6; Rev. 6:4). If their color was very significant, the angel probably would have commented on it. Some scholars believed the colors of the horses have no significance.<sup>40</sup> But if so, why did Zechariah mention their different colors?

"Compare Rev. 6:4. The whole period of Gentile world power is characterized by the red horse, i.e. by the sword. Cp. also Dan. 9:26; Mt. 24:6-7."<sup>41</sup>

"Myrtle trees" were evergreens, used in the Feast of Tabernacles to picture future endless messianic blessings that would come to Israel (Neh. 8:15;

<sup>38</sup>Unger, p. 26.

<sup>39</sup>Thomas E. McComiskey, "Zechariah," in *The Minor Prophets*, p. 1012.

<sup>40</sup>E.g., Smith, p. 190.

<sup>41</sup>*The New Scofield Reference Bible*, p. 964.

Isa. 41:19; 55:13).<sup>42</sup> Here they represent Israel. "The ravine" may hint at Israel's present depressed position in Zechariah's day. One amillennialist took the myrtle trees as typifying "the Jewish Church."<sup>43</sup> Others take them as representing the church or God's people of all ages.

1:9 Zechariah asked the angel who was with him in his vision what the horsemen and the horses represented, and the angel said he would explain.

1:10 The angel, who looked like a "man" and who was standing in the grove of trees, said that the horsemen were Yahweh's representatives whom He had "sent to patrol the earth."

"Like the Persian monarchs who used messengers on swift steeds to keep them informed on all matters concerning their empire, so the Lord knew all about the countries of the earth, including the great Persian state."<sup>44</sup>

1:11 The horsemen then reported to the angel that they had "patrolled the earth," and had found it "peaceful and quiet."

"Darius boasted that in nineteen battles he had defeated nine rebel leaders and had subdued all his enemies. So the empire was again virtually quiet by 520 B.C."<sup>45</sup>

The description of the interpreting angel as "the angel of the LORD" can be understood in one of three ways. He was either the Lord Himself (i.e., the second person of the Trinity), or he could have been an angel sent from the Lord and responsible to the Lord, the Lord's special angel (cf. 3:1-2; Gen. 16:11, 13; 18:1-2, 13, 17, 22; 22:11-12, 15-18; 31:11, 13; Exod. 3:2, 4; Josh. 5:13; 6:2; Judg. 2:1-5; 6:11-12, 14; 13:3-23; Ezek. 43:6-7). The third interpretation is that "the angel of the Lord is a representation of Yahweh in a way that actualizes His immanence, but not in direct theophany."<sup>46</sup>

1:12 Then the angel of the Lord addressed sovereign Yahweh. Clearly they were separate persons. He asked the Lord "how long" He planned to remain bent on disciplining "Jerusalem and the cities of Judah" (i.e., the Israelites), which He had done in His indignation for the last "70 years" (i.e., the Captivity; cf. Jer. 25:11-12). That prophesied period was now over, but the Israelites were still oppressed and under foreign domination.

1:13 The Lord responded to the angel's question graciously and "with . . . comforting words." However, what He said Zechariah did not reveal,

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<sup>42</sup>Leupold, p. 33.

<sup>43</sup>Charles L. Feinberg, "Zechariah," in *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, p. 898.

<sup>44</sup>Baldwin, p. 95.

<sup>45</sup>Barker, p. 612.

<sup>46</sup>McComiskey, p. 1038.



either because he did not hear it or because he chose not to do so under divine inspiration.

- 1:14 The angel then instructed Zechariah to proclaim that Yahweh was very "jealous for Jerusalem and Zion." Jealousy when used to describe God's attitude refers to His careful concern, specifically intolerance of rivalry or unfaithfulness, for the well-being of others. Often in Scripture it alludes to God as a husband wanting to keep His wife, Israel or the church, true to Himself.<sup>47</sup> God's jealousy has none of the negative connotations that we associate with selfish human jealousy. The double names for Jerusalem may be a case of poetic parallelism, or they could suggest Jerusalem of the past and Zion of the future. Zechariah's people evidently thought that the stability that the Persian Empire currently enjoyed indicated that God had turned from them to look favorably on the nations.
- 1:15 The Lord continued to explain that He was "very angry with the" Gentile "nations," which were presently "at ease." He was angry because they had compounded the punishment of Israel that God had inflicted on the Chosen People—by prolonging it (cf. Gen. 12:3).

## **2. The oracle about God's jealousy for Israel 1:16-17**

This is the first of four oracles that appear within the visions that Zechariah saw. These were messages that the prophet was to deliver along with the revelation of the vision.

"The vision had lifted the veil which hides the unseen, spiritual world to show that God is in control and active in the earth, but it would not have been of specific comfort without the message in words given by the interpreting angel (verses 14b-17). This oracle is essential to elucidate the implications of the vision."<sup>48</sup>

- 1:16 Because the people of "Jerusalem" had experienced so much hostility, the Lord promised to "return" to them and show them "compassion." The sovereign Lord promised that the temple would be rebuilt there, and the city again would become a viable entity. The Jews finished the temple in 515 B.C., but the city walls were not complete until 444 B.C. (Neh. 7:4; 11:1). Measuring the city pictures its expanded restoration (cf. Jer. 31:38-40), the "measuring line" being a construction tool.<sup>49</sup>
- 1:17 God promised that His cities, the cities of Judah (v. 12), would "again overflow with" the benefits of "prosperity." He would "again comfort Zion" and "choose" (to bless) "Jerusalem" (cf. 1 Kings 8:44, 48; 2 Chron. 6:6, 34, 38).

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<sup>47</sup>See Baldwin, pp. 101-3.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., p. 98. She understood the oracle as beginning with verse 14.

<sup>49</sup>See Baruch Halpern, "The Ritual Background of Zechariah's Temple Song," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 40 (1978):178, n. 51.

"The distinctive features of comfort for Israel in this first vision are: (1) the presence of the Angel of Jehovah in the midst of degraded and depressed Israel; (2) His loving and yearning intercession for them; (3) the promises of future blessings. We may say, then, that the import of the vision is this: although Israel is not yet in her promised position, God is mindful of her, providing the means of His judgment on the persecuting nations, and reserving glory and prosperity for Israel in the benevolent and beneficent reign of the Messiah.

"The series of visions carry us through God's dealings with Israel from the time of their chastisement by God under the Gentile powers until they are restored to their land with their rebuilt city and temple under their Messiah King. The first vision gives the general theme of the whole series; the others add the details. . . . When the world was busy with its own affairs, God's eyes and the heart of the Messiah were upon the lowly estate of Israel and upon the temple in Jerusalem."<sup>50</sup>

### **B. THE FOUR HORNS AND THE FOUR SMITHS 1:18-21**

The second vision elaborates the concept of comfort promised in the first vision (vv. 13, 17). Here we learn how God will execute His anger against the nations that excessively oppressed His people. The nations will meet with retribution, and Israel will triumph over her foes.

- 1:18 Verse 18 begins chapter 2 in the Hebrew Bible. Zechariah then saw another scene in his vision. He observed "four" animal "horns." Presumably they were on living animals since they could feel terror (v. 21), although there is no mention of animals. Horns were a common figure for power in biblical and ancient Near Eastern iconography, specifically, of a Gentile king or world empire (e.g., Deut. 33:17; Ps. 18:2; 75:10; 89:17; Dan. 2:36-44; 7:3-7, 24; 8:20-21; Rev. 17:12).
- 1:19 In response to the prophet's request for an interpretation, the assisting angel explained that they represented the powers that had "scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem." Assyria took Israel into captivity, and Babylonia destroyed Jerusalem and took the Judahites captive. So perhaps the fact that there were four horns symbolizes that they represented nations from the four corners of the world, the totality of opposition.<sup>51</sup> Another view is that they stand for Babylonia, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome (cf. Dan. 2; 7).<sup>52</sup>
- 1:20 Then the Lord showed Zechariah "four" smiths (Heb. *harashim*, lit. workers in metal, "craftsmen"). Either the Lord Himself pointed them out, or the Lord did so through Zechariah's guiding angel.

<sup>50</sup>Feinberg, *God Remembers*, p. 38.

<sup>51</sup>Smith, p. 193.

<sup>52</sup>Charles H. Dyer, in *The Old Testament Explorer*, p. 823; and Feinberg, "Zechariah," p. 900.

1:21

Again in answer to the prophet's request for interpretation, the angel repeated that the horns represented the powers that had scattered the Israelites. Then he added that the four artisans had come "to terrify" these horns, and to overthrow them for attacking Israel and scattering the Israelites. These smiths evidently carried hammers with which they threatened to smash the horns. Probably the kingdoms of Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and Messiah are in view. Each of these kingdoms would destroy the preceding one, as Medo-Persia, the first one, had already defeated Babylonia (cf. Dan. 2:34-35, 44-45).

<b>The four smiths</b>		<b>The four horns</b>
Medo-Persia	destroyed	Babylonia
Greece	destroyed	Medo-Persia
Rome	destroyed	Greece
God's kingdom	will destroy	Rome

Another, less likely view, is that they describe kingdoms that had already destroyed Israel's enemies. A third possibility is that they will all appear in the future to take vengeance on Israel's end-times enemies. A fourth, less probable view, I think, is that the horns represent "the full extent of human cruelty, military might, political machinations, and lust for power . . . which destroyed pre-exilic Judah."<sup>53</sup> A fifth view is that they represent the four judgments of Ezekiel 14:21: sword, famine, wild beasts, and plague (cf. Rev. 6:1-8).<sup>54</sup> The Ezekiel prophecy describes the destruction of Jerusalem by the Babylonians in 586 B.C., but similar judgments are predicted for the Tribulation in Revelation 6—19.

"Several features are noteworthy in this vision: (1) God takes account of every one that lifts his hand against Israel; (2) He has complete knowledge of the dejected condition of His people and the extent of their injury; and (3) He has already provided the punishment for every foe of His chosen ones."<sup>55</sup>

"As little as horns can hold their own before powerful smiths, so little can God's enemies lastingly prevail over God's people."<sup>56</sup>

### **C. THE SURVEYOR CH. 2**

In the first vision (1:7-17), God promised comfort to Israel. In the second (1:18-21), He explained that He would bring this comfort by punishing the nations that had afflicted Israel. In this third vision (ch. 2), He guaranteed the future prosperity and expansion of

<sup>53</sup>McComiskey, p. 1048.

<sup>54</sup>*The New Scofield . . .*, p. 965.

<sup>55</sup>Feinberg, *God Remembers*, pp. 42-43.

<sup>56</sup>Leupold, p. 51.

Israel. Jerusalem has a divine protector. As will become clear, this future blessedness must extend beyond the restoration period to messianic times.<sup>57</sup> This third vision has a counterpart in vision six (5:1-4), in that they both deal with measuring, dimensions, and Jerusalem. This vision stresses the importance of Jerusalem, and vision six pertains to law within Jerusalem. This vision pictures Jerusalem in millennial glory.<sup>58</sup>

### **1. The vision itself 2:1-5**

- 2:1-2 In the next scene of his vision, Zechariah saw "a man" (i.e., an angel who looked like a man) "with a measuring line in his hand" (cf. 1:11; 6:12; Ezek. 40:2-3). When the prophet asked him where he was going, he replied that he was going "to measure" the dimensions of "Jerusalem." This surveying would have been preparation for restoring and rebuilding the city. The restoration of Jerusalem in progress in Zechariah's day was only a foreview of a much grander future restoration to be described (cf. Jer. 32:15; Ezek. 40:3, 5; Rev. 11:1).
- 2:3-4 "Another angel," possibly the angel of the Lord (1:11-12), came forward to meet Zechariah's guiding angel as he was going out toward the "man" with the measuring line. He instructed him to tell "that young man," Zechariah, that Jerusalem would expand beyond its walls because so many people and cattle would live in it (cf. Ezek. 38:11). Another interpretation is that the young man was the angel with the measuring line.<sup>59</sup> But it seems more probable that the other angel gave this revelation to Zechariah directly. During the restoration period, the Jews built walls around the city to make it secure, yet few people wanted to live in it (cf. Neh. 11:1-2; 7:4). This prophecy must have a future fulfillment, though it doubtless encouraged Zechariah's contemporaries to rebuild the city in their day.<sup>60</sup>
- 2:5 The Lord promised to be Jerusalem's defense ("a wall of fire")—instead of a physical wall—and to "be the glory in her," in contrast to any human glory. Such a promise must have been a great encouragement to the returnees from captivity. *Yahweh Himself* (emphatic in the Hebrew text) would provide security by His protection and presence (cf. 1:16; Ps. 24:7-10). Though God did protect the returnees, His promise has not yet found fulfillment. The "wall of fire" that Yahweh would be, recalls the pillar of cloud and fire by which God revealed His protecting presence at various times throughout her history (Exod. 13:21-22; 14:19-20; 40:34; Isa. 4:5-6).

"This anticipates the Lord's personal presence through the Messiah in his kingdom on earth (cf. 2:11-12; 14:9; Isa 60:19; Ezek 43:1-5; 48:35). So then the literal kingdom will be very spiritual."<sup>61</sup>

<sup>57</sup>See T. T. Perowne, *The Books of Haggai and Zechariah*, p. 74.

<sup>58</sup>Unger, p. 43.

<sup>59</sup>E.g., Leupold, p. 55.

<sup>60</sup>See Merrill, pp. 116-18, for defense of this "both in Zechariah's day and in the future" interpretation.

<sup>61</sup>Barker, p. 617. For a defense of the spirituality of the physical, earthly kingdom of Messiah, see Feinberg, *God Remembers*, p. 45.

"At a time when others such as Nehemiah were interested in rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem and excluding from the community those who had divorced their wives and married young foreign girls (Ezra 10:2-3), Zechariah sees a vision of the future Jerusalem as a broad, spreading metropolis with the wall of God's presence around her and the glory of his presence within her."<sup>62</sup>

Both the second and third visions guarantee the future safety of Jerusalem. Since Jerusalem has not been safe for millennia, it seems reasonable to expect a fulfillment in messianic times.

## **2. The oracle about enemy destruction and Israelite blessing 2:6-13**

This message brings out the practical implications of the two visions just related. It is a section of poetry in the middle of the prose visions. The prophet now spoke for the Lord, first to the Jews still in exile (vv. 6-9), and then to the Jews in Jerusalem (vv. 10-13). The first part deals with the overthrow of enemies and so connects with the second vision. The second part declares Yahweh's sovereignty in Zion and reinforces the third vision.<sup>63</sup>

"The future greatness of Zion is too important a subject to be quickly dismissed. Various aspects of it should yet be unfolded; therefore verses 6-13 follow, which are very much in place at this point, and for just this reason."<sup>64</sup>

### **The destruction of oppressing enemies 2:6-9**

2:6-7        The Lord called on His people to "flee from the land of the north" (cf. Jer. 3:18; 16:15; 23:8; 31:8) where He had scattered them "as the four winds" (cf. Isa. 43:5-6; 49:12). Most of the Israelite exiles had gone into captivity in Assyria, and most of the Judean exiles went into captivity in Babylon. However, there were many other Israelites who had been taken or had fled to Egypt (Jer. 43:7), Moab, Ammon, and Edom (Jer. 40:11-12), Persia, and many other nations. These were Jews who later constituted the Diaspora, those who did not return to Palestine but remained dispersed throughout the ancient world. The Lord called these people to "escape" from "Babylon" among whose "daughter" nations they lived. This was a call for the scattered Jews to return home in Zechariah's day and help rebuild their nation. But it is also, because of the context and lack of fulfillment, a prophetic call to those living in the end times to abandon the Babylon of their day (cf. Rev. 18:4-8).

"Since Babylon in the post-exilic period epitomized all the suffering and indignity inflicted on Judah at the fall of

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<sup>62</sup>Smith, p. 197.

<sup>63</sup>Baldwin, pp. 107-8.

<sup>64</sup>Leupold, p. 57.

Jerusalem and after, the name could stand for all lands of exile, and was not confined to the geographical area known as Babylon."<sup>65</sup>

2:8-9 They were to flee because the Lord purposed to send His representative to plunder "the nations" for afflicting (plundering) His people, "the apple" (lit. gate, the pupil, which is the most sensitive part) "of His eye" (cf. Deut. 32:10; Ps. 17:8; Matt. 25:34-45; Acts 9:1, 4-5). This would result in His "glory."

"This statement ["after glory"] anticipates the New Testament revelation of the Father sending the Son to glorify Him, both in His first advent (John 17:4, cf. Isa. 61:1, 2; Luke 4:17-19) and in His second advent (Isa. 61:1, 2)."<sup>66</sup>

"This will be fulfilled in the judgment of the Gentiles at Messiah's Second Advent (Matt. 25:31-46)."<sup>67</sup>

The person whom the Lord would send as His representative ("Me") could not be Zechariah, in view of what the following verses say He would do. He must be Messiah, the only one with sufficient power and authority to fulfill what God predicted here. He would simply "wave" His "hand" over these nations in a menacing gesture, and they would become "plunder" for the Israelites whom they had enslaved (cf. Esth. 7:10; Isa. 11:15; 14:2; 19:16; Gal. 6:7-8). "Then" God's people would "know" that Yahweh of armies had "sent" this One (cf. Isa. 61:3; John 17:4). This would be the sovereign Lord's doing, so the Jews should rejoice, return to the land, and prepare.

### **Yahweh's ultimate blessing of Israel 2:10-13**

2:10-11 The Israelites in Jerusalem and elsewhere were to rejoice because the Lord promised to intervene for them and to dwell among them. His return to Jerusalem would prompt the nations to come there and acknowledge Him as sovereign (cf. Ps. 47:9; 96:1; 97:1; 98:4). "Many nations" will turn "to the LORD in that day" (the eschatological day of the Lord, cf. ch. 14; Isa. 2:12-21; 24—27; Joel 1:15; 2:28—3:21; Amos 5:18-20; 9:11-15; Zeph.) and become part of his family of believers (8:20-23; Gen. 12:3; 18:18; 22:18; Isa. 2:2-4; 60:3). They will resemble Him, as well as acknowledge Him (cf. Is. 56:6-8; 60:3, 21). He "will dwell" in the "midst" of His people (cf. 8:3, 20-23; John 1:14; 2 Cor. 6:16; Rev. 21:3), and they will "know" that Yahweh had "sent" this One. This is clearly a reference to Messiah's second advent, not His first advent.

<sup>65</sup>Baldwin, p. 109.

<sup>66</sup>Unger, p. 49.

<sup>67</sup>F. Duane Lindsey, "Zechariah," in *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old Testament*, p. 1553.

"In fulfillment of the great OT covenants, particularly the Abrahamic covenant, this section anticipates full kingdom blessing in the messianic era. . . . This language is ultimately messianic—indirectly or by extension from God in general to the Messiah in particular."<sup>68</sup>

2:12-13 The Lord will at that time "possess Judah" as His inheritance in the "holy land," and will "choose Jerusalem" for special blessing (cf. Isa. 19:24-25). This is the only occurrence of the term "holy land" in the Bible. Canaan would become holy (sacred, not common or ordinary) because it would be the site of the throne and habitation of God, who is holy, dwelling among His covenant people. "All" the people of the earth should be still (silent), because Yahweh will arouse Himself "from His heavenly habitation" and take action on the earth.

The typical amillennial interpretation, represented by Leupold, sees "'Judah' and 'Jerusalem' as a designation of His people wherever they may be found. So also 'the holy land' is not specifically Palestine but every place where God manifests Himself."<sup>69</sup> McComiskey, another amillennialist, viewed the promise of land in both a territorial (a world conquered by Christ; Rom. 4:13) and a spiritual sense (the rest that those in Christ enjoy; Heb. 3—4).<sup>70</sup>

"The first vision introduced the judgment (or curse) and blessing motif (1:15-17). That motif is then developed in the second and third visions in an alternating cycle: judgment for the nations (1:18-21) but blessing and glory for Israel (2:1-5); judgment for the nations (2:6-9) but blessing for Israel—and the nations (2:10-13)."<sup>71</sup>

#### **D. THE CLEANSING AND RESTORATION OF JOSHUA CH. 3**

The Lord explained that Joshua and his friends were men who had prophetic significance (v. 8). As will become clear, Joshua, Israel's high priest, represents Israel in this vision, specifically Israel in her divinely appointed role as a kingdom of priests (Exod. 19:6). Similarly, Israel's high priest represented the nation each year on the Day of Atonement. In this vision and the next, Israel's standing before God and her resources are in view. This vision presents Israel's restoration as a high priestly nation.

"As the first three visions dealt principally with the material side of Israel's tribulation and restoration, the remaining five dealt pre-eminently with her moral and spiritual influence."<sup>72</sup>

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<sup>68</sup>Barker, p. 619.

<sup>69</sup>Leupold, p. 61.

<sup>70</sup>McComiskey, pp. 1044 and 1096.

<sup>71</sup>Barker, p. 621.

<sup>72</sup>G. Campbell Morgan, *An Exposition of the Whole Bible*, p. 399.

This vision has two parts: a symbolic act (vv. 1-5) and accompanying promises (vv. 6-10).

### **1. The symbolic act 3:1-5**

3:1 Zechariah's guiding angel next showed the prophet, in his vision, "Joshua" (lit. Yahweh saves), Israel's current "high priest" (6:11; Ezra 5:2; Neh. 7:7; Hag. 1:1), "standing before the angel of the LORD" (1:11-12). "The accuser" (lit. "the Satan," Heb. *hasatan*) was standing at Joshua's "right hand," prepared "to accuse him" before the angel of the Lord (cf. Job 1:6-12; 2:1-7; Rev. 12:10). The writer made a play on the Hebrew word in its noun and verb forms here translated "Satan" and "accuse."<sup>73</sup> Standing *at the right hand* was the traditional place where an accuser stood in Jewish life (cf. 1 Chron. 21:1; Ps. 109:6).

"The term *satan*, when used without the definite article, usually refers to a human adversary. The one exception is in Num. 22:22, 32, where the angel of the Lord assumes the role of Balaam's adversary. In 1 Chron. 21:1, the term probably refers to a nearby nation, though some prefer to take the word in this context as a proper name, 'Satan.' When the term appears with the article, as it does here and in Job 1—2, it is a title for a being who seems to serve as a prosecuting attorney in the heavenly court."<sup>74</sup>

". . . sin exposes the sinner to satanic attack not only in the case of unbelievers (Matt. 12:43-45), but believers as well (I Cor. 5:5; I John 5:16)."<sup>75</sup>

Evidently the scene that Zechariah saw took place in the temple.

"The first three visions brought the prophet from a valley outside the city to a vantage-point from which the dimensions of the original Jerusalem could be seen. In the fourth and fifth visions he is in the Temple courts, where the high priest officiated and had access to God's presence."<sup>76</sup>

"Joshua is standing in a tribunal, where he is being accused of unfitness for the priestly ministry."<sup>77</sup>

Another view is that he was not on trial but simply ministering to the Lord.

<sup>73</sup>See Sydney H. T. Page, "Satan: God's Servant," *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 50:3 (September 2007):449-65.

<sup>74</sup>Robert B. Chisholm Jr., *Handbook on the Prophets*, p. 460.

<sup>75</sup>Unger, p. 57.

<sup>76</sup>Baldwin, pp. 112-13.

<sup>77</sup>Merrill, p. 131.



3:2 "The LORD" then spoke to the accuser, citing His own authority as "the LORD (Yahweh) who had chosen Jerusalem." This is one indication that Joshua represented Israel, since God linked Joshua with Jerusalem. Joshua was secure from Satan's accusations because of the Lord's sovereign choice of Jerusalem (cf. 12:2; Rom. 8:33). "The Lord" may be distinct from "the angel of the LORD," but they seem to be synonymous. Most conservative commentators equate them, and believe "the angel of the LORD" is the second person of the Trinity. In other contexts, adversaries argue their cases before God, not before His representatives (e.g., Job 1—2). The Lord rebuked Satan twice, the repetition adding force to the initial rebuke (cf. Jude 9).

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 emerged 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).

3:3 Joshua stood "before the angel" of the Lord, dressed in excrement bespattered garments (cf. Isa. 4:4). He was ministering to the Lord in this extremely filthy—and ceremonially unclean—condition. This represented the unclean state in which Israel stood in Zechariah's day, as she ministered before Him like a kingdom of priests in the world (cf. Exod. 19:6).

3:4 The Lord then instructed others "who were standing before" Him, probably angelic servants, to "remove" Joshua's "filthy garments" (cf. Exod. 28:8-9, 41; Lev. 8:7-9; Num. 20:28). The Lord explained that these garments symbolized the high priest's (Israel's) iniquities, which He had forgiven. He promised to remove His representative's filthy robes and replace them with "festal," stately "robes," the apparel of royalty and wealth—symbolic of God's righteousness (cf. Isa. 3:22). Thus God would restore Israel to her original calling as a priestly nation (cf. Exod. 19:6; Isa. 61:6).

"Theologically, however, there also seems to be a picture here of the negative aspect of what God does when he saves a person. Negatively, he takes away sin. Positively, he adds or imputes to the sinner saved by grace his own divine righteousness (cf. v. 5)."<sup>78</sup>

Amillennialists contend that this is all that the vision means; it contains no special promises for Israel.<sup>79</sup>

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<sup>78</sup>Barker, p. 624.

<sup>79</sup>See Leupold, pp. 74, 77.

3:5 Zechariah chimed in, suggesting that the angelic dressers also put "a clean turban on" Joshua's "head," which they did along with his other new garments. A plaque on the front of the high priest's turban read "Holy to the Lord" (Exod. 28:36; 39:30). This is what Israel will be in the future, a holy nation of holy priests. The Lord observed all that was happening, sovereignly approving and directing all the changes in Joshua's condition.

"What is unique here is the command of a mere man to bring about a purpose of God."<sup>80</sup>

Similarly, prayer plays a part in the execution of God's will.

## **2. The accompanying promises 3:6-10**

3:6-7 Then "the angel of the LORD" admonished Joshua. He promised, in the name of sovereign Yahweh, that if Joshua obeyed the Lord and served Him, Joshua would "govern" the temple, "have charge of" the temple "courts," and enjoy "free access" into the Lord's presence. He could come into the Lord's presence like the angels who stood before Him. Joshua's commission pertained to a priestly function within the framework of a covenant relationship.<sup>81</sup> As always, faithful, obedient service leads to further opportunities for service.

The Lord specified two conditions and promised three results. The first condition was Israel's practical righteousness; she had to walk in His ways faithfully with heart and hand (cf. Deut. 10:12-22; 28:9). Second, she had to carry out her priestly duties faithfully. If Israel did these things, she would govern God's house (people and temple; cf. Deut. 17:8-13; Jer. 31:7), have charge of His courts—keeping them pure (cf. Isa. 56:7; Jer. 31:23), and enjoy free access to God (cf. Exod. 19:6; Isa. 61:6; Heb. 4:16; 10:19-22).

"In all this the person and work of Joshua's greater namesake, Jesus, was being anticipated. The faithful high priest of the pre-Christian era entered into God's presence as the Christian [believer priest] does 'by grace through faith'."<sup>82</sup>

3:8 Evidently, Zechariah also saw in his vision other priests—Joshua's friends—sitting in front of him. The Lord continued to address Joshua, identifying him as "the high priest." He called the friends, sitting in front of Joshua, "men" who were "a symbol" (sign; Heb. *mopheth*, token of future events, prophetic sign; cf. Isa. 8:18). It was not just Joshua individually who represented Israel, but the other priests also represented the priesthood within Israel.

<sup>80</sup>Merrill, p. 136.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid., p. 138.

<sup>82</sup>Baldwin, p. 115. Cf. Heb. 4:14-16.

"The miracle, which is to be seen in Joshua and his priests, consists . . . in the fact that the priesthood of Israel is laden with guilt, but by the grace of God it has been absolved, and accepted by God again, as the deliverance from exile shows, and Joshua and his priests are therefore brands plucked by the omnipotence of grace from the fire of merited judgment. This miracle of grace which has been wrought for them, points beyond itself to an incomparably greater and better act of the sin-absolving grace of God, which is still in the future."<sup>83</sup>

The Lord also said that He planned to bring into the picture His Servant, "the Branch." This is a double title of Messiah (cf. 6:12; Ps. 132:17; Isa. 11:1; 53:2; Jer. 23:5; 33:15). As Yahweh's servant (Isa. 42:1; 49:3, 5; 52:13; 53:11; Ezek. 34:23-24), Messiah would come into the world to do His Father's will, including redeeming, cleansing, and restoring Israel to God's intended place for her.

"As Branch, the Messiah is represented in the OT in four different aspects of his character (King, Servant, Man, and God). These aspects are developed in the NT in the four Gospels: (1) in Matthew as the Branch of David, i.e., as the Davidic messianic King (Isa 11:1; Jer 23:5; 33:15); (2) in Mark as the Lord's Servant, the Branch (Isa 42:1; 49:6; 50:10; 52:13; Ezek 34:23-24; Zech 3:8); (3) in Luke as the Man whose name is the Branch (Zech 6:12); and (4) in John as the Branch of the Lord (Isa 4:2)."<sup>84</sup>

3:9 Zechariah also saw in the vision a "stone . . . set" in front of Joshua. The stone, too, is a common figure of God and Messiah in the Bible (10:4; Exod. 17:6; Num. 20:7-11; Ps. 118:22; et al.). In the past, God had promised that the Stone would be a secure, never-failing refuge for His people (Isa. 28:16; 1 Pet. 2:6). When Messiah appeared, however, He proved to be a stone over which the Jews stumbled and an offensive rock to them (Ps. 118:22-23; Isa. 8:13-15; Matt. 21:42; 1 Pet. 2:7-8). Presently He is the foundation stone, the chief cornerstone of the church (Eph. 2:19-22). And in the future He will be the great stone that smites the nations (Dan. 2:35, 45).<sup>85</sup>

"The reason two figures are used, one the Servant-Branch, the other the single Stone, is because one applies specifically to the first advent and the other centers in the second advent."<sup>86</sup>

<sup>83</sup>C. F. Keil, *The Twelve Minor Prophets*, 2:259.

<sup>84</sup>Barker, p. 626. See also Feinberg, *God Remembers*, p. 64.

<sup>85</sup>See *ibid.*, p. 65.

<sup>86</sup>Unger, p. 66.

Another view is that they represent Messiah as king and priest.<sup>87</sup> But this seems unlikely because of a lack of connection between the branch and the stone and the king and the priest.

The stone that Zechariah saw had "seven eyes" (Heb. *'ayin*), probably symbolizing its complete, divine intelligence (omniscience; cf. 1:10; 4:10; 2 Chron. 16:9; Isa. 11:2; Ezek. 1:18; 10:12; Col. 2:3, 9; Rev. 5:6). The "inscription" engraved on the stone remains unexplained, but many of the early church fathers and interpreters ever since have taken the engraving as a preview of Messiah's wounds.<sup>88</sup> The engraving may indicate that the stone is a commemorative one, since the Assyrian and Babylonian kings set such stones in the foundations of buildings to perpetuate their memories.<sup>89</sup>

"The eyes on the stone would be the divine signature identifying YHWH as the real architect and builder of the structure."<sup>90</sup>

The Lord continued, saying that He would also "remove the iniquity" of "that land," the holy land (2:12), "in one day." He did that when Messiah died on the cross, but Israel will finally realize this benefit of His death when He returns to earth, at His Second Advent, and cleanses and forgives Israel as a whole (12:10—13:1; Rom. 11:26-27). The Day of the Lord is doubtless in view.

"As the Servant of the Lord, Christ is the One who comes to do the will of the Father (Isa. 42:1; 49:3-4; 50:10; 52:13; 53:11). As the Branch of David, Christ is the Davidic Descendant who will rise to power and glory out of the humiliation into which the line of David had fallen (Isa. 4:2; 11:1; Jer. 23:5; 33:15; Zech. 6:12-13). As the Stone (cf. Ps. 118:22; Matt. 21:42; 1 Peter 2:6) He will bring judgment on the Gentiles (Dan. 2:44-45) and be a stone of stumbling for unbelieving Israel (Rom. 9:31-33)."<sup>91</sup>

3:10 "In that day," the Lord promised, the Israelites will 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.

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<sup>87</sup>Smith, p. 201.

<sup>88</sup>See E. B. Pusey, *The Minor Prophets*, 2:359.

<sup>89</sup>Baldwin, p. 116.

<sup>90</sup>Merrill, p. 143.

<sup>91</sup>Lindsey, pp. 1554-55.

"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 reinstalled 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)."<sup>92</sup>

#### **E. THE GOLD LAMPSTAND AND THE TWO OLIVE TREES CH. 4**

This vision would have encouraged the two leaders of the restoration community, Zerubbabel and Joshua, by reminding them of God's resources, and it would have vindicated these leaders in the eyes of the Israelites. Chapter 3 brought Joshua forward to encourage him, and chapter 4 does the same to Zerubbabel. The chapter contains the vision (vv. 1-5), two oracles concerning Zerubbabel (vv. 6-10), and the interpretation of the vision (vv. 11-14). It presents Israel as the light of the world under Messiah, her king-priest. The amillennial interpretation sees no fulfillment in the future for Israel, only in the church.

". . . after Israel as the priestly nation of God has been cleansed from all defilement and has entered into the restoration of her priestly calling, then she is prepared to fulfill God's original purpose in her as the bearer of light and truth to all the surrounding nations in their idolatry and paganism."<sup>93</sup>

"Vision five forms a matching pair with vision four, both in terms of its juxtaposition to it and its subject matter. Both deal with cultic persons or objects (the high priest and the menorah respectively), both mention historical persons contemporary to the prophet (Joshua and Zerubbabel), both refer to temple building, and both reach their climax on a strong messianic note."<sup>94</sup>

#### **1. The vision 4:1-5**

- 4:1 Zechariah's guiding angel "roused" the prophet from his visionary slumber. Evidently when the last scene of his vision ended, Zechariah remained in a sleep-like condition. Even in an ecstatic state, human beings remain dull and obtuse to divine revelation, and must receive supernatural enlightenment.
- 4:2-3 The angel asked the prophet what he saw, and Zechariah replied that he saw a golden "lampstand" with a "bowl" above it. Lampstands generally, and the lampstands in the tabernacle and temple particularly, held removable lamps (Exod. 25:31; 1 Kings 7:49). Their purpose was to support these light-bearers. Symbolically a lampstand represents what

<sup>92</sup>Merrill, pp. 143-44.

<sup>93</sup>Feinberg, *God Remembers*, p. 69.

<sup>94</sup>Merrill, p. 145.

supports whatever bears light (cf. Matt. 5:16; Rev. 1:20; 2:5). This seems to be the figure in view in 1 Timothy 3:15, where Paul called the church the pillar and support of the truth. The purpose of the church is to support individual Christians who bear the light of God's truth in a dark world (cf. Rev. 1:20). Ultimately the light is the Lord Himself (John 1:8-9; 1 Tim. 3:16). In the case of the present vision, the lampstand represents the temple and the Jewish community, which were to hold the light of Israel's testimony for Yahweh up to the rest of the world. The bowl on top of this lampstand contained oil that constantly replenished the lamps (cf. v. 12).

"Lamp pedestals excavated from Palestine cities were . . . cylindrical in shape, hollow, and looked rather like a tree trunk. They were usually made of pottery, and had a hole in the side, into which a spout could have been fixed. . . . Zechariah's lampstand (*menora*) was probably just a cylindrical column, tapered slightly towards the top, on which was a bowl. Innumerable pottery versions of bowl lamps show how the rim was pinched together to form a holder for the wick, the better the light needed the more the places for wicks, seven being the most popular number. . . . The picture is of seven small bowls, each with a place for seven wicks, arranged round the rim of the main bowl. . . . What would be unusual would be such a lampstand in gold. With its seven times seven lights it would be both impressive and effective."<sup>95</sup>

The Hebrew text has "seven and seven pipes to the lamps." Most conservative commentators understood the number of pipes (spouts) connecting the large upper bowl to the individual lamps below to be distributive, indicating seven each for a total of 49 such pipes. This presents the picture of a somewhat "spaghetti-like configuration"<sup>96</sup> "with an excess of plumbing."<sup>97</sup> Nevertheless this interpretation seems to be truest to the text. Another view is that there were two pipes connecting the bowl to each of the lamps for a total of 14 pipes. The Septuagint simply omitted one of these sevens, resulting in one pipe connecting them, for a total of seven pipes. The large number of pipes probably stresses the abundant supply of oil from the reservoir to each lamp.

There were seven lamps, one resting on each of the seven branches of the lampstand, and each lamp had seven spouts (lips). Most such earthenware lamps that archaeologists have found had only one spout for a wick. Here the picture is of a full complement of lamps (seven) that manifested the full complement of light (seven flames from each lamp).

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<sup>95</sup>Baldwin, pp. 119-20.

<sup>96</sup>Merrill, p. 148.

<sup>97</sup>Leupold, p. 85.

There were also two olive trees, one standing on either side of the bowl. Human maintenance of the lamps was unnecessary, since the oil flowed from the trees, to the reservoir, to the lamps. This important feature of the vision stresses God's singular provision of the oil (cf. v. 6).

"The two olive trees represent Joshua and Zerubbabel, whose witness in that day is the prototype of the two witnesses of Rev. 11:3-12. Actually no human being can be the real source of the power that actuates God's witness. It is only as Joshua, Zerubbabel, or any other human being represents Christ, the true Priest-King, that he fulfills this vision. In their fullest significance the two olive trees speak of Christ, the LORD's Priest-King (cp. Ps. 110:4)."<sup>98</sup>

The two olive trees played an important part in the founders' perception of the new State of Israel in 1948, in which "religion" and "state" and their respective dignitaries (the high priest and the prime minister) stand together to realize the Zionist dream in this official emblem.

4:4-5 Zechariah asked the angel for an explanation of what he saw. The angel asked if he did not understand what these things represented, and Zechariah admitted that he did not (cf. v. 13).

## **2. Two oracles concerning Zerubbabel 4:6-10**

The writer inserted two oracles that Zechariah received from the Lord concerning Zerubbabel, at this point, because they help to clarify the meaning of the vision.

### **The first oracle 4:6-7**

4:6 The angel announced "a word" of explanation from Yahweh that Zechariah was to pass on "to Zerubbabel," the descendant of David who became the leader of the first group of returnees from exile.<sup>99</sup> He was to tell him: "not by might [Heb. *hayil*] nor by power [Heb. *koah*], but by the Spirit [Heb. *ruah*] of Yahweh of hosts."

"This principle is an elliptical sentence: 'Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the Lord of hosts,' a kind of motto, as it were, to guide all endeavors and enterprises of the nation in these evil days. If we were to complete the ellipsis we might formulate the statement somewhat after the following fashion: If success is to be gained in the achievements of the people of God it will not be secured by what man can do but by the Spirit's work."<sup>100</sup>

<sup>98</sup>*The New Scofield . . .*, pp. 966-67.

<sup>99</sup>See David L. Petersen, "Zerubbabel and Jerusalem Temple Reconstruction," *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 36:3 (1974):366-72.

<sup>100</sup>Leupold, p. 87. See also Thurman Wisdom, "'Not by Might, nor by Power, but by My Spirit,'" *Biblical Viewpoint* 24:2 (November 1990):19-26.

Since Zerubbabel was leading the rebuilding of the temple and the restoration of the community, the Lord's word to him was a word of encouragement. These restorations would not need an army of workers, as Solomon's temple did (1 Kings 5:13-18), nor unusually strong laborers. The strength of the workers, in fact, failed because the work was so strenuous (cf. Neh. 4:10). The work would succeed because of the supernatural grace (help) that the Lord would provide by His Spirit (cf. Gen. 1:2; Exod. 15:8, 10; 28:3; 31:3; Num. 11:17-29; Judg. 3:10; 6:34; 11:29; 13:25; 14:6, 19; 15:14, 19; 2 Sam. 22:16; Ezek. 37:1-14). This is, of course, true of any work that seeks to carry out God's will in the world (cf. 2 Cor. 12:9).

4:7 A "great mountain" would become a "plain . . . before Zerubbabel." Mountains epitomize large obstacles (cf. Isa. 40:4; 41:15; 49:11; Matt. 17:20; 21:21; Mark 11:23; 1 Cor. 13:2). They are also symbols of kingdoms (cf. Isa. 41:15; Jer. 51:25; Dan. 2:35, 45; et al), but that is not the meaning here. The whole process of temple restoration seemed like a mountainous job to the few exiles who returned from captivity. In addition, there was much opposition to building (Ezra 4:1-5, 24), and the Israelites themselves proved unwilling to persevere in the task (Hag. 1:14; 2:1-9). Nevertheless, God would reduce this mountain to a flat plain by assisting the workers.

Furthermore, Zerubbabel would "bring forth the top stone," the final stone on the project, *with shouts of* "Grace, grace to it!" The joyful cry of the people, as they saw the last stone put in place, would voice their prayer that God's blessing would now rest on the beautiful structure that His grace had made possible.

"There is nothing that makes the heart of God's people more ready to overflow with the truest joy than to witness success or the fulfillment of God's promises in the work of the kingdom."<sup>101</sup>

### The second oracle 4:8-10

4:8-9 Another word from the Lord also came to Zechariah about Zerubbabel. This appears to be another oracle that the writer inserted here because it is appropriate at this point. He promised that as Zerubbabel had "laid the foundation" of the temple (Ezra 3:8-11; 5:16), so he would also complete it (cf. Ezra 6:14-18). Construction began on the foundation of the temple in 536 B.C., and the last stone went in place in 515 B.C. The date of this oracle is unclear, but it probably came in 519 B.C. or perhaps shortly before that (cf. 1:7). Ezra 5:16 credits Sheshbazzar with laying the foundation, but Ezra 3:8 and Zech. 4:9 give Zerubbabel the credit for doing it. Probably Zerubbabel finished the work that Sheshbazzar had

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<sup>101</sup>Leupold, p. 90.



started. The Lord promised that when the temple was complete, the people would "know" that it was indeed "the LORD" who had "sent" the messenger who brought this message to Zechariah. The messenger in view appears to be the angel of the Lord (cf. 1:11-12; 2:8-9, 11; 3:1, 5-6).

- 4:10 The people would be ashamed that they had despised the rebuilding project as insignificant (cf. Ezra 3:12; Hag. 2:3).<sup>102</sup> The Lord Himself was "glad" to "see . . . Zerubbabel" building with his "plumb line," as His omniscient eyes ("these seven") surveyed all that was happening in the world (cf. 3:9; 2 Chron. 16:9). The Hebrew words translated "plumb line" may mean "separated [i.e., chosen] stone." In this case, the idea would be that the Lord, in addition to His people, would rejoice when He *saw the capstone put in place* (cf. v. 7; Ezra 6:16-22). Now His people could serve Him as He purposed.

"Bible history is the record of God using small things. When God wanted to set the plan of salvation in motion, He started with a little baby named Isaac (Gen. 21). When He wanted to overthrow Egypt and set His people free, He used a baby's tears (Ex. 2:1-10). He used a shepherd boy and a sling to defeat a giant (1 Sam. 17) and a little lad's lunch to feed a multitude (John 6). He delivered the Apostle Paul from death by using a basket and a rope (Acts 9:23-25). Never despise the day of small things, for God is glorified in small things and uses them to accomplish great things."<sup>103</sup>

### **3. The interpretation of the vision 4:11-14**

Though some help understanding the vision came through the preceding oracles concerning Zerubbabel, Zechariah still had some questions about what he had seen in the vision. The angel helped him further.

- 4:11-12 Zechariah asked specifically for an explanation of the "two olive trees" that he had seen (v. 4). He also wanted to know the meaning of the "two branches" of these trees that emptied olive oil into "two golden pipes" (spouts) that carried the golden oil into the bowl atop the lampstand. "Golden oil" is literally "gold," but clearly olive oil, which is golden in color, is in view. However, it may be the pure quality and value of the oil more than its color that the gold connotes.<sup>104</sup>

<sup>102</sup>See Wayne O. McCready, "The 'Day of Small Things' vs. the Latter Days: Historical Fulfillment or Eschatological Hope?" in *Israel's Apostasy and Restoration: Essays in Honor of Roland K. Harrison*, pp. 223-36.

<sup>103</sup>Wiersbe, p. 456.

<sup>104</sup>Unger, p. 79.

4:13 Again the interpreting angel expressed surprise that Zechariah needed an explanation of these things (cf. v. 5). He did not want to give an interpretation if Zechariah could figure it out himself. Normally God does not provide additional information until we have done all we can to discover His meaning. To do so would discourage human effort Godward.

4:14 He then said that the two branches represented "the two anointed ones" who stood by the Lord of all the earth. It was their relationship to the Lord that equipped them for their tasks. "Anointed ones" is literally "sons of oil."

"The phrase 'sons of oil' is typically interpreted to mean that the two individuals mentioned were anointed with oil as the Lord's special servants (see NIV). However, the word for 'oil' used here (Heb. *yitshar*) does not refer to anointing oil elsewhere (the Hebrew term for such oil is *shemen*) but to fresh oil that symbolizes a land's agricultural abundance.<sup>105</sup> It is more likely, then, that the individuals are called 'sons of oil' because under their leadership the Lord would restore agricultural prosperity to the land (see 3:10, as well as Hag. 2:19). These 'sons of oil' were, of course, the high priest Joshua and the governor Zerubbabel (see 3:1-10; 4:7-10; 6:9-15)."<sup>106</sup>

Nevertheless, the earlier reference to the Spirit's enablement (v. 6) presents these "sons of oil" as empowered by Him.<sup>107</sup>

Zerubbabel and Joshua point ultimately to the Messiah, who combined the royal and priestly offices and functions in one person, the Branch (3:8; 6:12; Isa. 11:1; Jer. 23:5; cf. Ps. 110; Heb. 7). Some of the Jews in Jesus' day (e.g., the Qumran community) expected two Messiahs, a princely one and a priestly one.<sup>108</sup> In the Tribulation, two other special witnesses will appear (cf. Rev. 11:3-12).

The point of this vision, and its accompanying oracles, was the Lord's ability to bring a seemingly impossible project to completion—successfully and gloriously—through His anointed servants (Messiah, and Zerubbabel and Joshua) and His supernatural enablement (cf. 2 Cor. 12:9). The lesson is applicable to any project that God has ordained and called His people to execute, including rebuilding the temple and building the church (Matt. 16:18).

<sup>105</sup>Footnote 299: See David L. Petersen, *Haggai and Zechariah 1—8*, pp. 230-31.

<sup>106</sup>Chisholm, *Handbook on . . .*, p. 462.

<sup>107</sup>For an edifying explanation of the similarities between oil and the Holy Spirit, see Feinberg, *God Remembers*, pp. 74-75.

<sup>108</sup>See Helmer Ringgren, *The Faith of Qumran*, pp. 171-73.

### **F. THE FLYING SCROLL 5:1-4**

The priests and the kings in Israel were responsible for justice in the nation (cf. Deut. 17:9; 2 Sam. 15:2-3), though neither group could prevent wickedness from proliferating. The sixth and seventh visions deal with the removal of wickedness. This sixth one deals with the elimination of lawbreakers, and the next one with the removal of wickedness from the land. What God promised in the preceding two visions required the purging predicted in these two visions.

"At this point the series of visions takes a sharp turn from that which heretofore has been comforting, to a stern warning that the Lord (Yahweh) is a holy God and cannot brook evil."<sup>109</sup>

". . . before the blessing of the first five visions will be actualized, there will intervene in the life of the nation a period of moral declension and apostasy. God must and will purge out all iniquity, though He has promised untold glory for the godly in Israel."<sup>110</sup>

5:1           The next thing Zechariah saw in his visions was an unrolled "scroll," "flying" through the air. This was a scroll that contained writing, the equivalent of a modern book.

"A scroll (or roll), in Scripture symbolism, denotes the written word, whether of God or man (Ezra 6:2; Jer. 36:2, 4, 6, etc.; Ezek 3:1-3, etc). Zechariah's sixth vision is of the rebuke of sin by the Word of God. The two sins mentioned [in verse 3] really transgress both tables of the law. To steal is to set aside our neighbor's right; to swear is to set aside God's claim to reverence."<sup>111</sup>

5:2           The prophet replied to the interpreting angel, who asked him what he saw, that he saw a "flying scroll" that was 20 cubits long and 10 cubits wide (30 feet by 15 feet). Several commentators made connections between this scroll and the tabernacle, and the temple, since these were the dimensions of the holy place of the tabernacle (Exod. 26:8), as well as the porch in front of the holy place of Solomon's temple (1 Kings 6:3). But this correspondence seems to be coincidental. The scroll that Zechariah saw was open—and large—so that people could read it easily. During the restoration period, the returnees demonstrated an increased interest in the Mosaic Law, which was written on scrolls (cf. Neh. 8). No one could plead ignorance, because the scroll in Zechariah's vision was large enough for all to see and read.

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<sup>109</sup>Unger, p. 83.

<sup>110</sup>Feinberg, *God Remembers*, p. 82.

<sup>111</sup>*The New Scofield . . .*, p. 967.

- 5:3 The angel explained that the scroll represented the curses that God had decreed against the Israelites who stole and who swore falsely in the Lord's name (v. 4; cf. Deut. 28). According to what God had previously written in the Law, those who stole and profaned His name would die, thus purging the land of sin. The Hebrew word *ha'arets* can mean either "the earth" or "the land." Here, and in verse 6, the primary meaning seems to be "the land," namely, the land of Israel. Writing was on both sides of the scroll, as it had been on the stone tables that contained the Ten Commandments (Exod. 32:15). On one side there was a curse against Israelites who broke the eighth commandment (Exod. 20:15), and on the other side was a curse for breaking the third commandment (Exod. 20:7). These two commandments, from the first part of the Decalogue and the second part, which Zechariah's contemporaries were apparently breaking frequently, probably represent by synecdoche the whole Law (cf. James 2:10). Synecdoche is a figure of speech in which the writer uses a part, or parts, to represent the whole, or the whole to represent a part.
- 5:4 Yahweh then promised to cause His curse to seek out the guilty and to bring judgment on them. He personified the curse and pictured it going throughout the land, even into homes, to seek out law-breakers. God's Word still had its ancient power even in post-exilic Judaism. Even the privacy of their homes would not afford protection from the judgment that the Lord would send on those of His people who broke His law.

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, including the Decalogue.

"It is striking that this vision plays down any human activity."<sup>112</sup>

"This whole passage is very valuable as a commentary on the nature of Christ's rule in righteousness in the millennial period as well as the severity of His dealing with sinners once the day of grace is ended and the day of wrath and judgment is ushered in with the opening of the seven-sealed roll of Revelation 5:1-9, loosing the seals, trumpets, and bowl judgments that dispossess Satan, demons, and the wicked men from the earth preparatory to the advent of the King of kings and Lord of lords to establish His rule and kingdom."<sup>113</sup>

Amillennialists hold that "there is no allusion in our vision to the millennial kingdom and its establishment within the limits of the earthly Canaan."<sup>114</sup>

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<sup>112</sup>Merrill, p. 166.

<sup>113</sup>Unger, p. 89.

<sup>114</sup>Keil, 2:281.

### **G. THE WOMAN IN THE BASKET 5:5-11**

The preceding vision described the future removal of individual sinners from the land through divine judgment, and this one pictures the eventual removal of all wickedness from the future "holy land" (2:12; cf. 3:9).

"In line with the scope of all eight of Zechariah's night visions, the fulfilment [*sic*] of this likewise extends into the millennial kingdom. Nevertheless the immediate application of the vision to the prophet's time and to the conditions then prevailing is plain."<sup>115</sup>

5:5           The angelic guide next proceeded to instruct Zechariah to view something else that was happening in his vision.

"So little is human nature capable of readily appropriating divine revelation that it is not only necessary for God to let the necessary visions appear but also to stimulate the recipient's attention step by step lest, overcome by the power of the heavenly, he fail to appropriate all that God desires to offer."<sup>116</sup>

5:6-7        The prophet asked what it was he was seeing, and the angel replied that it was an "ephah," a basket that held about a half bushel (or five gallons) of dry (or liquid) material (cf. 1 Sam. 1:24; Ruth 2:17). Some authorities contend that an ephah was slightly more than a bushel. The ephah was the largest dry measure among the Hebrews, and its use here suggests that Israel's sins had accumulated greatly in Zechariah's day.<sup>117</sup> The angel "lifted up" the "lead cover" on top of the basket and revealed "a woman sitting inside." A lead cover would be heavier than the customary stone cover, and would guarantee that what was inside would not get out. Either the ephah was oversized, like the flying scroll, or the woman was a miniature in Zechariah's vision. Perhaps God used an ephah in the vision simply because it was a standard container that people used to carry things in, similar to a barrel. Some commentators have seen in the ephah a particular allusion to commercial malpractice, since the ephah was used in commerce, but this may be over-exegeting the text.

"The woman, made visible by the lifting of the lead cover, is still, like the evil she represents, mostly hidden from sight."<sup>118</sup>

The angel further explained that this is what the ephah and its contents would resemble as they went forth in all the earth.

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<sup>115</sup>Unger, p. 91.

<sup>116</sup>Leupold, p. 103.

<sup>117</sup>*The New Scofield . . .*, p. 967.

<sup>118</sup>Baldwin, p. 128.

"As in the preceding vision, the earth (*ha'arets*) designates not merely Palestine, although this is the primary reference, and the removal of godless commercialism is first and foremost from 'the land,' which will then be in reality 'the Holy Land' (Zech. 2:12 [16]); but more broadly the term points to the entire millennial earth."<sup>119</sup>

5:8 The angel explained that the woman personified wickedness. Some have interpreted the woman as covenant-breakers, a particular form of wickedness.<sup>120</sup> The angel 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. It was not uncommon to represent wickedness as a woman (e.g., Prov. 7; Rev. 17; et al.). Here the woman represents the sum total of Israel's sins, wickedness being the opposite of righteousness (cf. Prov. 13:6; Ezek. 33:12). Another view is that she represents Babylon (Rev. 17—18), but this seems unlikely since she ends up in Babylon (v. 11).

5:9 The prophet next saw "two" other "women" flying through the air with "stork . . . wings." Perhaps they were women, and not men, because of the motherly attention they brought to their task.<sup>121</sup> Storks are strong, motherly birds that are capable of carrying loads a long distance in flight. They were commonly seen in Palestine in the spring months, while they were migrating to Europe (Jer. 8:7).<sup>122</sup> The word "stork" (Heb. *sida*) means "faithful one." These women would faithfully carry the ephah and its contents to God's appointed destination. Some believe they represent agents of evil, perhaps demonic forces.<sup>123</sup> If they were that, however, would they not try to help Wickedness escape? Storks were unclean birds for the Israelites (Lev. 11:19; Deut. 14:18), so these stork-like women were appropriate carriers of the contaminated basket. "They lifted up the ephah" into the air, flying off from earth to heaven with the divine assistance of "the wind" (Spirit, Heb. *ruah*).

"The removal of Wickedness, like the removal of Joshua's filthy garments (3:4), was an act of free grace on the part of the covenant-keeping (*hasid*) God."<sup>124</sup>

5:10-11 When Zechariah asked the angel where the two flying women were taking the basket, his interpreter responded that they were taking the woman to "the land of Shinar" (Babylonia, cf. Gen. 10:10; 11:2; 14:1, 9).

<sup>119</sup>Unger, p. 94.

<sup>120</sup>E.g., McComiskey, p. 1101.

<sup>121</sup>Merrill, p. 175.

<sup>122</sup>Smith, p. 211.

<sup>123</sup>E.g., Unger, p. 98.

<sup>124</sup>Baldwin, p. 129.

"Shinar, besides taking the theme of Babylon as antagonist back to the very beginning (Gen. 10:10), creating thereby a kind of 'historical inclusio,' lends a more trans-historical sense to the message."<sup>125</sup>

Leupold took Shinar as representing the world in contrast to the church.<sup>126</sup> These two women with storks' wings were God's agents carrying out His will (cf. Ps. 103:11-12; Jer. 32:39-40; Ezek. 36:25). At the appointed time, the woman Wickedness will sit atop a "pedestal" as an object of worship, an idol (cf. Rev. 17—18).

"Thus where Judah had been exiled was a fitting place for wickedness to be worshipped, but not in the land where God had placed *his* name. The idolatry of Babylon must once and for all be separated from the worship of the God of Israel."<sup>127</sup>

"We understand the passage to speak of the heaping up of the full measure of Israel's sins prior to the time of God's separation of the wicked from the midst of the righteous remnant of the last days."<sup>128</sup>

"The two cleansing acts of this chapter are complementary, like the two goats on the Day of Atonement, Leviticus 16, of which the first must give its blood as an expiation before the Lord, while the second carries away the guilt of the people, and the impurity springing from it, to the region of the impure desert-demon. The cleansing judgment, despite the terror, is a benefit to the land, which is thus purified and fitted to receive the blessing pictured in the former visions."<sup>129</sup>

#### **H. THE FOUR CHARIOTS 6:1-8**

There are several similarities between this last vision and the first one (1:7-17), indicating a return to ideas introduced at the beginning of this chiasmic series of revelations. Again there is a group of horses of various colors, but their order and colors are somewhat different. Zechariah mentioned a rider in vision one but no chariots, but in vision eight chariots without horsemen appear. There is a similar emphasis on the fact that Yahweh controls history and subdues the nations that oppress Israel.

"This last of the eight [visions] shares so much in common with the first that the two, at least, must be viewed as book ends enveloping the whole series."<sup>130</sup>

<sup>125</sup>Merrill, p. 178. Cf. Rev. 14:8; 17:1, 5, 18; 18:8, 10, 19, 21.

<sup>126</sup>Leupold, p. 108.

<sup>127</sup>David J. Ellis, "Zechariah," in *The New Layman's Bible Commentary*, p. 1034.

<sup>128</sup>Feinberg, *God Remembers*, p. 89.

<sup>129</sup>C. von Orelli, *The Twelve Minor Prophets*, p. 335.

<sup>130</sup>Merrill, p. 181.

6:1 The next thing Zechariah saw in his night visions was "four chariots" coming out from between "two . . . bronze . . . mountains." Due to the increasing repetition of "come forth" or "go forth" (Heb. *yasa'*) throughout the series of eight visions, the careful reader feels a developing sense of intensity in the activity being described, that reaches its climax in this vision (v. 8). Chariots were instruments of judgment, and bronze is a color that often carries this connotation in Scripture (cf. Exod. 27:2; Num. 21:9). William Kelly and others believed the four chariots represent the four great kingdoms in Daniel's prophecy (Dan. 2; 7).<sup>131</sup> This seems unlikely.<sup>132</sup>

"Bronze" was used to defend against attackers (Isa. 45:2; Jer. 1:18), so perhaps impregnability is also in view. Some interpreters believed the color bronze was due to the rising sun. This results, in the interpretations of some, in the first vision taking place at evening, and the last at sunrise.<sup>133</sup> Leupold referred to the commentators who take this view as letting "their fancy play at this point."<sup>134</sup>

Perhaps the mountains represent the gateway to heaven from which these agents of judgment come.<sup>135</sup> Another, more probable view, is that they were Mount Zion and the Mount of Olives, with the valley between being the Kidron Valley.<sup>136</sup> 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."

"Always in Scripture symbolism, they [chariots and horses] stand for the power of God earthward in judgment (Jer. 46:9-10; Joel 2:3-11; Nah. 3:1-7). The vision, then, speaks of the LORD's judgments upon the Gentile nations north and south in the day of the LORD (Isa. 2:10-22; Rev. 19:11-21)."<sup>137</sup>

6:2-3 The two horses pulling the "first chariot" were "red." "Black horses" pulled the "second chariot," "white horses" the "third," and "dappled horses" the "fourth." All of them were "strong." These horses evidently represent angels who facilitate the work of other angels, represented by the chariots (cf. v. 5). The colors of the horses may symbolize various aspects of judgment, perhaps war and bloodshed in the case of the red horses, famine and death for the black, victory and triumph for the white (cf. 1:8;

<sup>131</sup>William Kelly, *Lectures Introductory to the Study of the Minor Prophets*, p. 461.

<sup>132</sup>See Feinberg, *God Remembers*, pp. 95-97, or Keil, 2:287, for refutation.

<sup>133</sup>See G. von Rad, *Old Testament Theology*, 2:287.

<sup>134</sup>Leupold, p. 110.

<sup>135</sup>Baldwin, p. 130; McComiskey, p. 1106.

<sup>136</sup>Barker, p. 636; Keil, 2:287; Unger, p. 101; Feinberg, *God Remembers*, p. 95; idem, "Zechariah," p. 903.

<sup>137</sup>*The New Scofield . . .*, p. 968.



Rev. 19:11, 14), and plague and disease for the dappled (spotted; cf. Rev. 6:1-8).<sup>138</sup>

6:4-6 In response to the prophet's request for interpretation, his angel guide explained that the chariots represented "the four spirits" (winds, Heb. *ruhoth*) of heaven (i.e., angels), which were going forth, having been in the presence of "the Lord of all the earth" (cf. 4:14). They were His messengers, the executors of His will (cf. Ps. 104:4). The chariot with the black horses went "north" from Jerusalem, the direction from which most of Israel's enemy invaders descended on the Promised Land (e.g., Babylonia; cf. Jer. 1:14; 4:6; 6:22; Ezek. 1:4). The chariot with the white horses went out next, and evidently followed the previous one—north. The one with the dappled horses headed south. Egypt lay to Israel's south, and it was another implacable enemy. Presumably the red horses went south too.

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.

6:7 When these horses (angels) "went out" from between the bronze mountains, "they were eager to . . . patrol the earth"; they were anxious to carry out these judgments. The Lord gave them permission to patrol it, so they did.

"From first to last (cf. 1:10) the affairs of the nations are under God's direction, not man's. It is this certainty that makes prophecy possible."<sup>139</sup>

6:8 The Lord then called out to Zechariah that the horses that had gone out into the north had "appeased" His "wrath in the land of the north." This probably represents judgment on Babylonia specifically, but it probably hints at the total destruction of all enemies of Israel. Babylon had fallen to the Persians 20 years earlier, in 539 B.C.

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<sup>138</sup>Unger, pp. 102-3.

<sup>139</sup>Baldwin, p. 132.

<b>ZECHARIAH'S EIGHT NIGHT VISIONS</b>			
<b>Number</b>	<b>Reference</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Lesson</b>
1	1:7-17	The horseman among the myrtle trees	Yahweh's sovereignty over Israel's restoration
2	1:18-21	The four horns and the four smiths	The triumph of Israel over her enemies
3	ch. 2	The surveyor	Preparations for Israel's future restoration
4	ch. 3	The cleansing and restoration of Joshua	The renewal of Israel's priestly ministry
5	ch. 4	The gold lampstand and the two olive trees	Israel's testimony under Messiah as priest and king
6	5:1-4	The flying scroll	Judgment on Israel for covenant disobedience
7	5:5-11	The woman in the basket	The return of evil to Babylon
8	6:1-8	The four chariots	Judgment on Israel's enemies

### **III. THE SYMBOLIC CROWNING OF JOSHUA 6:9-15**

The visions ended and Zechariah awoke from his dream-like state. What follows is a symbolic act that took place in Jerusalem at the Lord's command.

"The position of this actual ceremony after the eight visions is significant. The fourth and fifth visions, at the center of the series, were concerned with the high priest [Joshua] and the civil governor in the Davidic line [Zerubbabel]. Zechariah here linked the message of those two visions to the messianic King-Priest. . . . Thus restored Israel is seen in the future under the glorious reign of the messianic King-Priest."<sup>140</sup>

"Immediately following the overthrow of Gentile world power by the earth judgments symbolized by the horsed chariots (Zech. 6:1-8) occurs the manifestation of Christ in His kingdom glory (Zech. 6:9-15) typified by the crowning of Joshua the high priest. This is the usual prophetic order: first, the judgments of the day of the Lord; then full kingdom blessing (Ps. 2:5, cf. Ps. 2:6; Isa. 3:24-26, cf. 4:2-6; 10:33, 34, cf. 11:1-10; Rev. 19:19-21, cf. 20:4-6).

"The eight night visions have ended, but the coronation of Joshua is closely connected with these revelations which extend in scope from Zechariah's day to the full establishment of Israel in blessing. The

<sup>140</sup>Barker, pp. 638-39.

crowning of King-Priest Messiah is thus set forth symbolically by the coronation of Joshua, which is not a vision, but an actual historical act, which evidently took place the day following the night of visions."<sup>141</sup>

". . . this oracle serves as a comment on and climax to the night visions as a whole."<sup>142</sup>

Some commentators connect this oracle with the preceding vision, just as the other oracles in chapters 1, 2, and 4 connect with the visions in their contexts.<sup>143</sup> Nevertheless, even these writers acknowledge that this oracle was not originally part of the vision in 6:1-8, but it supplements the earlier mention of the Branch in 3:8.

"Unlike vision one, number eight does not have its own oracle of response, though . . . the oracle that follows it (6:9-15) may serve it as such as well as bringing the whole series to an end."<sup>144</sup>

The lesson that this symbolic act illustrated was that Messiah would appear as a king-priest and rebuild God's temple in the days of Israel's future restoration (i.e., the Millennium).

"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."<sup>145</sup>

- 6:9-10      The Lord's word came to Zechariah, instructing him to go and take part (or all) of an offering that certain of "the exiles" had brought from Babylon for the restoration of the temple. These recent returnees were "Heldai, Tobijah, and Jedaiah." The prophet was to meet these men "at the house of Josiah the son of Zephaniah," where they were evidently staying.
- 6:11        Zechariah was to make an ornate "crown" out of at least some of the "silver and gold" that had been donated, and to place it "on the head of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest" (3:1). The Hebrew text has "crowns," not "crown." The plural could indicate a composite crown (cf. Rev. 19:12), a superlative crown, and or a sacred crown.<sup>146</sup> One writer believed there were two crowns and a double crowning—of Joshua and Zerubbabel.<sup>147</sup> But I see no evidence of this in the passage. This crown was not the regular turban of the high priest (Heb. *nezer*), but a kingly crown with many parts (Heb. *'ataroth*; cf. Rev. 19:12). Zechariah was to crown the high priest as a king, not as a priest (cf. Ps. 110:4; Heb. 7:1-3).

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<sup>141</sup>Unger, pp. 109-10.

<sup>142</sup>Merrill, p. 193.

<sup>143</sup>E.g., Baldwin, p. 85.

<sup>144</sup>Merrill, p. 182.

<sup>145</sup>D. Baron, *The Visions and Prophecies of Zechariah*, p. 190.

<sup>146</sup>Cf. Baldwin, p. 133.

<sup>147</sup>Merrill, pp. 197-201.

"Christ is now a Priest but is still in the holiest within the veil (Heb. 9:11-14, 24; cp. Lev. 16:15) and seated on the Father's throne (Rev. 3:21). He has not yet come out to take His own throne (Heb. 9:28)."<sup>148</sup>

6:12 Zechariah was then to announce, in the name of sovereign Yahweh, that those present should "behold" (take note of, recognize) Joshua, whom Zechariah would designate as "Branch" (lit. Sprout, Heb. *semah*, cf. 3:8; Isa. 11:1; 53:2; Jer. 33:15; Hag. 2:23). Joshua represented (was a type of) the coming messianic Branch. This name signified that the coming Shoot would shoot up from His humble place of origin (cf. Isa. 53:2; Mic. 5:2). "He will branch out from where He is" is a pun on the word "branch." It means, "The shoot will shoot up from beneath (where there is little promise of life)." His kingdom would be widespread. Furthermore, He would build the temple of Yahweh. Zerubbabel, not Joshua, was God's choice to build the restoration temple (4:9-10), but Messiah, whom Joshua prefigured, would build the future temple for Yahweh (cf. Isa. 2:2-4; 56:6-7; Ezek. 40—43; Mic. 4:1-7; Hag. 2:6-9). For amillennialists, the temple equals the church.<sup>149</sup>

"How appropriate therefore that both the type (Joshua) and the antitype (Jesus) have a name meaning 'the Lord saves' (cf. NIV mg. at Matt 1:21)!"<sup>150</sup>

The Aramaic Targum, the Jerusalem Talmud, and a Midrash all regarded verse 12 as messianic. When Pilate said, "Behold, the man" (John 19:5), he was announcing to the Jews unwittingly that Jesus was the Branch promised in this verse.

6:13 Indeed, "He" (emphatic in the Hebrew text) would "build" the Lord's "temple." The Lord repeated this assurance for emphasis. The Branch would "bear the honor" of royal majesty (cf. Dan. 11:21; 1 Chron. 29:25), "sit" enthroned—Israel's priests never sat while ministering—and "rule" on David's "throne" (cf. 2 Sam. 7:16; Isa. 9:7; Luke 1:32). He "will be a priest," ruling as a king, and "peace" (Heb. *shalom*) will characterize His dual "offices."

Along with Psalm 110, this verse is one of the clearest statements in the Old Testament that the coming Davidic king would also be a priest (cf. Heb. 5:1-10; 7:1-25). Chisholm favored the view that Zechariah's audience would have understood that "the Davidic ruler, though not a priest as such, will enjoy the full support of the priesthood."<sup>151</sup>

<sup>148</sup>*The New Scofield . . .*, p. 968.

<sup>149</sup>E.g., Leupold, p. 124.

<sup>150</sup>Barker, p. 639.

<sup>151</sup>Chisholm, "A Theology . . .," p. 425.

6:14 The ceremonial "crown" that Zechariah made for Joshua was to remain in the restoration temple as "a reminder . . . to Helem" (strength; or Heldai, mole, v. 10), "Tobijah, Jedaiah, and Hen" (Josiah) "the son of Zephaniah." It would doubtless remind other Israelites as well, but they were the prominent men during this event. "Hen" means "gracious one" in Hebrew, and it was likely an honorary title for Josiah, who had been the host of this historic coronation (v. 10).

6:15 When the Branch appears, Gentiles from afar "will come" and help "build the temple" of Yahweh (cf. 2:11; 8:22; Isa. 2:2-4; 56:6-7; 60:1-7). The donors mentioned earlier (vv. 10, 14) were typical of future Gentiles who will come from afar—in the last days—to help build the Lord's house (cf. Isa. 60:4, 6, 9). When this happens, the people "will know" that Yahweh "has sent" Messiah to His people (cf. 2:8-11; 4:9). Another view is that the fulfillment would vindicate Zechariah as the Lord's messenger. All these people could participate in the building of the future temple, by bringing gifts (Isa. 56:7), if they were faithful to obey the Lord by doing all that He commanded (cf. Deut. 28:1-2, 15; 30:1-10).

"In the new covenant (Jer 31:33-34; Ezek 36:26-27), God personally guarantees that the people will ultimately obey; his Spirit will enable them to do so."<sup>152</sup>

What is the temple that the Branch will build? It appears to be a literal building in Jerusalem—where God will reside during the Millennium—that will bring great glory to Him (cf. Ezek. 40—46). There will be no temple in the New Jerusalem in the eternal state (Rev. 21:22). Whereas the church is now the temple of God (i.e., Christians corporately and local congregations of believers; 1 Cor. 3:16; 1 Pet. 2:5), the church is not in view here. The equality of Jewish and Gentile believers in one body (i.e., the church) was a mystery that was unknown until God revealed it later (Matt. 16:18; Eph. 2:11—3:11).

"Here we have the end and consummation of all the prophetic Scriptures: the crowning of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is only after the dark night of world judgment and punishment is passed, that the glorious light of Christ's coronation day will follow. This is one of the sublimest passages in the Scriptures on the Person and work of the Messiah."<sup>153</sup>

The sequence of events in the eight night visions, and the crowning of Joshua, argues for the traditional dispensational interpretation: that Jesus will begin reigning as the Davidic King when He returns to the earth at His second coming. The progressive dispensational view, on the other hand, as well as the covenant premillennial and amillennial views, are that Jesus began ruling as the Davidic king at His first advent.

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<sup>152</sup>Barker, p. 641.

<sup>153</sup>Feinberg, *God Remembers*, p. 100.

"The fulness [*sic*] of this Messianic prophecy can better be seen if we but marshal the distinctive features in order: 1. The humanity of the Branch. 2. The place of His birth. 3. The building of the millennial temple by Him. 4. His fitness to bear the glory of God. 5. His reign on the throne of David. 6. His priestly ministry. 7. The issue of His blessed ministry—peace."<sup>154</sup>

This is the end of the apocalyptic visionary section of the book. Chapters 7—14 contain regular prophetic messages. Some scholars have tried to correlate the last eight chapters of Zechariah and the eight night visions, but these attempts seem strained.

#### **IV. MESSAGES CONCERNING HYPOCRITICAL FASTING CHS. 7—8**

A question posed by representative Israelites provided the occasion for God to give four messages that Zechariah collected in the text here. They all deal with the issue of empty ritualism, which the original question introduced.

"As early as 1:3-6 it was clear that Zechariah was interested in the spiritual renewal of the postexilic community. Here he deals further with this problem. The purpose of chapters 7 and 8 is to impress on the people their need to live righteously in response to their past judgment and future glory."<sup>155</sup>

##### **A. THE QUESTION FROM THE DELEGATION FROM BETHEL 7:1-3**

- 7:1 A prophetic message came to Zechariah from the Lord in 518 B.C. The "fourth day of the ninth month" would have been in early December. "Chislev" is the Babylonian name of the month. This message, which comprises the following four messages in chapters 7 and 8, came to the prophet almost two years after he received the eight night visions (cf. 1:7), and about halfway through the period of temple reconstruction (520-515 B.C.).
- 7:2-3 Israelites who lived in "Bethel," about 10 miles north of Jerusalem (cf. Ezra 2:28; Neh. 7:32; 11:31), sent two representatives to ask the priests and prophets in the capital about how they should worship the Lord (cf. Mal. 1:9). The names of the two ambassadors were Babylonian, suggesting that they had been born in Babylonia during the Captivity. Another view is that a Jew living in Babylon named Bethel-Sharezar (lit. house of God-protect the king), whose title was Regem-melech (lit. king's friend), indicating his royal authority (from Darius), came with his men to pose the question.<sup>156</sup> A slightly different translation yields the view that Bethel-Sharezar sent Regem-melech and his men. Whoever these men were, they wanted to know if they should continue to "weep" and

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<sup>154</sup>Ibid., p. 106.

<sup>155</sup>Barker, p. 643.

<sup>156</sup>Baldwin, pp. 142-43.

"abstain" from food (i.e., to fast), which had become traditional but which the Mosaic Law did not require. The only fast that the Mosaic Law prescribed was on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:29; 23:27-32).

"Coming as they did from a place long associated with apostate worship (1 Kings 12:29-33; 2 Kings 10:29; Jer. 48:13; Amos 3:14; 4:4; 7:13), these men would be particularly concerned to determine orthodox praxis on behalf of those who sent them."<sup>157</sup>

There were four fasts that the Jews in exile had instituted to commemorate various events connected with the destruction of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. (cf. 8:19). The one "in the fifth month" memorialized the destruction of the temple (cf. 2 Kings 25:8-10).<sup>158</sup> Since the temple was almost complete (cf. Ezra 6:16), did the Lord want His people to continue to fast? The people knew that the captivity would last 70 years (Jer. 25:11-12), and 68 of these had already past. It seemed to them that fasting over the destruction of the temple might be inappropriate, since the Lord had enabled them to rebuild the temple and reestablish worship. The question was a reasonable one.

"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?"<sup>159</sup>

### **B. THE LORD'S REBUKE 7:4-7**

This is the first of four messages that Zechariah received from the Lord that bear on the question just raised. That there were four separate messages seems clear, since each one begins with the same preamble: "The word of the Lord came" (7:4, 8; 8:1; 18). The first two, in chapter 7, are negative, and the last two, in chapter 8, are positive.

7:4-5            The Lord spoke to Zechariah, and he proceeded to inform the messengers, "all the people in the land," and "the priests." The issue that the messengers had raised had widespread implications for the whole nation. The Lord asked—rhetorically—if the people had really observed the fasts that they had instituted in "the fifth and seventh months," for 70 years, for His benefit or for themselves. "Seventy years" is a round number for the length of the Captivity here, assuming the 70 years had not completely run

<sup>157</sup>Merrill, p. 208.

<sup>158</sup>*The Illustrated Family Encyclopedia of the Living Bible*, 8:93; Peter Ackroyd, *Exile and Restoration*, p. 207.

<sup>159</sup>Merrill, p. 209. Cf. McComiskey, p. 1125.

their course yet. The fast in the fifth month, on the ninth of Ab, memorialized the destruction of Solomon's temple by Nebuchadnezzar. The fast in the seventh month, on the second of Tishri, commemorated the assassination of Gedaliah and his associates at Mizpah (2 Kings 25:25; Jer. 41:2).<sup>160</sup> Evidently the people had turned these events into occasions for self-pity over their physical condition, rather than engaging in prayer and genuine spiritual repentance.

7:6-7 Likewise, when the people ate and drank, they did it for themselves—rather than to please the Lord. They were simply perpetuating the selfishness for which "former prophets" had rebuked their ancestors. The prophets in view had lived before the captivity, when the whole land and its cities were still full of inhabitants (e.g., Isa. 58:3-9; Joel 1:14; 2:12). Now there were far fewer Israelites occupying the land. The "Negev" to the south of Beersheba, and "the foothills" (Shephelah) toward the Mediterranean coast, were grazing and agricultural areas in which the returnees had not yet settled.

"Note that the inquiry put by the Bethel committee is not being answered directly. In fact, throughout chapters 7 and 8 no direct answer is offered. The reason is: the question is not an important issue. However, the attitude revealed by that question is of sufficient moment to receive exhaustive treatment."<sup>161</sup>

### **C. THE COMMAND TO REPENT 7:8-14**

Having referred to the words of the former prophets (v. 7), Zechariah now summarized them as an exhortation to his own generation of Israelites.

7:8-10 Zechariah received another message from the Lord related to this inquiry. The sovereign Lord commanded His people to "dispense true justice" (Heb. *mishpat*), to exercise "kindness" (Heb. *hesed*) "and compassion" (Heb. *rahamim*) toward each other, "not" to "oppress" the weak and vulnerable among them, and "not" to plot "evil" against each other.

"Here . . . is a concise yet comprehensive range of ethical teaching condensed into four pithy utterances."<sup>162</sup>

"Morality is certainly not piety, but the piety which does not include morality is a mere delusion. It mocks God and insults man."<sup>163</sup>

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<sup>160</sup>*The Illustrated . . .*, 8:93.

<sup>161</sup>Leupold, p. 133.

<sup>162</sup>Ellis, p. 1037. Cf. Mic. 6:8.

<sup>163</sup>J. P. Lange, ed., *A Commentary on the Holy Scriptures*, vol. 7: *The Book of Zechariah Expounded*, by Talbot W. Chambers, p. 58.



7:11-12 When the former generations of Israelites had heard these commands, "they refused to pay attention" to the Lord. They "turned" away from Him stubbornly like a rebellious ox, and they put their fingers in ("stopped") "their ears" so they would not hear Him. They hardened "their hearts" (minds and wills) like "flint" (Heb. *shamir*, diamond), so they could not hear the Law, or the Holy Spirit's messages, "through the former prophets" whom God had sent to them.

"This remarkable doctrine of the Holy Spirit as mediator of God's word to the prophets, who were themselves its mediators, has no parallels in the prophetic books. . . . Zechariah is the first to record this aspect of the doctrine of the Spirit."<sup>164</sup>

God had proceeded to dull the people's ears in discipline because they would not hear (cf. Isa. 6:10; Acts 28:27). Consequently great wrath had come from the Lord against them.

"One indispensable ingredient in true spirituality is a dogged attentiveness to familiar truths, but they did not 'pay attention.'"<sup>165</sup>

7:13-14 Since the forefathers refused to listen to the Lord's Spirit when "He called" to them (cf. Neh. 9:20, 30; 2 Pet. 1:21), the Lord refused to listen to them when "they called" to Him in prayer (cf. Jer. 11:11-14). Instead, He "scattered" them "among" many "nations," as though a windstorm had blown them off the Promised Land (cf. Deut. 28:36-37, 64-68; Hos. 13:3). As a result, "the land" had become "desolate"—with none of the Israelites returning to it during the Captivity (cf. Deut. 28:41-42, 45-52). This desolation of the formerly "pleasant land" of Israel was due to the sin of the people (cf. Ps. 106:24; Jer. 3:19; Dan. 11:16, 41).

". . . while Zechariah may well not have answered the original enquiry directly, he had nevertheless taken up the very essence of ritual in the heart of the worshiper, which was that the outward form of religious activity was useless and lifeless without an accompanying spirit of obedience, confession and repentance."<sup>166</sup>

#### **D. ISRAEL'S RESTORATION TO GOD'S FAVOR 8:1-17**

Chapter 8 not only contains two major messages from the Lord (vv. 1-17, 18-23), but 10 minor messages—"a *decalogue* of divine words"<sup>167</sup>—that make up the two major ones. Another writer believed there were seven oracles in this section.<sup>168</sup> "Thus says the Lord"

<sup>164</sup>Baldwin, p. 147.

<sup>165</sup>Barker, p. 647.

<sup>166</sup>Ellis, pp. 1037-38.

<sup>167</sup>Leupold, p. 141.

<sup>168</sup>Waltke, p. 846.

introduces each of these minor messages (vv. 2, 3, 4-5, 6, 7-8, 9-13, 14-18, 19, 20-22, 23), each of which contains a promise of future blessing for Israel. These short sayings may have been the texts of different sermons that Zechariah had preached and later wove together because of their similar content.<sup>169</sup>

"In the preceding section [ch. 7] Israel was to repent and live righteously after the punishment of her captivity; here [in ch. 8] she is to repent and live righteously because of the promise of her future restoration."<sup>170</sup>

The whole chapter presents Israel's eventual restoration and participation in full millennial blessing.<sup>171</sup> The restoration from exile in Zechariah's day was only a precursor of greater future blessing and prosperity.

"Of a total of 36 occurrences of 'YHWH of hosts' in Zechariah, 15 are in this one oracle [ch. 8], 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 [8:1-8], 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."<sup>172</sup>

I counted 16 occurrences of "the LORD of hosts" and four more of "the LORD" in this chapter.

8:1           The Lord's word came to Zechariah.

"The introductory formula lacks the words *to me* in the original, a fact which suggests that Zechariah was repeating words he had often spoken rather than expressing a new revelation."<sup>173</sup>

8:2           Almighty Yahweh had revealed that He was very "jealous" for the exclusive love and commitment of His people (cf. 1:14). His loving jealousy burned, "with great wrath," within Him.

". . . YHWH is a 'jealous God' (Ex. 20:5), one who tolerates no rivals real or imaginary and who is zealous to protect His uniqueness and maintain the allegiance of His people to Himself alone. He is also jealous for His people, that is, He is protective of them against all who would challenge them or claim to be elect alongside them. Therefore, He is zealous to safeguard their interests and come to their defense."<sup>174</sup>

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<sup>169</sup>Baldwin, p. 148.

<sup>170</sup>Barker, pp. 649-50.

<sup>171</sup>Unger, p. 132.

<sup>172</sup>Merrill, p. 220.

<sup>173</sup>Baldwin, p. 149.

<sup>174</sup>Merrill, pp. 220-21.

The English word "jealous" derives from the Latin *zelus*, "zeal."

"The zeal with which God had carried through His chastisement of Israel and then of the nations (1:15, 21) was now burning to restore the covenant bond."<sup>175</sup>

8:3 Yahweh announced that He would "return to Zion" and reside among His people in "Jerusalem" again (cf. 1:16; 2:10). When He did, people would call Jerusalem the "City of Truth," and they would refer to the temple mount as the "Holy Mountain" (cf. 14:20-21). Finally the recurring cycle of apostasy followed by punishment would end.

"Jerusalem did not acquire this character in the period after the captivity, in which, though not defiled by gross idolatry, as in the times before the captivity, it was polluted by other moral abominations no less than it had been before. Jerusalem becomes a faithful city for the first time through the Messiah, and it is through Him that the temple mountain first really becomes the holy mountain."<sup>176</sup>

8:4-5 Then the elderly would feel secure enough to "sit in the" open "streets" again, and children would again play in the streets because they would be safe. During the destruction of Jerusalem, both of these groups of Israelites had suffered greatly (Lam. 2:21). In other words, Jerusalem would become a place of tranquility, long life, peace, prosperity, and security for even the most defenseless of her citizens (cf. Isa. 65:20-25). These conditions await the return of Jesus Christ at His second coming.

"In one of the most amazing and challenging statements about measurement of the health of society, Zechariah suggests that we look at the place the old and the young have in that society."<sup>177</sup>

8:6 Even though these blessings seemed impossible to the people of Zechariah's day, they were not to assume that they would be impossible for the Lord. His promises of blessing were as hard for the returned exiles to believe as His threats of judgment had been for their ancestors previously.

8:7-8 Sovereign Yahweh promised to deliver His people from the distant places in the world where He had scattered them, and to "bring them" back to live "in . . . Jerusalem" (cf. Isa. 11:11-12; Jer. 30:7-11; 31:7-8). Jerusalem stands for the whole land here (by metonymy), not "the true church of God."<sup>178</sup> It identifies the place where people would come to worship the

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<sup>175</sup>Baldwin, p. 149.

<sup>176</sup>Keil, 2:312.

<sup>177</sup>Smith, p. 233.

<sup>178</sup>Leupold, p. 148. Cf. McComiskey, p. 1141.

Lord. There they would enjoy intimacy with Him, a relationship marked by truth and righteousness. This future Exodus depended on Yahweh's electing grace and His covenant faithfulness, just as much as the original Exodus did.

"'They will be my people, and I will be . . . their God' is covenant terminology, pertaining to intimate fellowship in a covenant relationship (cf. Gen 17:7-8; Exod 6:7; 19:5-6; 29:45-46; Lev 11:45; 22:33; 25:38; 26:12, 44-45; Num 15:41; Deut 4:20; 29:12-13; Jer 31:33; 32:38; Ezek 37:27; 2 Cor 6:16; Rev 21:3)."<sup>179</sup>

"This is one of the greatest and most comprehensive promises in reference to Israel's restoration and conversion to be found in the prophetic Scriptures."<sup>180</sup>

8:9 The Lord also told the people to gain strength from the "words . . . of the prophets" who had encouraged them to complete the rebuilding of the temple ever since they began the project (cf. Josh. 1:7; 2 Sam. 2:7; 16:21; Hag. 2:4). These prophets were Haggai, Zechariah, and perhaps others (Ezra 5:1-2). Probably the resumption of construction in 520 B.C. (Hag. 2:18) is in view, rather than the restoration of the foundation in 536 B.C. (Ezra 3:8). Between these dates the people did little work on the temple, especially between 530 and 520 B.C.

8:10 Before the returnees began to rebuild in earnest, there was severe unemployment, so there were no wages for many of the people (cf. Hag. 1:6). Even the animals were not earning their keep. "There was" also "no peace," because the "enemies" of the Jews oppressed them (cf. Ezra 4:1-5; Hag. 1:6-11; 2:15-19). The Lord Himself was ultimately responsible for the antagonism that existed then.

"This verse presents a contrast of the present, when they had begun to obey the Word of God, with the past, when they did not."<sup>181</sup>

8:11-12 The Lord promised to "treat the remnant of" His "people" differently in the future than He had in the past (cf. Hag. 2:19). "Peace" would prevail for the people as they sowed their seed: their fields would become productive (cf. Hag. 2:19), there would be abundant moisture so things would grow (cf. Hag. 1:10-11), and "the remnant" would enjoy the fruits of all these blessings. These were some of the things God had promised the Israelites for covenant obedience (Lev. 26:3-10; Deut. 28:11-12; cf. Ezek. 34:25-27).

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<sup>179</sup>Barker, p. 651.

<sup>180</sup>Baron, p. 237.

<sup>181</sup>Unger, p. 140.

8:13 Even though the Israelites had been "a curse among the nations" in the past (cf. Deut. 28:15-68; Jer. 24:9; 25:18; 29:22), the Lord would "save" them and make them "a blessing" to the world in the future.

"Not only the two tribes [of Judah] but the ten [of Israel]. This has never yet been fulfilled."<sup>182</sup>

One of the purposes of these promises was to remove the Jews' present "fear" and give them strength to complete the temple. "Let your hands be strong" is the exhortation that frames this sixth message of encouragement (cf. v. 9).

8:14-15 Yahweh of armies also promised that "just as" He had "purposed" to bring His people into difficult times because of their forefathers' sins (cf. Jer. 4:28; 51:12; Lam. 2:17), so He had "purposed" to bless ("do good to") "Jerusalem" in the near future. Covenant disobedience had brought divine discipline, but covenant obedience would bring divine blessing. As He had not relented from bringing the first promise to pass, so He would not go back on the second promise. His determination was equally strong in both instances. Therefore the people should "not fear" (cf. v. 13).

"These glorious eschatological promises illuminating the future of the Jews and setting before them their future national hope also came as an illustration to them of the blessing God had in store for them at that time. To describe this the prophet uses the expression **in these days** (v. 15). But the benefits that were immediate *did not exhaust the full scope* of these sweeping prophetic previews.

"Like Jonah out of God's will they have caused a storm among the Gentiles. Yet in a future day, after their great tribulation, like Jonah's experience in the fish, they shall be restored to faith and obedience to minister to the nations of the millennium, as Jonah did to the Ninevites."<sup>183</sup>

8:16-17 In view of this promise, the remnant should speak truthfully with each other. They should also practice justice and promote "peace" (Heb. *shalom*) in their community life. They should stop plotting to take advantage of one another and stop lying under oath—because the Lord hates these things (cf. Prov. 6:16-19; Mal. 2:16).

"One theological rationale for ethics, then, is awareness that God hates attitudes and actions contrary to his character. We are to love what God loves and hate what he hates."<sup>184</sup>

<sup>182</sup>Perowne, p. 105. Cf. Jer. 31:1-31; Ezek. 37:11-28.

<sup>183</sup>Unger, p. 145.

<sup>184</sup>Barker, p. 653.

Verses 14-15 explain God's part in the people's immediate restoration, and verses 16-17 explain theirs.

### **E. KINGDOM JOY AND JEWISH FAVOR 8:18-23**

This final section of this part of the book (chs. 7—8) returns full circle to the theme with which it began, namely, the people's concern about fasting (cf. 7:1-7). These messages began after a few Bethelites came to Jerusalem (7:2-7), and they ended with the promise that multitudes of Gentiles representing all languages would come to Jerusalem. The fasting of the past would become feasting in the future.

8:18-19 Zechariah received another message from the Lord Almighty. He promised that in the future, the sorrowful fasts that the Jews had observed in captivity would give way to joyful "feasts." Thus at the end of this section of messages on hypocritical fasting (chs. 7—8), the Lord provided at least a partial answer to the question that the messengers from Bethel had asked about the traditional fasts (7:3). In addition to the fasts in the fifth and seventh months (7:3, 5), the exiles also had commemorated the breaching of the walls of Jerusalem (2 Kings 25:3-4; Jer. 39:2) in the fourth month and the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem (2 Kings 25:1; Ezek. 24:2) in the tenth month.<sup>185</sup> Strict modern Jews still observe these four fasts. They seemingly died out after the second (restoration) temple was finished, but after the destruction of this temple in A.D. 70, the observance of these fasts revived.<sup>186</sup>

"The manifestation of the kingdom will be attended by such a fulness [*sic*] of salvation that Judah will forget to commemorate the former mournful events and will only have occasion to rejoice in the benefits of grace bestowed by God."<sup>187</sup>

The immediate practical application of this revelation was that the people should "love truth and peace" (cf. Lev. 19:18, 34; Deut. 6:5; Ps. 31:23; Amos 5:15). They could value these ideals in the present because they were sure to come in the future. Before mourning could become joy for them, the returnees would need to love truth and peace.

8:20-22 The Lord foretold that people from one of the world's cities would contact people from another of these cities, and would plan to go up to Jerusalem immediately to worship ("entreat the favor of") the Lord (cf. 7:2). They would do this eagerly, not out of a sense of duty or obligation (cf. 2:11; Isa. 2:1-5; Mic. 4:1-5). Many people, representing many nations from around the world, "will come" to "Jerusalem" to pray and worship Yahweh Almighty.

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<sup>185</sup>*The Illustrated . . .*, 8:93.

<sup>186</sup>See Keil, 2:319.

<sup>187</sup>Unger, p. 148.

"Jerusalem is no longer viewed simply as the heart of Judaism but as the centre of God's dealings with all nations, and as a glorious realization of the ancient promise given to Abraham (cf. Gen. 12:3)."<sup>188</sup>

"With the Davidic kingdom established, Israel will be a medium of blessing to the entire globe."<sup>189</sup>

8:23 In this future time of Yahweh's blessing, many Gentiles from many nations and language groups will lay hold "of a Jew." In this case, as in many others, 10 is a round number suggesting completeness (cf. Gen. 31:7; Lev. 26:26; Judg. 17:10; Ruth 4:2; 1 Sam. 1:8; Jer. 41:8). They will do so, not to persecute him (as in times past), but to ask his permission to accompany him—because God's blessing would rest on the Jews so obviously.

"The prophecy teaches, then, that Israel will be the means of drawing the nations of the earth to the Lord in the time of the Messiah's reign of righteousness upon earth."<sup>190</sup>

Amillennialists understand this promise as fulfilled by many Gentiles coming to salvation in the present age through Jewish influences (e.g., Messiah, the scriptures, etc.).<sup>191</sup>

"By way of summary . . . we can see the purpose of the Spirit through the prophet in answer to the question concerning fasting. It was a twofold objective: a present and a future one. For the time then present the Spirit pointed out the sham in the fastings, the need for reality and sincerity, the vivid warning from the past sins of the forefathers, and the imperative demand for righteousness in all the relationships of life. With reference to the future Zechariah was directed to point to a day of glorious promise for Israel when the Lord would dwell in her midst, when prosperity and peace would characterize her land, when her dispersed ones would be gathered back to their homeland, and . . . when her fasts would be turned into feasts, the glory of the Lord being so manifest in Israel that all the nations would be drawn to Him through His people."<sup>192</sup>

Chapters 7 and 8 are a fruitful source for Christian preaching since there is empty ritualism in the church today.

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<sup>188</sup>Ellis, p. 1039.

<sup>189</sup>Unger, p. 148.

<sup>190</sup>Feinberg, *God Remembers*, p. 146.

<sup>191</sup>E.g., McComiskey, p. 1157.

<sup>192</sup>Feinberg, *God Remembers*, pp. 146-47.

## **V. ORACLES ABOUT THE MESSIAH AND ISRAEL'S FUTURE CHS. 9—14**

This part of Zechariah contains two undated oracles that are almost entirely eschatological. They expand the eschatological vision in chapters 1—8, and modify its generally optimistic view, with emphasis on Israel's purification. The prophet may have composed these chapters after the temple was completed. The phrase "on that day" occurs 18 times and points to the distant future, as is clear from their contexts. The centerpiece of this section is the messianic King who will appear and bring both judgment and blessing.

"Just as the eight night visions (chapters 1—6) and prophecies springing out of the question of the national fasts (chapters 7 and 8) all have their fulfillment in events leading *up to and into the kingdom* (without an exception), so chapters 9—14 likewise comprehend *the same great Messianic future of Israel*."<sup>193</sup>

"One must admit that once he begins a careful study of chapters 9—14 he is immediately made aware of the change of mood, outlook, style, and composition of this part of the book compared to the first eight chapters. . . .

". . . the prophet in this section has entered another realm of thought and perspective, much as did Isaiah in the latter part (chaps. 40—66) of his work. . . . The perspective . . . is primarily eschatological, it lacks any indisputable connection to contemporary persons or events, and it is dominated by cryptic allusions to cosmic, redemptive, and messianic themes that have no accompanying interpretation, contrary to the case in Zech. 1—8. In short, the prophet has broken free of the mold in which he cast the material of the first part and has created a new form in which to express the grand and glorious ideas that permeate his thinking in the second part."<sup>194</sup>

Many critics have concluded, therefore, that a different person wrote chapters 9—14. Lindsey, however, pointed out many thematic parallels between the eight night visions and the two oracles.<sup>195</sup>

"The last six chapters are very different. Gone are the bold outlines, and instead there are enigmatic references to enemies of former days, grim battles, betrayal, bitter weeping, interspersed with assurances of peace, prosperity and ultimate victory. It is probably with these chapters in mind that Jerome wrote, '. . . that most obscure book of the prophet Zechariah, and of the Twelve the longest . . .'.<sup>196</sup> Obscure though it is in places, chapters 9—14 are the most quoted section of the prophets in the passion narratives of the Gospels and, next to Ezekiel, Zechariah has influenced the author of Revelation more than any other Old Testament writer."<sup>197</sup>

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<sup>193</sup>Unger, p. 238

<sup>194</sup>Merrill, pp. 239-40.

<sup>195</sup>Lindsey, p. 1561. See also McComiskey, p. 1017.

<sup>196</sup>Footnote 1: Quoted by P. Lamarche, *Zacharie i-xiv: Structure, Litteraire, et Messianisme*, pp. 8-9.

<sup>197</sup>Baldwin, p. 59.



"In the first [burden] (chaps. 9—11), the judgment through which Gentile world-power over Israel is finally destroyed, and Israel is endowed with strength to overcome all their enemies, forms the fundamental thought and centre of gravity of the prophetic description. In the second [burden] (chaps. 12—14), the judgment through which Israel itself is sifted and purged in the final great conflict with the nations, and transformed into the holy nation of Jehovah, forms the leading topic."<sup>198</sup>

This section of the book is also chiasmic (cf. chs. 1—6).

- "A God comes to protect and bless (chs. 9—10)  
 B The people reject God's shepherd (11:1-14)  
 C The worthless shepherd hurts the flock (11:15-17)  
 C' The nations come to destroy Jerusalem (12:1-9)  
 B' The people repent and turn to God (12:10—13:6)  
 A' God comes to protect and bless (13:7—14:21)"<sup>199</sup>

#### **A. THE BURDEN CONCERNING THE NATIONS: THE ADVENT AND REJECTION OF MESSIAH CHS. 9—11**

In this first oracle there is much change. Judgment is coming on Israel's enemies (9:1-7), but Israel will enjoy deliverance (9:8). In the midst of much blessing (9:9—10:12), Israel will experience sorrow (ch. 11). The messianic King will come, but He will be rejected.

#### **1. The coming of the true king ch. 9**

This chapter reveals the destruction of nations, the preservation of Zion, the advent of Messiah, and the deliverance and blessing of Israel.

#### **The destruction of nations and the preservation of Zion 9:1-8**

The first four verses of this poem deal with the north and the last four with the south. The first two verses and the last two speak of salvation, and the middle four speak of judgment. The passage begins and ends with references to eyes: the eyes of men (v. 1), and the eyes of God (v. 8).

- 9:1-2 The Lord sent a burden (Heb. *massa'*, heavy pronouncement; cf. 2 Kings 9:25-26; Jer. 23:33) to Zechariah that announced judgment and blessing.<sup>200</sup> It concerned the lands of "Hadrach" (Hatarikka, near Hamath),<sup>201</sup> "Hamath" on the Orontes River (a city farther south in Aram, cf. Amos 6:2), "Damascus" (the capital of Aram, still farther south), and "Tyre and Sidon" (Phoenician cities between Aram and Israel, cf. Ezek.

<sup>198</sup>Baron, p. 285.

<sup>199</sup>Dyer, p. 827.

<sup>200</sup>For an excursus on the meaning of this rarely used Hebrew word, see Baldwin, pp. 162-63. For a more thorough study, see P. A. H. de Boer, *An Inquiry into the Meaning of the Term Massa'*.

<sup>201</sup>See J. B. Pritchard, ed., *Ancient Near Eastern Texts*, pp. 282-83.

26:3-14; 28:20-24). The order of these cities in the text is from north to south. Earlier prophets had seen enemies invading Israel from the north (Isa. 41:25; Jer. 1:14-15; Ezek. 26:7), but now Yahweh would take the same route, destroying Israel's enemies as He came.

"Originally the Mediterranean coast had been designated Israel's territory (Nu. 34:5, 6) and yet it had never been possessed by Israel. Now at last the Lord will claim it."<sup>202</sup>

This revelation concerned a time when all the people of the world, especially the Israelites, would be looking toward Yahweh. Some translators believed the text means that the Lord has His eye on all people, just as He has His eye on the tribes of Israel.<sup>203</sup> As history would show, this later took place when Alexander the Great was rapidly moving south toward Egypt, after defeating the Persians at Issus in 333 B.C. The whole world was worried about what he would do next, especially the residents of the cities of Palestine that lay in his path. All these people would have their eyes on Alexander, but he was only the Lord's instrument, so Zechariah could say that they were really looking to Yahweh. The nations would have done so unwittingly, but Israel would have looked to Him for protection.

9:3-4 Tyre had trusted in physical fortifications for her defense, and in stockpiles of "silver" and "gold" for her security. She had built a 150-foot high wall around the city, which stood on an island just offshore, following Nebuchadnezzar's earlier unsuccessful 13-year siege (cf. Isa. 23:4; Ezek. 29:18), and she had gained great wealth through commerce. There is wordplay (paronomasia) in the Hebrew text. "Tyre" (Heb. *sor*, rock) was "a fortress" (Heb. *masor*, stronghold, rampart). Nevertheless, the Lord would "dispossess" Tyre and displace "her wealth," casting it into the Mediterranean Sea. The parts of the city that would not go down into the water would go up in flames. Alexander destroyed Tyre by building a causeway from the mainland to the island city, and then *leveling* it.<sup>204</sup>

9:5-6 The Philistine cities farther south along the Mediterranean coast would observe Tyre's fate and fear, especially "Ekron," the northernmost of the four cities mentioned. The fifth city of the Philistine pentapolis, Gath, had lost all significance by Zechariah's time, which probably explains its omission here (cf. 2 Chron. 26:6). God would also destroy these cities and populate them with a mixed group of citizens. Thus He would humble the pride of the Philistines. This too happened when Alexander swept south.<sup>205</sup>

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<sup>202</sup>Baldwin, p. 157.

<sup>203</sup>E.g., *ibid.*, p. 159.

<sup>204</sup>For accounts of Alexander's destruction of Tyre, see G. W. Botsford and C. A. Robinson Jr., *Hellenic History*, pp. 314-20; and A. A. Trever, *History of Ancient Civilization*, 1:456-59.

<sup>205</sup>McComiskey, p. 1162.

- 9:7 The Lord would also "remove" the "blood" that these pagans ate, which was forbidden in Israel, from their mouths. He would take the unclean, "detestable" food that they ate, from their mouths. Drinking blood and eating unclean food was part of Philistine pagan worship (cf. Isa. 65:4; 66:3, 17), so the judgment in view included punishment for idolatry. Some remaining Philistines would turn to the Lord and become like the Israelites in their faith in Yahweh. As the Jebusites became incorporated into Israel in David's day (cf. 2 Sam. 24:16; 1 Chron. 21:18), so would the Philistines in the future, from Zechariah's viewpoint.
- 9:8 The Lord promised to protect His people and land—as with a band of soldiers—since enemies would oppose them. "House" is probably a metonym for the whole land including its people. No enemy would oppress them ever again because the Lord had seen the plight of His people and would defend them (cf. 4:10; Exod. 3:7; Ps. 32:8). This promise of no more oppression anticipates the second advent of Messiah.

"For their preservation at the time of Alexander and for their future deliverance from every oppressor, Israel is indebted to the providence of God which watched over them for good."<sup>206</sup>

This section is a prophetic description of Yahweh's march from the north, using Alexander the Great as His instrument, destroying Gentiles nations but preserving the Jews. Zechariah later predicted the coming Roman Empire (11:4-14) and the kingdom of Messiah (chs. 12—14).

"As history shows, the agent of the Lord's judgment was Alexander the Great. After defeating the Persians (333 B.C.), Alexander moved swiftly toward Egypt. On his march he toppled the cities in the Aramean (Syrian) interior, as well as those on the Mediterranean coast. Yet, on coming to Jerusalem, he refused to destroy it."<sup>207</sup>

Josephus reported that Alexander had a dream and because of it decided to spare Jerusalem.<sup>208</sup>

"The first section of this . . . part of the book establishes from the start two important facts: the Lord's victory is certain, and he intends to bring back to Himself peoples long alienated from Him. These truths underlie all that follows and culminate in the universal worship of the King, the Lord of hosts, in 14:16-19."<sup>209</sup>

"One should not . . . 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

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<sup>206</sup>Unger, p. 160.

<sup>207</sup>Barker, p. 657.

<sup>208</sup>Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, 11:8:3-5.

<sup>209</sup>Baldwin, p. 162.

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."<sup>210</sup>

### The advent of Zion's King 9:9-10

"This text is one of the most messianically significant passages of all the Bible, in both the Jewish and Christian traditions. Judaism sees in it a basis for a royal messianic expectation, whereas the NT and Christianity see a prophecy of the triumphal entry of Jesus Christ into Jerusalem on the Sunday before His crucifixion (Matt. 25:5; John 12:15). Thus, though the fulfillment may be in dispute, there is unanimous conviction that a descendant of David is depicted here, one who, though humble, rides as a victor into his capital city Jerusalem. The way will have been prepared by the imposition of universal peace, following which the king will exercise dominion over the whole world."<sup>211</sup>

"We have pictured for us: (1) the Agent of peace, (2) the method of peace, and (3) the kingdom of peace."<sup>212</sup>

9:9 The Israelites should "rejoice greatly" because their King was "coming to" them (cf. Zeph. 3:15). The first part of this verse contains three figures of speech: Zechariah personified "Zion" and "Jerusalem" as daughters rejoicing and shouting, he named the city in place of its inhabitants (metonymy), and he used the city to represent the whole nation (synecdoche). Israel's King would be a just ruler who would bring salvation with Him.

"He is victorious, not in himself or anything that he personally commands, but by the grace, and in the might, of the God of Israel. . . . His triumph, therefore, is the triumph of the faith of the Servant of Yahweh."<sup>213</sup>

"The world's peace depends upon a Savior and His salvation."<sup>214</sup>

The "king" would, therefore, be "humble," not proud and boastful. Zechariah pictured this humble king riding on a gentle "donkey colt" (cf. Gen. 49:11; Matt. 21:1-9; Mark 11:1-10; Luke 19:28-38; John 12:12-15). A donkey's colt was a purebred donkey, one born of a female donkey rather than of a mule.

<sup>210</sup>Merrill, pp. 247-48. Cf. Chisholm, *Handbook on . . .*, p. 468.

<sup>211</sup>Merrill, pp. 249-50. For further explanation of the Jewish view, see Joseph Klausner, *The Messianic Idea in Israel*, pp. 203-40.

<sup>212</sup>Feinberg, *God Remembers*, p. 163.

<sup>213</sup>H. G. Mitchell, "Haggai and Zechariah," in *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi and Jonah*, p. 273.

<sup>214</sup>Feinberg, *God Remembers*, p. 165.

"It thus qualified to be a royal mount."<sup>215</sup>

In the ancient Near East, rulers commonly rode donkeys if they came in peace (Judg. 5:10; 10:4; 12:14; 2 Sam. 16:2; 1 Kings 1:33), but they rode horses into war. This verse gives one reason the Israelites should rejoice: the coming of the King. Alexander the Great's coming inspired fear, but Messiah's coming would inspire joy.

9:10 "The entire age of the church fits between Zechariah 9:9 and 9:10, just as it does between Isaiah 9:6 and 7 and after the comma in Isaiah 61:2."<sup>216</sup>

This verse gives a second reason for rejoicing: the establishment of the King's kingdom. The Gospel writers believed Jesus was the coming King, but they said He fulfilled only verse 9, not verse 10, during His past earthly ministry (Matt. 21:5; John 12:15; cf. Rev. 19:11-16). The Lord would end war in Israel, and would establish peace in the world, with His sovereign proclamation (cf. Isa. 2:4; 9:5-7; 11:1-10; Mic. 5:10-15). Note the worldwide extent of Messiah's kingdom predicted here.

"The chariot, the war-horse, and the battle bow represent the whole arsenal used in ancient warfare; so the passage implies the destruction of this whole arsenal."<sup>217</sup>

Yahweh would rule through this King over Israel, and His dominion would be worldwide, from the Euphrates River in the East to the ends of the earth (a merism; cf. Ps. 72:8-11; Isa. 66:18). In both of these verses, Messiah contrasts with Alexander the Great, the king who initially fulfilled verses 1-8.

"One clue to the anticipation of a twofold event—a Palm Sunday as well as eschatological procession—lies in the clear difference in tone or emphasis between v. 9 and v. 10. In v. 9 the coming one, designated king to be sure, nevertheless is described as 'humble' or 'lowly,' a most inappropriate way to speak of one whose triumph is complete in every respect. Only in v. 10 is that triumph translated into universal dominion. The lowly one of v. 9, though victorious in some sense, does not achieve the fruits of that victory until v. 10.

"Admittedly, exegesis of the passage apart from NT considerations would never uncover the distinction just suggested between the verses."<sup>218</sup>

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<sup>215</sup>Baldwin, p. 166.

<sup>216</sup>Wiersbe, p. 467.

<sup>217</sup>Barker, p. 663.

<sup>218</sup>Merrill, p. 250.

This ambiguity resulted in some pre-Christian sects of Judaism, including the Qumran community, expecting two Messiahs.<sup>219</sup>

### **The deliverance and blessing of Zion's people 9:11-17**

Before Messiah can reign in peace, He must destroy all enemies, and deliver and restore His people (cf. Ps. 110).

9:11 As for the Israelites (Zion), the Lord promised to set free those of them whom their enemies would hold prisoner. He pictured this as taking them out of a dry "cistern," where they were captives ("prisoners") like Joseph and Jeremiah (Gen. 37:24; Jer. 38:6-9).

"God's people had been in the 'pit' of Babylonian exile, but they would find themselves in a worse predicament in the end of the age. From that pit God would again retrieve them according to His faithfulness to His covenant promises."<sup>220</sup>

"Blood" sacrifices ratified the Abrahamic Covenant (Gen. 15:9-11) and the Mosaic Covenant (Exod. 24:3-8; 29:38-46; cf. Mark 14:24).

9:12 The Lord instructed these former Israelite prisoners of the nations—who were now free—to "return" to their Stronghold, namely: Himself (cf. Ps. 18:2; 31:3; 71:3; 91:2; 144:2; Jer. 16:19; Nah. 1:7). He Himself promised to "restore" to them "double" of what He had allowed their enemy to take from them (cf. Job 42:10). A double restoration of joy pictures a complete restoration (by metonymy; cf. Job 42:12-13; Isa. 40:2; 51:19; 61:7).

9:13-14 Yahweh, as the Divine Warrior, would use Israel as a weapon to subdue the Gentiles. "Judah" would be His "bow," and "Ephraim" would be His arrow ("fill the bow"). The "sons" of "Zion" would be His "warrior's sword." He was in complete command of Israel's affairs. He would come against the nations, like an army called to advance with a "trumpet," and like the strong southern "storm winds" (cf. Exod. 24:9-10, 15, 18). This verse saw initial, partial fulfillment when the Jews overthrew the Greeks during the Maccabean revolts in the second century B.C. But final, complete fulfillment awaits Messiah's second coming.<sup>221</sup>

9:15-16 The Lord would "defend" Israel, and would cause His people to be victorious over their enemies. The death of these enemies would be a sacrifice to Him. However, the Israelites would experience deliverance and victory, like "a flock" of sheep protected by their Shepherd. They

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<sup>219</sup>See Klausner, p. 394.

<sup>220</sup>Merrill, p. 258.

<sup>221</sup>See H. A. Ironside, *Notes on the Minor Prophets*, p. 394.

would be precious and beautiful ("sparkling") in the Lord's land, as jewels in "a crown" as they circled Jerusalem's hills. They would "trample on the sling stones" (v. 15) used in warfare, and would become precious "stones" in the King's "crown" (v. 16).

9:17 The Israelites would be very attractive then. They would all enjoy plenty of the best food and drink; they would "flourish" and prosper, having an abundance of all that human beings need.

An amillennial view that illustrates a spiritual, as contrasted with a literal, interpretation follows:

"The citizens of Christ's kingdom as well as God's ancient people are a landed people. Hebrews 3 and 5 make this clear, affirming the believer's landedness in the gospel—'at-homeness in Christ.' Today, the fruit of the land that causes its citizens to flourish is the fruit of salvation."<sup>222</sup>

## **2. The restoration of the true people ch. 10**

The first part of this oracle focused particularly on the true King who would come and exercise sovereignty over the nations (ch. 9). Now the emphasis changes to the people of the King, the Israelites, who will return to the Promised Land and rule with the King (ch. 10). Like the revelation in chapter 9, this chapter also has a near and a far fulfillment: the *near* being the revival of Israel's power under Judas Maccabeus in the second century B.C., and the *far* being the return and reign of Messiah.

"Chapter 9 presents the victory of God's people from the positive side for the most part, showing how the true Israel shall be made strong by the Lord and shall prevail. Without abandoning this point of view, chapter 10 brings greater emphasis to bear upon the negative side of the victory, namely, how the enemies shall be brought low. Yet particular stress is at the same time laid upon the gathering of the scattered Israelites."<sup>223</sup>

10:1 The Lord urged His people, in the day of blessing just described, to "ask" Him to send "rain" when they needed it in the "spring," when they sowed their seed. He promised to send it, and it would cause their crops and other "vegetation in the field" to grow (cf. 9:11; Deut. 11:13-14). Asking *Him* is only reasonable, since He is the One who creates "storm clouds." The Canaanites gave credit to Baal for sending rain and producing fertility, but Yahweh was the true rainmaker (cf. Jer. 14:22; Amos 5:8). Since rain is often a symbol of many types of blessing in the Old Testament, spiritual as well as physical blessing is probably in view here (cf. 12:10; Isa. 55:10-12; Hos. 6:3; Joel 2:21-32). Many good commentators included this verse with 9:11-17 because of the continuation of thought. However, all of chapter 10 continues the thought of the previous pericope.

<sup>222</sup>McComiskey, p. 1174.

<sup>223</sup>Leupold, p. 189.

10:2 In contrast to the only true God, "*teraphim*" (household idols; cf. Gen. 31:19; Judg. 17:5, 14; 18:5; 1 Sam. 15:23; Hos. 3:4) only led people into "iniquity," and "diviners" saw misleading "visions" and "dreams" (cf. Deut. 18:9-14; Jer. 23:30-32; 27:9-10). Their "comfort" was worthless. Consequently, the people who rely on these false indicators of God's will "wander like" shepherdless "sheep," and experience much needless trouble (cf. Mark 6:34).

"A modern parallel is the renewed interest in magic, spiritism and other survivals of primitive times. The more widespread modern equivalent is to ignore God altogether and tacitly to assume that no problem is beyond man's unaided power to solve."<sup>224</sup>

10:3 The Lord was angry with these false "shepherds" (*rulers*, i.e.: kings, princes, nobles, prophets, and priests) and the other leaders who led His sheep astray like rams (cf. 1 Sam. 28:3-7; 1 Kings 16:31; 22:6-12; 2 Kings 1:2; 16:15; 21:6). The shepherds and rams may also include the foreign rulers under which the Jews had to live.<sup>225</sup> The Lord would visit "His flock," namely, the "house of Judah" (the Israelites), and He would make His people like the "majestic" war "horse" He rode "in battle" to defeat His enemies. In other words, He would empower the Israelites. The weak sheep would become as strong as horses. The battle of Armageddon is probably in view (cf. 12:1-9; 14:1-8).

10:4 From the house of Judah "will come the cornerstone" of the building (kingdom) He would build, namely: Messiah (cf. 3:9; Gen. 49:10; Ps. 118:22; Isa. 28:16; Jer. 30:21; Acts 4:11; Eph. 2:20; 1 Pet. 2:1-8). "The cornerstone" (Heb. *pinnah*) was a figure of a leader who would stabilize a nation and keep it from sliding down a slippery slope (cf. Judg. 20:2; 1 Sam. 14:38; Isa. 19:13). Messiah would also be like a "tent peg" (Heb. *yathed*), in that He would hold the tent (kingdom) firmly in place (cf. Judg. 4:21-22; Isa. 22:23-24; Acts 15:16). The Hebrew word also describes a peg inside a tent on which people hung beautiful things that glorified their homes (cf. 6:13; Isa. 22:22-24; Ezek. 15:3). Messiah would also be Yahweh's "bow of battle," by which He would destroy His enemies (cf. 9:13; Ps. 45:5; Rev. 19:11-16). All these figures picture the strong, stable, victorious, and trustworthy nature of Messiah's rule.

"This verse constitutes one of the most far-reaching and meaningful Messianic prophecies in the Old Testament in which the seer summarizes a number of declarations by the former prophet [i.e., Isaiah], setting forth the character and ministry of Israel's Redeemer-King."<sup>226</sup>

<sup>224</sup>Baldwin, p. 171.

<sup>225</sup>See Chambers, p. 78, in Lange's commentary.

<sup>226</sup>Unger, p. 177.



From the house of Judah would also go forth (depart) "every" oppressing "ruler" (Heb. *noges*, cf. 9:8; Exod. 3:7; Isa. 3:12; 14:2; 60:17; Dan. 11:20).

"Because the Messiah intervenes in the manner to be noted, every oppressor will depart from Judah. Cause and effect are clearly stated."<sup>227</sup>

10:5 These Israelites would be like "mighty men . . . in battle" (cf. David's mighty men). They would subdue the Lord's enemies in battle successfully because Yahweh would be "with them." The opposing adversaries would be defeated and shamed, even though they fought from positions of strength. The Lord's infantry would defeat the world's seemingly superior cavalry.

"It is a great mistake to suppose that all will be accomplished by Jehovah single-handed."<sup>228</sup>

"The scene is that of the *strengthening* of the Jews in Palestine at the time of the invasion from the North under 'the beast' (Dan. 7:8) in conjunction with the events of Armageddon (Rev. 16:14; 19:17-20)."<sup>229</sup>

10:6 The Lord "will strengthen," deliver ("save"), and restore ("bring back") "the house of Judah" and "the house of Joseph" (Ephraim), both the former Northern and Southern Kingdoms. He would do this simply because He "had compassion on them," not because they deserved His blessing. He would restore the Israelites to a condition similar to the one they enjoyed before He sent them into captivity, including sovereignty within their own homeland. He would do this because He is Yahweh, their God. He "will answer" their prayers for His help.

10:7 Then the Israelites, who previously had been weak from idolatry and apostasy, will be strong. They and "their children will rejoice in the LORD" when He saves them (Ps. 32:11; Phil. 4:4).

10:8 The Lord, the true Shepherd of His flock, "will" simply "whistle," and His people will follow Him because He had redeemed them (Exod. 12; Isa. 35:10; Mic. 6:4; John 10:11-16; 1 Pet. 1:18-19). They will again "be as numerous as they" had been in the days of their greatest prosperity.

"Just as redemption, that is, election, theologically preceded the actual exodus escape from Egypt (Ex. 2:24; 3:7-8; 4:22-23; 6:2-8), so it is on the basis of an already

<sup>227</sup>Feinberg, *God Remembers*, p. 185.

<sup>228</sup>Kelly, p. 472.

<sup>229</sup>Unger, p. 180.

effected redemption that YHWH's people will enter into the eschatological land of promise."<sup>230</sup>

10:9 When the Lord scattered His people like seed "among the" other "peoples" of the world, they would "remember" Him, even though they lived "far" from the Promised Land (cf. John 12:24; 1 Cor. 15:36). Not only would the Lord remember them (the meaning of Zechariah's name), but "they will remember" Him. "They" and "their children will live" (enter into new life) and return to the land. Sowing anticipates reaping a harvest and so connotes hope.

". . . even after Israel had been restored to the land after the Babylonian exile, the prospect of a regathered, reunited nation still appeared in Zechariah 10:9-12. The importance of this passage and its late postexilic date should not be lost by those who interpret the promise of the land spiritually or as a temporal blessing which has since been forfeited by a rebellious nation due to her failure to keep her part of the conditional (?) covenant. On the contrary, this hope burned brighter as Israel became more and more hopelessly scattered."<sup>231</sup>

10:10 Yahweh "will bring" the Israelites "back from the land of Egypt" (to Israel's south—where they had been slaves), and "from" the land of "Assyria" (to the north—where they had been exiles), namely: from all over the world (cf. Isa. 11:11-16; 19:23; Hos. 11:10). Probably Zechariah used Assyria as his example of a northern enemy, rather than Babylonia, because Assyria and Egypt were Israel's most persistent and hostile enemies historically. God "will bring them" back into the fruitful Promised Land, "into . . . Gilead" with its rich pastures east of the Jordan River, "and Lebanon" with its mighty forests west of the Jordan. Again, the whole land is in view.

"The Lebanon . . . is referred to in the Old Testament as a symbol of strength, dignity and splendour (e.g., 2 Kings 19:23; Isa. 35:2), as are the mountains of Gilead. Hence the two are sometimes also mentioned together to denote power and pride . . . (Jer. 22:6). In our verse too this combination may be intended to demonstrate the future power and glory of the Messianic kingdom of Israel."<sup>232</sup>

Eventually there would be no more room because so many blessed Israelites would live there (cf. Isa. 49:19-21; 54:2-3).

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<sup>230</sup>Merrill, p. 276.

<sup>231</sup>Kaiser, p. 255.

<sup>232</sup>*The Illustrated . . .*, 8:95.

- 10:11 Yahweh's representative, Messiah, "would pass through the sea" of His people's "distress" and banish it, as He had done to the Red Sea when the Israelites left Egypt in the Exodus (and as Jesus did when He calmed the Sea of Galilee). He would humble all of Israel's enemies, of which Egypt and Assyria were only representatives. The Gentile leaders of the world, symbolized by Egypt's "scepter," would no longer hold sway over Israel in the world.
- 10:12 Messiah "will" also "strengthen" the Israelites "in the LORD." "They will walk" all over the earth (exercise dominion over it) "in His name" (as His representatives and in harmony with His character). All of this was a promise from Yahweh.

### **3. The rejection of the true king ch. 11**

Chapters 9 and 10 picture blessing and prosperity, but chapter 11 paints a scene of sin and punishment.

"Preceding the fulfillment of the prophecies of blessing are the apostasy of Israel and their rejection of the Good Shepherd, their Messiah, with the consequent visitation of God upon them in dire punishment."<sup>233</sup>

Several shepherds are in view in this chapter: the wailing shepherds (vv. 1-3), the true Shepherd (vv. 4-14), and the false shepherd (vv. 15-17).

#### **The announcement of doom 11:1-3**

- 11:1 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>234</sup> The "second temple" refers to the temple that Ezra rebuilt, and that Herod the Great refurbished, which stood until A.D. 70. The cedar tree also became a symbol of the royal house of Judah (Ezek. 17:3-4, 12-13).
- 11:2 Likewise the "cypress" (juniper, pine) and "oaks of Bashan" should wail, because they too would perish in the coming devastation. Bashan was famous for its oak forests (cf. Isa. 2:13; Ezek. 27:6). Earlier, Zechariah combined Lebanon and Bashan to indicate the whole land (10:10). All these trees suggest the people of the land as well as the land itself. A judgment that would affect the whole land of Palestine and all its people, including its rulers, is in view.

<sup>233</sup>Feinberg, *God Remembers*, p. 197.

<sup>234</sup>Baron, pp. 378-79.

"Perhaps next in prominence to shepherd as metaphor for king is that of a plant, especially a tree [cf. Judg. 9:7-15; Isa. 10:33-34; Ezek. 31:3-18; Dan. 4:10, 23]."<sup>235</sup>

The cedar tree, in particular, is a metaphor for a king (cf. 2 Kings 14:9; Isa. 14:8; Ezek. 17:3; Amos 2:9).

11:3 The "shepherds" and "lions" (the rulers and leaders of Israel, cf. Jer. 25:34-38) would "wail" because a coming destruction would leave no pasture for their flocks, and no lairs or food for beasts.

"The pride of the Jordan is not the river itself; this expression personifies it, referring to that in which the Jordan may take pride: the topography through which it flows—its beautiful valleys and hills—hence the land itself."<sup>236</sup>

In view of what follows in verses 4-14, verses 1-3 seem to be a description of the devastation of Palestine due to the rejection of the Messiah. Another view is that it is a lament over the destruction of the nations' power and arrogance described in chapter 10. This prediction had an initial fulfillment in the Roman destruction of Jerusalem and the scattering of the Jews in A.D. 70. Its complete fulfillment, however, lies in the future, specifically the destruction that will overtake the land and its people in the Tribulation.

#### **The fate of the Good Shepherd 11:4-14**

The reason for the devastation of the people and the land just described now becomes apparent. It is the people's rejection of the messianic Shepherd-King (cf. Isa. 42; 49; 50; 53). The Lord would graciously give His people another good leader (vv. 4-6), but they would reject the Good Shepherd that He would provide for them (vv. 7-14).

11:4 Yahweh, Zechariah's God, instructed the prophet to present himself as a *shepherd* assigned to care for ("pasture") a "flock *doomed* to slaughter." This may mean that the prophet was to act out a skit for his audience.<sup>237</sup> However, it seems more likely, in view of what follows, that Zechariah spoke for God, and sometimes as Messiah, as though *He* were the Shepherd. He seems to have been presenting an allegory that was the product of a visionary experience (cf. Jer. 1:10; 25:15-38).<sup>238</sup>

11:5 "Those who" bought the sheep would then "slay them" (Heb. feminine) and "go unpunished." This was bad because these were female sheep, ewes, intended for breeding and not for butchering. The butchers 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).

<sup>235</sup>Merrill, p. 285.

<sup>236</sup>McComiskey, p. 1189.

<sup>237</sup>E. Cashdan, "Zechariah," in *The Twelve Minor Prophets*, p. 314; Unger, p. 191.

<sup>238</sup>Leupold, p. 207; Feinberg, *God Remembers*, p. 201.

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.

- 11:6 The Lord's displeasure was the real reason for the Israelites' misery. He would "no longer" take "pity on them." He would cause the men of Israel to become dependent on "another's power" (kingdom: Roman Empire) and on "another king," evidently a foreign despot. This king and his followers would strike the land, but Yahweh would not deliver His people from them.

"History demonstrates that these conditions did take place after Israel's rejection of their Messiah."<sup>239</sup>

The ruler in view was Caesar, and the striking took place in A.D. 70.

- 11:7 Zechariah proceeded to carry out his assignment from the Lord (v. 4). He spoke as a shepherd of the sheep "doomed to slaughter," "the afflicted" sheep of the "flock," and so represented Israel's Shepherd, Messiah. 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).

"The Eastern shepherd carried a rod or stout club hewed from a tree to beat away wild beasts attacking the sheep and a crooked staff for retrieving the sheep from difficult places [cf. Ps. 23:4]."<sup>240</sup>

- 11:8 Zechariah, as God's representative, did away with "three shepherds" that had been leading his flock within the first "month" that he took charge of the sheep. These appear to have been real shepherds and a real month. At the very least, Zechariah's action prefigured that of Messiah, in taking over the leadership of His flock from other leaders of Israel who did not appreciate His leadership. Who these shepherds were or will be has been the subject of much debate. Some commentators identified specific kings, either Jewish or Gentile, who failed the Lord and were set aside before or during the siege of Jerusalem in A.D. 70.<sup>241</sup> History records little about the Jews between 350 and 200 B.C. The three initial fulfillment shepherds could have lived then, but we may have no record of their activities. Other interpreters, including myself, believe the three shepherds refer to three classes of leaders, probably Israel's elders, chief priests, and scribes (cf. Luke 9:22).<sup>242</sup> The Luke 9:22 reference is particularly significant, since

<sup>239</sup>Ibid., p. 204.

<sup>240</sup>Unger, p. 194.

<sup>241</sup>E.g., Baron, p. 396, n. 1; Ellis, p. 1045; Mitchell, p. 307; and Merrill, p. 293.

<sup>242</sup>E.g., E. Henderson, *The Minor Prophets*, p. 442; Unger, p. 195; Feinberg, *God Remembers*, p. 206; idem, "Zechariah," p. 908; and Lindsey, p. 1565.

there Jesus named these three groups of leaders as those who would reject Him. Unger held that the one month was the time preceding the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, which sealed the fate of Israel.<sup>243</sup> Another view is that the shepherds represent all of Israel's unfaithful human leaders.<sup>244</sup> Many commentators remarked on the difficulty of this verse, which Baldwin called "probably the most enigmatic in the whole Old Testament."<sup>245</sup> Over 40 different interpretations of it appear in the commentaries.

It is also difficult to identify the antecedent of "them." Did Zechariah (Messiah) grow weary of the sheep (cf. Isa. 1:13-14), and did they detest him? Another interpretation sees the antecedent of "them" to be the three groups of leaders (kings). Perhaps "them" refers generally to both the leaders and the sheep.

- 11:9 Zechariah, as God's representative, turned "them" over to their fate, though that meant that some of them would die, suffer annihilation, and devour one another. The Jews did eat one another during the siege of Jerusalem in the first century A.D.<sup>246</sup> And they will evidently do so again during the Tribulation.

"By withholding his leadership the shepherd abandoned the people to the consequences of their rejection of him: death, and mutual destruction. He simply let things take their course."<sup>247</sup>

- 11:10 Zechariah then chopped his staff "Favor" into pieces, picturing the end of the favorable pastoral care that he had provided. The covenant in view is none of the biblical covenants, since God never breaks His promises. It must refer to the security that He had been providing and the restraint that He had been exercising in relation to Israel thus far.

"The term 'covenant' is here used in a looser sense, not as descriptive of a formal agreement entered into by contracting parties, but to indicate that, when the peoples round about Israel did her no harm, this was due to the fact that God had put them under as strong a restraint as might be exerted upon a nation by a covenant solemnly sworn to."<sup>248</sup>

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<sup>243</sup>Unger, p. 195.

<sup>244</sup>Baldwin, p. 183.

<sup>245</sup>Ibid., p. 181.

<sup>246</sup>Josephus, *The Wars of the Jews*, 6:3:3-4.

<sup>247</sup>Baldwin, p. 184.

<sup>248</sup>Leupold, p. 214.

11:11 The faithful Israelites who were listening to Zechariah, "the afflicted of" God's "flock" (cf. v. 7), realized that what he had done in breaking the staff was in harmony with "the word of the LORD." Another view is that the afflicted were a group within Zechariah's society, not the whole postexilic community.<sup>249</sup> God had promised in the Mosaic Law that if His people apostatized—He would cast them off, temporarily, and allow the nations to punish them (cf. Matt. 23:13, 23-24, 33-39).

"The 'poor of the flock' i.e. the 'remnant according to the election of grace' (Rom. 11:5), are those Jews who did not wait for the manifestation of Christ in glory but believed on Him at His first coming and subsequently. Of them it is said that they 'waited upon me,' and 'knew.'"<sup>250</sup>

11:12 Since Zechariah was terminating his protection of the flock, he asked the sheep to pay him his wages or, if they refused, to keep what they owed him.

"He is more concerned about making the flock feel that he is done with it than he is about money."<sup>251</sup>

The sheep "weighed out 30" shekels "of silver" as his pay. This was the price of a gored slave in the ancient Near East (Exod. 21:32) and, though a substantial amount, was a pittance in view of all that the Shepherd had done for the sheep.<sup>252</sup> Their act was as shamelessly insulting as their general reaction to His ministry as a whole had been. To offer him this wage was far worse than simple outward rejection (cf. Matt. 26:15). It was the equivalent of telling the Shepherd that they could buy a dead slave who would be as useful to them as He had been. This response shows how unworthy the people were of His solicitude.

11:13 The Lord instructed Zechariah to "throw" the 30 shekels of silver "to the potter" since it was, sarcastically, such a handsome ("magnificent") price. His service had been worth far more than that. So Zechariah threw the 30 shekels of silver to the potter in the temple. Evidently the setting of Zechariah's visionary allegory was the temple courtyard. Throwing something to the potter was evidently a proverbial way of expressing disdain for it, since potters were typically poor and lowly craftsmen.<sup>253</sup>

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<sup>249</sup>McComiskey, p. 1194.

<sup>250</sup>*The New Scofield . . .*, p. 973.

<sup>251</sup>Leupold, p. 216.

<sup>252</sup>See E. Reiner, "Thirty Pieces of Silver," *Journal of the American Oriental Society* 88 (January-March 1968):186-90.

<sup>253</sup>Unger, p. 200; Leupold, p. 217.

"The fulfillment of this prophecy in Matthew 27:3-10 is proof enough that the money was flung down in the temple and immediately taken up by the priests to purchase a field *of a potter* for a burying ground for the poor."<sup>254</sup>

Matthew attributed this prophecy to Jeremiah (Matt. 27:9-10). Probably Matthew was referring to Jeremiah 32:6-9, which he condensed, using mainly the phraseology of Zechariah 11:12-13 because of its similarity to Judas' situation. Joining (conflating) two quotations from two Old Testament books and assigning them to one prophet follows the custom of mentioning only the more notable prophet. Compare Mark 1:2-3, in which Isaiah 40:3 and Malachi 3:1 are quoted but are assigned to Isaiah.<sup>255</sup>

"Like the earlier prophecy of the King (ix. 9), the prophecy of the Shepherd is remarkable for its literal fulfillment. The 'thirty pieces of silver' were literally the 'goodly price' paid for Him, 'whom they of the children of Israel did value.' 'The potter' was literally the recipient of it, as the purchase money of his exhausted field for an unclean purpose (Matt. xxvii. 5-10)."<sup>256</sup>

11:14 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>257</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>258</sup> We know that this destruction will not be permanent, however, because of other promises that God will reunite and restore His people, and that He will not cast them off permanently (e.g., Rom. 11; et al.).

"Responsibility for human chaos lies squarely on human shoulders. God has offered men His shepherd, but they have rejected Him, to their own irreparable loss."<sup>259</sup>

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<sup>254</sup>Unger, p. 200.

<sup>255</sup>For further discussion, see Hobart E. Freeman, *An Introduction to the Old Testament Prophets*, pp. 340-42.

<sup>256</sup>Perowne, p. 127.

<sup>257</sup>Chambers, p. 86, in Lange's commentary.

<sup>258</sup>See Feinberg, *God Remembers*, p. 211.

<sup>259</sup>Baldwin, p. 187.



### The appearance of the bad shepherd 11:15-17

"The full fate of Israel is not recounted in the rejection of the good Shepherd God raised up to tend them. The complete tale of woe centers in their acceptance of the bad shepherd God will raise up to destroy them. The one dark episode centers in the events of Messiah's first advent and death, followed by the dissolution of the Jewish state (Zech. 11:1-14). The other tragic experience will occur in the events connected with Messiah's second advent and glory, and deals with the nation's final time of unparalleled trouble (Zech. 11\* [*sic*] 15-17) previous to her entrance into kingdom blessing."<sup>260</sup>

- 11:15 The Lord next directed Zechariah to present himself as a "foolish" (worthless, v. 17, i.e., morally deficient, cf. Prov. 1:7) "shepherd," since his flock had rejected the Good Shepherd (cf. Ezek. 34:3-4).
- 11:16 In his new role, Zechariah represented one who would fail to do for the sheep all that a good shepherd would do. Instead he would be self-serving. Israel's preference for Barabbas over Jesus showed her willingness, many years later, to accept a bad individual in place of a good one.

"When one removes 'not' from the sentence, he has an enlightening description of a truly effective pastoral ministry in the church today. (1) 'care for the lost . . .' or . . . 'care for those in the process of being ruined or destroyed'; (2) 'seek the young . . . [or] 'the scattered'; (3) 'heal the injured,' and (4) 'feed the healthy.'"<sup>261</sup>

*Tearing off the hoofs* of the sheep probably represents the avaricious shepherd, searching for the last edible morsel that he can extract from his charges whom he has consumed.<sup>262</sup>

- 11:17 God pronounced judgment on "the worthless shepherd" for abandoning the flock (cf. Jer. 50:35-37). This condemnation applies to all the evil kings of Israel and Judah who had let their people down, but one particular individual is in view primarily. Yahweh would paralyze this man's power ("arm") and nullify his intelligence ("eye"), rendering him incapable of hurting others or defending himself.

Who is this bad shepherd? Some students of history have seen Bar Kokhba as at least a partial fulfillment. He led the ineffective Jewish revolt against the Romans in A.D. 132-135, and some in his day hailed him as the Messiah. Others see the fulfillment in "all those leaders of Israel, who, under the guise of shepherds, misled and harmed the poor flock . . . ever since Zechariah's day, especially since the time that the nation has rejected

<sup>260</sup>Unger, p. 202.

<sup>261</sup>Barker, p. 679.

<sup>262</sup>Unger, p. 204.

the Christ."<sup>263</sup> However, the ultimate fulfillment must be the Antichrist, who will make a covenant with Israel—but then break it and proceed to persecute the Jews (Ezek. 34:2-4; Dan. 9:27; 11:36-39; John 5:43; 2 Thess. 2:3-10; Rev. 13:1-8). Perhaps the whole collective leadership of Israel, from Zechariah's time forward—culminating in Antichrist—is in view.<sup>264</sup>

"The judgment here (vs. 17) brings to a close the cycle of prophecy which began with judgment (9:1). Judgment has gone from the circumference (the nations) to the center (Israel); Zechariah will yet reveal that in blessing the direction will be from the center (Israel) to the circumference (the nations) as in chapter 14."<sup>265</sup>

"With this climactic scene the first prophetic burden describing the first advent and rejection of Messiah, the Shepherd-King (chapters 9—11) comes to a close. The way is thus opened for the second burden and the second advent and acceptance of Messiah, the King (chapters 12—14)."<sup>266</sup>

#### **B. THE BURDEN CONCERNING ISRAEL: THE ADVENT AND ACCEPTANCE OF MESSIAH CHS. 12—14**

This last section of the book contrasts initial judgments on Israel with ultimate deliverance, restoration, and blessing.

"As a portion of the prophetic Scriptures it is second to none in importance in this book or in any other Old Testament book. It is indispensable to an understanding of the events of the last days for Israel—the time of the Great Tribulation and the establishment of God's kingdom on earth."<sup>267</sup>

The repetition of "in that day" and its equivalent 19 times in these three chapters sets these events quite clearly in the eschaton (end times).

"This prophetic time indicator is equivalent to 'the day of the Lord' and denotes precisely *that future period when the Lord will openly and publicly manifest His power in delivering Israel from her enemies and establishing her in millennial peace and prosperity.*"<sup>268</sup>

Two main events are in view in this oracle: the final siege of Jerusalem and the return of Messiah to the earth to defeat His enemies and establish His kingdom. The nations of the earth play a major role in what these chapters predict. These events follow in time Israel's acceptance of the evil shepherd predicted in 11:15-17.

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<sup>263</sup>Leupold, p. 219.

<sup>264</sup>Merrill, p. 303.

<sup>265</sup>Feinberg, *God Remembers*, pp. 213-14.

<sup>266</sup>Unger, p. 205.

<sup>267</sup>Feinberg, *God Remembers*, p. 218.

<sup>268</sup>Unger, p. 210.

"The major difference between the two oracles (chap. 11 excepted) is that 12—14 expands greatly on the themes of 9—10 and introduces a cosmic, universalistic motif that is not as clearly perceived in the latter. Moreover, 12—14 focuses on the messianic aspect of the eschatological redemption, going so far as to identify YHWH Himself as the messianic figure (12:10-14; 13:7-9)."<sup>269</sup>

### **1. The repentance of Judah ch. 12**

This chapter consists of two parts: Israel's deliverance (vv. 1-9) and Israel's national conversion (vv. 10-14). These events will happen sequentially and very close together.

#### **Israel's deliverance 12:1-9**

12:1 "The burden . . . concerning Israel" introduces chapters 12—14 as "The burden . . . against the land of Hadrach" (9:1) did chapters 9—11. By describing Yahweh as the Creator of "the heavens," "earth," and "man," Zechariah reminded his audience of God's authority, and ability, to accomplish what He predicted, in this three-chapter oracle. He is the master over all things celestial, terrestrial, and human.

"Here at the brink of a new age it is important to know that the same God who brought everything into existence in the first place is well able to usher in the new creation of a restored people in a renewed and universal kingdom."<sup>270</sup>

12:2 The Lord "will make Jerusalem" like "a cup" of strong wine to the nations ("all the peoples around"); when they try to consume Jerusalem (a metonymy for all Israel), it will cause them to reel. Jerusalem had previously drunk the cup of the Lord's wrath (Isa. 51:17, 22; Jer. 25:15-17, 28), but now it will be the nations' turn to drink it. Their "siege" of "Jerusalem" will extend to all the surrounding territory of "Judah." The time in view is after the Lord regathers the Israelites to their land (ch. 10).

12:3 "In that day" Jerusalem will also be like "a heavy stone" when the nations try "to lift" and carry it away; they will injure themselves when they try to do so. In that day, "all the nations of the earth will" gather together against Jerusalem (cf. 14:2; Joel 3:9-16; Rev. 16:16-21).

". . . even if all the peoples of the earth should attempt to conquer Jerusalem, they will turn away, bloodied by their futile efforts."<sup>271</sup>

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<sup>269</sup>Merrill, p. 310.

<sup>270</sup>Ibid., p. 312.

<sup>271</sup>McComiskey, p. 1210.

- 12:4 The Lord will cause the weapons that Israel's enemies used to destroy the city to be ineffective, and He will make the hostile soldiers crazy (cf. Deut. 28:28; Judg. 5:22). In this way, He "will watch over the house of Judah" (the Israelites; cf. Ps. 32:8; 33:18).
- 12:5 The leaders of Israel's groups outside Jerusalem will realize that Yahweh Almighty, "their God," is making the people of Jerusalem strong supporters of them.
- 12:6 "In that day," the Lord will not only preserve His people from the attacks of their enemies, but He will also make them effective as they aggressively attacked them (cf. Judg. 15:3-5; Esth. 9:1-28).
- 12:7 Yahweh will defend the outlying areas "of Judah first," so the people from David's line and the residents of Jerusalem would not conclude that they were more important in God's sight (cf. Jer. 9:23-24; 1 Cor. 1:29, 31; 12:22-26; 2 Cor. 10:17). All the Jews will see that it was "the LORD" who was responsible for their deliverance. This would evidently end their fighting among themselves (cf. 11:6).
- 12:8 As part of His defense of them, the Lord will strengthen the "feeble" among the people, so that they will be as strong as "David," the mighty warrior. The Davidic rulers will also receive supernatural strength and will be "like God," as "the angel of the LORD" who was going "before (in front of) them" (cf. Exod. 14:19; 23:20; 32:34; 33:2, 14-15, 22; 1 Sam. 29:9; 2 Sam. 14:17, 20; 19:27).
- 12:9 "In that day," the Lord "will set about" destroying "all" of Israel's enemies, and He will be successful.

". . . we place the entire passage in the time of the Great Tribulation and more specifically in the Battle of Armageddon, when the nations of the earth will make their last frantic effort to blot Israel out of existence, only to be met by the most crushing defeat at the hands of the Lord of hosts Himself."<sup>272</sup>

An amillennial explanation of the passage follows.

". . . it covers all time from that in which the prophet spoke to the end of days. What is said concerning Judah applies to the people of God of all times. The claims made for Jerusalem's future find their ultimate fulfillment in the true Zion of God—His church; in fact, they can be applied to Jerusalem only insofar as she for a time harbored the church of God. The whole passage speaks of God's sovereign care and protection of the church of the Old and the New Testaments through the ages and more

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<sup>272</sup>Feinberg, *God Remembers*, p. 228.

particularly of the church's victory rather than the victory of Judah after the flesh."<sup>273</sup>

### Israel's national conversion 12:10-14

The focus now changes from physical to spiritual deliverance (cf. Deut. 30:1-10).

12:10 The Lord also promised to "pour out on" the Davidic rulers and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, representing all the Israelites, a spirit of remorse. "Grace" will be the motive for this outpouring, and "supplication" to God (for what the Jews had done to their Messiah) will be the result. This God-given conviction will cause them to "mourn" when they look (in faith) *to* Him (better than *on* Him) "whom they" had formerly "pierced" (i.e., slain; cf. Num. 21:9; Isa. 45:22; 53:5; John 3:14-15; 19:34).

"It is not so much a mourning for the act committed, but for the Person involved. Compare John 19:37; Revelation 1:7."<sup>274</sup>

"The idea is that they will humble themselves and recognize that they were saved by another whom they pierced."<sup>275</sup>

They would mourn as one mourns over the death of one's only (beloved, cf. Gen. 22:2; Jer. 6:26; Amos 8:10) son or his or her firstborn son.

"It is a picture of penitence as vivid and accurate as any found anywhere in the Scriptures."<sup>276</sup>

The Jews will do this, either just before the Messiah returns to the earth, or when He returns to the earth (cf. Isa. 27:9; 59:20-21; Jer. 31:31-37; Amos 9:11-15; Rom. 11:25-27; Rev. 1:7). The "spirit" in view will be a result of the ministry of the Holy Spirit, who conveys *grace* (compassion; cf. Heb. 10:29) and calls forth *supplication* (prayer; cf. Isa. 32:15; 44:3; 59:20-21; Jer. 31:31, 33; Ezek. 36:26-27; 39:29; Joel 2:28-29). The coming of the messianic kingdom is contingent on Israel's repentance, God's sovereign control, and the Spirit's enabling grace.<sup>277</sup>

The unusual combination "they will look to *Me* whom they have pierced" and "they will mourn for *Him*" suggests two different individuals, but the deity of the Messiah solves this problem. Yahweh Himself would suffer for the people in the person of Messiah. The suffering could be figurative (they wounded His holiness) or substitutionary (He died in place of

<sup>273</sup>Leupold, p. 234.

<sup>274</sup>Feinberg, *God Remembers*, p. 231.

<sup>275</sup>Smith, p. 277.

<sup>276</sup>Chambers, p. 94, in Lange's commentary.

<sup>277</sup>See Stanley D. Toussaint and Jay A. Quine, "No, Not Yet: The Contingency of God's Promised Kingdom," *Bibliotheca Sacra* 164:654 (April-June 2007):131-47.

others). Other references to this text point to a substitute suffering (e.g., John 19:37; Rev. 1:7; cf. Isa. 53:5, 8).

". . . like Thomas their excruciating and inexpressibly penetrating cry of deepest contrition will be, 'My Lord and my God!' (John 20:28)."<sup>278</sup>

12:11 "In that day there will be great mourning in Jerusalem"—and undoubtedly elsewhere throughout Israel. Zechariah compared this mourning to "the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the plain of Megiddo," an event that scholars have had trouble identifying. "Hadadrimmon" is a compound of two Amorite or Canaanite divine names, "Hadad" being the storm god and "Rimmon" the thunder god.<sup>279</sup> Hadadrimmon may have been an important though presently unknown individual, a place near Megiddo (cf. 14:10; Josh. 15:32; 19:7),<sup>280</sup> or a pagan deity (cf. 2 Kings 5:18).<sup>281</sup> The devotees of the Canaanite god Baal mourned his "dying" each winter and then celebrated his "resurrection" each spring. Probably the place where King Josiah died, and or where the people mourned his premature death near there, as late as the writing of Chronicles, is in view (cf. 2 Chron. 35:20-27).<sup>282</sup>

12:12-14 All the Israelites, "the land," will mourn; this will be a national repentance. The repeated phrases "every family by itself" and "their wives by themselves" solemnize the mourning and underline its genuineness.

"The wives are spoken of as mourning apart because in public lamentations the custom prevailed of separating into groups, also according to sex."<sup>283</sup>

"The closest relationship is as nothing in [the] presence of sin and God as its judge. Each must be alone."<sup>284</sup>

This would not be a national media event staged by the leaders of Israel to make a show, but individuals everywhere throughout the nation would sincerely voice their remorse.

"Individually and corporately, this is the experience of Leviticus 16 (the Day of Atonement) and Psalm 51 (a penitential psalm) on a national scale. . . . Isaiah 53:1-9 could well be their confession on the great occasion."<sup>285</sup>

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<sup>278</sup>Unger, p. 217.

<sup>279</sup>Merrill, p. 323.

<sup>280</sup>Barker, p. 684; Merrill, p. 324; Unger, p. 219; Feinberg, *God Remembers*, p. 232; Leupold, p. 240; McComiskey, p. 1215.

<sup>281</sup>K. N. Schoville, *Biblical Archaeology in Focus*, p. 444.

<sup>282</sup>Feinberg, "Zechariah," p. 909.

<sup>283</sup>Leupold, p. 241.

<sup>284</sup>Kelly, p. 486.

<sup>285</sup>Barker, p. 685.

The houses of "David" and of his son "Nathan" represent the political branches of the nation, though not just the kings, as reference to Solomon might have suggested (cf. 2 Sam. 5:14). Feinberg believed that this Nathan was the prophet of David's day, so he represents the prophets in Israel who will repent.<sup>286</sup> This is a minority view. The houses of "Levi" and of his grandson "Shimei" represent the religious branches of Israel, though not just the main ones that reference to Gershon, Shimei's father, might have suggested (cf. Num. 3:17-18, 21). Perhaps the political and priestly families received mention because they were those chiefly responsible for Messiah's death. When these leading families mourned, all the other citizens would follow their example. The families of "Nathan" and of "Shimei" may have been the most prominent families of their kind in Zechariah's day. Zerubbabel came from Nathan's line (Luke 3:23-31), and the Shimeites presumably dominated the Levitical classes in the postexilic era.<sup>287</sup>

"Nothing can excite to repentance like a view of the crucified Saviour."<sup>288</sup>

The Battle of Armageddon, described in this section, will produce a great turning back to the Lord in Israel. When Jesus returns to the earth at His Second Coming, it will be at the climax of the Battle of Armageddon, when the nations of the world have gathered together to annihilate the Jews from the earth. Then the Jews will see Jesus coming from heaven and realize that He really is their Messiah. Compare Paul's Damascus Road experience. They will turn to Him in faith in such a large revival that Paul could say, "All Israel will be saved" (Rom. 11:26).

## **2. The restoration of Judah ch. 13**

"The connection between chapters 12 and 13 is so close that a chapter division is really uncalled for. The same people, the same subject, and the same time are in view in both chapters. The relationship between 12:10-14 and 13:1-6 is not only logical but chronological as well. Once Israel is brought to a penitent condition and is brought face to face with her crucified Messiah, then the provision of God for cleansing will be appropriate."<sup>289</sup>

### **Israel's cleansing 13:1-6**

13:1 "In that day," God will 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

<sup>286</sup>Feinberg, *God Remembers*, p. 233. See pp. 233-35 for a history of the interpretation of this passage.

<sup>287</sup>Merrill, p. 325.

<sup>288</sup>Feinberg, *God Remembers*, p. 233.

<sup>289</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 236.

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. Rom. 11:26-27). "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).

"The problem of sin is the central problem in the OT. It began in the garden of Eden and will not be eradicated until the final day of Yahweh."<sup>290</sup>

13:2 At that time the Lord also promised to remove idolatry, false prophets, and unclean spirits from the land. There would be external cleansing as well as internal. The Jews would "no longer ascribe supernatural powers to mere things, nor worship them as divine" (cf. 10:2-3; Jer. 23:30-32; 27:9-10; Ezek. 13:1—14:11).<sup>291</sup> False prophets, as is clear from the context, would not mislead the people (cf. Matt. 24:4-5, 11, 15, 23-24; 2 Thess. 2:2-4; Rev. 9:20; 13:4-15). The unclean spirits are the diviners, mediums, and demons who confused and afflicted the people in the past.

"The reference to the banishment of the unclean spirits out of the land . . . is the only passage in Scripture which explicitly refers to the imprisonment of demons during the kingdom age. But since Satan is remanded to the abyss (the prison house of evil spirits) during this era, as is clearly declared in Revelation 20:1-3, it is a necessary corollary that his demon aids shall also share the same fate."<sup>292</sup>

13:3 If anyone tries to play the part of a false prophet, then his own parents, those closest to him, are to put him to death. This was what God had commanded the Israelites to do to false prophets (Deut. 13:6-9). They "will pierce" the false prophets fatally, as they had formerly pierced the Messiah fatally (12:10).

13:4-5 This dangerous situation for the false prophets would lead them to hide their identity as "prophets." They will not identify themselves in traditional ways (cf. 2 Kings 1:8), but will deny that they were prophets. They will go so far as claiming to have been sold into slavery as field hands when they were only boys, so they could not possibly be prophets.

13:6 Sometimes false prophets cut themselves to arouse prophetic ecstasy, to increase ritual potency, or to identify themselves with a particular god (cf. Lev. 19:28; 21:5; Deut. 14:1; 1 Kings 18:28; Jer. 16:6; 41:5; 48:37). If someone saw such wounds on a false prophet's body in that future day, the

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<sup>290</sup>Smith, p. 280.

<sup>291</sup>Baldwin, pp. 195-96.

<sup>292</sup>Unger, p. 225.



false prophet might claim that he had received his injuries by accident in a friend's "house." The modern practice of claiming, "I walked into a door," to avoid telling the real reason for an injury, is similar.

Though some expositors believed this verse describes Messiah and His wounds, the preceding context and lack of any New Testament citation of the verse in relation to Messiah argue against this view.<sup>293</sup>

"This verse is best understood as an evasive reply of a false prophet in the last days. It carries on and concludes the subject begun in v. 2. By no valid interpretation may it be referred to the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no clear change of subject between vv. 5 and 6 such as exists between vv. 6 and 7. Christ would not claim that He was not a prophet (cf. Dt. 18:15-18); He was not a farmer; He was not bought or sold from His youth. Verse 7 does speak of Christ, as Mt. 26:31 and Mk. 14:27 attest."<sup>294</sup>

"As is always the case with genuine conversion, there are both negative and positive aspects. The positive consists of the restoration to fellowship that takes place when sin has been forgiven (v. 1). The negative involves the removal of those habits and attitudes that occasioned the interruption of fellowship between God and His people in the first place (vv. 2-6)."<sup>295</sup>

### **The smiting of the Shepherd and the scattering of the sheep 13:7-9**

13:7 Zechariah now returned—with a poem—to the subject of the Shepherd that he had mentioned in chapter 11. He also returned to the time when Israel would be scattered among the nations because of her rejection of the Good Shepherd.

Almighty Yahweh personified a sword, the instrument of violent death. Addressing it as "O sword," He commanded it to execute ("strike") His "Shepherd," the royal Good Shepherd of 11:4-14. This is a figure of speech called *apostrophe*: a direct address to an impersonal object as if it were a person. Yahweh further described this Shepherd as the Man who was very close to Him—even as "My Associate."

"The expression 'who stands next to me' is used elsewhere only in Leviticus (*e.g.* 6:2; 18:12) to mean 'near neighbour'; similarly the shepherd is one who dwells side by side with the Lord, His equal."<sup>296</sup>

<sup>293</sup>Ibid., pp. 228-30; and R. Jamieson, A. R. Fausset, and D. Brown, *Commentary Practical and Explanatory on the Whole Bible*, p. 865; were proponents of the messianic interpretation.

<sup>294</sup>*The New Scofield . . .*, p. 975. Cf. Feinberg, "Zechariah," p. 910.

<sup>295</sup>Merrill, p. 328.

<sup>296</sup>Baldwin, pp. 197-98. Cf. John 1:1-2; 14:9.

"There is no stronger statement in the OT regarding the unimpeachable deity of Israel's Messiah, the Son of God."<sup>297</sup>

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).

The last line of the verse is capable of two different interpretations, both of which came to pass. Perhaps a double entendre was intended. God Himself would scatter even the young sheep and would extend mercy to them (cf. Mark 13:19, 24; Luke 2:35; Rev. 11:3-10). New Testament scholar R. T. France believed that this passage influenced the thinking of Jesus, regarding His shepherd role, more than any other shepherd passage in the Old Testament.<sup>298</sup>

"The divine witness to the death and deity of the prophesied Messiah makes this verse one of the most significant in the entire Old Testament."<sup>299</sup>

13:8-9      The scattering of the sheep would result in two-thirds of the flock dying, and one-third remaining alive. The Lord will "refine" the surviving one-third in the fires of affliction (cf. 3:2; Ezek. 5:1-12). This remnant must be the same group of Israelites, described in 12:10—13:1, who will turn to God in repentance. Evidently two-thirds of the Jews, the unbelieving, will perish during the Tribulation, and one-third will live through it and enter the Millennium. This surviving remnant, therefore, must include the 144,000 Israelite witnesses of Revelation 7:1-8 and 14:1-5. The one-third will call on the Lord's name in supplication for forgiveness (12:10). The Lord will respond to their cry by reaffirming His New Covenant relationship with them, and they will agree to it (cf. Ezek. 20:37).

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<sup>297</sup>Feinberg, "Zechariah," p. 910.

<sup>298</sup>R. T. France, *Jesus and the Old Testament: His Application of Old Testament Passages to Himself and His Mission*, pp. 103-4, 107-9.

<sup>299</sup>Unger, p. 232.

### **3. The reign of Messiah ch. 14**

"The cosmic, eschatological sweep of this last portion . . . is almost without compare in the prophetic literature of the OT for the richness of its imagery, the authority of its pronouncements, and the majestic exaltation of the God of Israel who will be worshiped as the God of all the earth."<sup>300</sup>

#### **The final deliverance of Israel and the return of Messiah 14:1-8**

14:1 The Lord announced through His prophet that "a day" was "coming for the LORD," i.e., coming primarily for His benefit, when the nations that had plundered Israel victoriously would divide their spoil between themselves in Jerusalem. This would be the Lord's day, in which He would do His will, in contrast to man's day, in which man conducts his affairs without divine interference.

"The day of the Lord in prophetic literature designates any time when Yahweh steps into the arena of human events to effect his purposes."<sup>301</sup>

14:2 The Lord "will gather all the nations against Jerusalem" to fight against her (cf. Rev. 16:16-21, Armageddon). They will capture the city, plunder the houses, and rape the women. Half of the Jewish residents will depart as exiles, but the other half will remain. This will be one-half of the portion of the one-third of the Jewish population—that will be in Jerusalem—that had not died during the Tribulation (13:8). This has not yet happened.

"The only [?] explanation is that this is an ideological conflict to remove a non-co-operative element that blocked the way to an international world order."<sup>302</sup>

"This eschatological verse alone—with its statement that 'the city will be captured'—is sufficient to refute the notion popular in certain circles that 'the times of the Gentiles' (Luke 21:24) were fulfilled as of the rebirth of the modern state of Israel. According to Lucan theology, after 'the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled,' Jerusalem will be trampled on no more. Since Zechariah 14:2 clearly indicates that Jerusalem will be 'trampled on' again in the future, the 'times of the Gentiles' would seem to extend to the Messiah's second advent, when those 'times' will be replaced by the final, universal, everlasting kingdom of Daniel 2:35, 44-45."<sup>303</sup>

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<sup>300</sup>Merrill, p. 341.

<sup>301</sup>McComiskey, p. 1227.

<sup>302</sup>Baldwin, p. 200.

<sup>303</sup>Barker, p. 689.

14:3 Yahweh will then take the role of the Divine Warrior, "and fight against those nations" for His people Israel (cf. 1:3; 9; 10:4-5; 12:1-9). He had done this previously in the Exodus and on numerous other occasions (cf. Exod. 14:13-14; Josh. 10:14; 23:3; Judg. 4:15; 2 Chron. 20:15).

"In their quest for world peace, some denominations have removed the 'militant songs' from their hymnals, so that a new generation is growing up knowing nothing about 'fighting the good fight of faith' or worshiping a Savior who will one day meet the nations of the world in battle (Rev. 19:11-21)."<sup>304</sup>

"The actual order of events in this day peculiarly the Lord's is: (1) the nations assembled to war against Jerusalem (vs. 2); (2) the city captured and plundered, etc. (vs. 2); (3) the spoil of the city divided within its walls (vs. 1); (4) the Lord's intervention (vs. 3)."<sup>305</sup>

14:4 "In that day" Yahweh's "feet," in the person of Messiah (cf. Acts 1:9-12; Rev. 19:11-16), "will stand on the Mount of Olives" to "the east . . . of Jerusalem" (cf. Acts 1:11). This is the only place in the Old Testament where this name for this mountain appears (cf. 2 Sam. 15:30; Ezek. 11:23). Since people were east-oriented in ancient times, Zechariah described this mountain as "in front of" Jerusalem. The Lord will "split" this mountain in two (with an earthquake, v. 5), "so that half" of it will fall away "toward the north," and "the other half toward the south," leaving a large east-west valley down the middle (cf. Rev. 16:18-19). The earthquake will accompany Antichrist's invasion of Israel (cf. Dan. 7:8; Rev. 19:20).

"Words cannot express more plainly the personal, visible, bodily, literal return of the Lord Jesus Christ in power."<sup>306</sup>

14:5 The Israelites will "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). Compare the Israelites' flight through the Red Sea during the Exodus. The "valley will reach" as far as "Azal" (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 "will flee just as" they did during the great "earthquake" that happened during King Uzziah's reign over Judah (cf. Amos 1:1).<sup>307</sup> "Then the LORD will come," with all His "holy ones with Him," namely: Christians in heaven and angels (cf. Ps. 89:5, 7; Matt.

<sup>304</sup>Wiersbe, p. 471.

<sup>305</sup>Unger, p. 245.

<sup>306</sup>Feinberg, "Zechariah," p. 910.

<sup>307</sup>See Josephus, *Antiquities of . . .*, 9:10:4.

25:31; Col. 1:4, 12, 26-27; 1 Thess. 3:13; Jude 14; Rev. 19:11-16). Zechariah expressed his own relationship with the Lord, his faith in Him, and his wonder at this revelation by referring to Him personally: "O my God."

14:6 "In that day . . . the luminaries will dwindle" (lit. congeal), and there will be a reduction of light on the earth (cf. Joel 3:15-17; Amos 5:18).

"The meaning is that the loss of light is explained by the congealing of the heavenly bodies, their 'thickening' as it were to the point that they cannot shine [cf. Exod. 15:8; Job 10:10; Zeph. 1:12]."<sup>308</sup>

14:7 It will evidently be like twilight, "neither day nor night" (cf. Gen. 1:3-5). Even in the evening there will be more light than usual. It will be "a unique day" (time) in human history (cf. Jer. 30:7). This phenomenon will occur on a day that only Yahweh knows (cf. Matt. 24:36; Acts 1:7).

Other passages also predict cosmic phenomena in the Day of the Lord (Isa. 13:9-10; Joel 2:31; 3:15; Amos 5:18; Matt. 24:29-30; Rev. 6:12-14; 8:8-12; 9:1-18; 14:14-20; 16:4, 8-9). Bear in mind that this "day" is an extended period of time, not just a 12-hour or 24-hour period. Here, just the end of the Tribulation is in view—the entirety of which the prophets spoke of as "the Day of the Lord"—along with the Millennium.

14:8 Also, "in that day," life-giving water will flow rapidly "out of Jerusalem," half of it flowing east into the Dead Sea, and the other half west into the Mediterranean Sea. "Living water(s)" is a metaphor that pictures water as a living thing, flowing quickly and sparkling in its constant movement and shifting course (cf. Lev. 14:5-6, 50-52; 15:13; Num. 19:17). This water will flow all year round, even "in" the "summer" when most streams in Palestine dry up (cf. Ps. 46:4; Joel 3:18). The Israelites divided their year into two seasons instead of four: summer and winter (cf. Gen. 8:22; Ps. 74:17; Isa. 18:6).<sup>309</sup> 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).

"There is no reason to take this [whole description] in any but a literal way, unless one is prepared to deny a literal coming of YHWH as well."<sup>310</sup>

### The security of Israel 14:9-11

14:9 "In that day," Yahweh will rule over the whole earth. He will be the only "king"; there will be no others. "His name" will be number "one" in all the earth; there will be no other so-called gods (cf. Deut. 6:4-5). This verse

<sup>308</sup>Merrill, p. 351.

<sup>309</sup>R. de Vaux, *Ancient Israel: Its Life and Institutions*, pp. 189-90.

<sup>310</sup>Merrill, pp. 343-44.

refers to Christ's millennial kingdom (cf. Ps. 2; Dan. 2:44-45; 7:27; Matt. 6:9-10).

"Israelites for generations had been singing 'The Lord reigns' (Pss. 93; 97; 99), but it had been a declaration of faith. Once 'that day' comes He will be seen to be King over His world kingdom."<sup>311</sup>

"Yahweh's kingdom will be complete, total, and real on earth as it is in heaven."<sup>312</sup>

- 14:10 The land around Jerusalem will become level, whereas Jerusalem itself will be elevated (apparently due to a great earthquake; cf. Isa. 2:2; Rev. 16:18-19). In view of the place names mentioned, this verse probably refers to the literal city and its topography. "Geba" stood about six miles north of Jerusalem (2 Kings 23:8), and the "Rimmon" south of Jerusalem stood about 35 miles southwest of it (Josh. 15:32; Neh. 11:29). The sites mentioned in Jerusalem were on the east, west, north, and south sides of the city, indicating its totality.<sup>313</sup>
- 14:11 People will live in millennial Jerusalem. From then on, Jerusalem will never again suffer depopulation by being put under the "curse" (or ban, Heb. *herem*). Canaanite cities placed under the ban were totally destroyed (Josh. 6:17-18). In other words, the city and those in it will enjoy "security," because Jerusalem will never again suffer destruction.

### **The destruction of Israel's enemies 14:12-15**

Chronologically these verses describe what will follow verse 3.

- 14:12 The Lord will "strike" the nations that warred against Jerusalem (vv. 1-3) with a "plague" that will cause the people's flesh to "rot" off of them wherever they might be. They would not be able to see or speak (cf. Isa. 37:36). One wonders if nuclear warfare may be involved.
- 14:13 "Panic" will seize them "from the LORD . . . in that day," and they will fight one another (cf. Judg. 7:22; 1 Sam. 14:15-20; 2 Chron. 20:23). This will happen near Jerusalem.
- 14:14 The Israelites will also fight their enemies there, and will gather much spoil from the people they defeat. Thus there are three instruments God will use to defeat Israel's enemies: plague (v. 12), themselves (v. 13), and the Israelites (v. 14).

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<sup>311</sup>Baldwin, p. 203.

<sup>312</sup>Smith, p. 289.

<sup>313</sup>Baldwin, p. 204.

14:15 The "plague" that the Lord will send on Israel's enemies (v. 12) will also afflict their animals—precluding their escape (cf. Josh. 7:24-25).

### **The worship of the sovereign King 14:16-21**

14:16 The remaining former enemies of Israel who have not died will bow to the sovereignty of Yahweh (cf. 8:20-23; Isa. 2:2-4; 45:21-24; 60:4-14; Ezek. 40—48; Phil. 2:10). They will be expected to make annual pilgrimages to Jerusalem to worship the one "King": Almighty Yahweh (cf. Ps. 24:10; Isa. 6:5; Rev. 11:15; 19:16), "and to celebrate the Feast of Booths." The Feast of Booths (or Tabernacles, Ingathering) commemorated the Lord's provision of agricultural bounty and the Israelites' redemption from Egyptian slavery. Strangers were welcome to participate in it in Israel's past history. It also anticipated entrance into the Promised Land and kingdom blessings (Lev. 23:34-43).

The Apostle Peter evidently concluded that the messianic kingdom had begun when he saw Jesus transfigured (Luke 9:33). He suggested that the disciples make three booths for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah. This indicates that the Jews in Jesus' day associated the Feast of Booths with the beginning of Messiah's kingdom, the same connection that Zechariah made here.

The Feast of Booths was the last of the three most important feasts on Israel's calendar, so it would be an appropriate one for these Gentiles to celebrate in Jerusalem yearly. This feast was a time of grateful rejoicing (Lev. 23:40; Deut. 16:14-15; Neh. 8:17). This may not be the only feast these people will celebrate, but it was the only one Zechariah mentioned, perhaps because it was so climactic.<sup>314</sup>

"There are many views as to why choice was made of the Feast of Tabernacles, but the most probable is that, speaking of the joys of the ingathering, it will celebrate the gathering of the nations to the Lord and especially His tabernacling among them [cf. Rev. 7:15-17; 21:3]."<sup>315</sup>

The Feast of Tabernacles is the only one of Israel's major feasts that will be unfulfilled until it is celebrated at this time.<sup>316</sup>

14:17-19 As punishment for not making the pilgrimage to attend this feast, the Lord will withhold rain (cf. Ps. 2:8-12; Rev. 2:27; 12:5; 19:15). This was also a curse for covenant disobedience under the Mosaic Law (Deut. 28:22-24). For example, if people from Egypt did not go up to Jerusalem, the Lord will withhold rain from Egypt. This will be His punishment on any nation that does not participate (cf. 9:11—10:1). Rain is a figure for spiritual

<sup>314</sup>See de Vaux, pp. 495-502, 506.

<sup>315</sup>Feinberg, *God Remembers*, pp. 260-61.

<sup>316</sup>Unger, p. 265.

blessing (cf. Ezek. 34:26), but both literal and spiritual blessing are probably in view here.

"Egypt was an exception among the nations because it depended for water not on rainfall but on the Nile. As Egypt had experienced plagues at the time of the Exodus, and through them had been brought to acknowledge God's sovereignty, so *plague* was a fitting symbol of disaster in the new era."<sup>317</sup>

"Zechariah portrays the Messiah as the complete and perfect King by applying all six royal functions [of ancient Near Eastern kingship] to him . . . : (1) mediating Servant (3:8); (2) Priest (6:13); (3) Judge (14:16-19); (4) Warrior (10:4; 14:3-4); (5) Shepherd (11:8-9; 13:7); and (6) 'Peace'-bringing King (3:10; 9:9-10)."<sup>318</sup>

14:20 "In that day," even the most common things will be as consecrated to God's glory as the gold plate on the high priest's turban that previously indicated his consecration (Exod. 28:36). This plate was to remind the Israelites of their holy calling as well. Finally, all the people will truly be consecrated to the Lord and will fulfill their holy calling (cf. Exod. 19:6; Jer. 2:3). The ordinary "cooking pots" in the temple will be as holy as "the bowls" used to sprinkle the sacrificial blood on the brazen altar had been. Distinctions between sacred and secular will no longer exist, since *everything will be holy*—set apart to God.

14:21 In fact, "every cooking pot" throughout the holy city will be set apart to honor Yahweh Almighty. People will even be able to use them to bring their sacrifices of worship to the Lord. Finally, there will be no more Canaanites in the temple of the Lord of Hosts in that day. 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.

"There will be holiness in public life ('the bells of the horses,' v. 20), in religious life ('the cooking pots in the LORD's house,' v. 20), and in private life ('every pot in Jerusalem and Judah,' v. 21). Even common things become holy when they are used for God's service. So it is with our lives."<sup>319</sup>

<sup>317</sup>Baldwin, p. 207. Cf. Feinberg, "Zechariah," p. 911.

<sup>318</sup>Barker, p. 664.

<sup>319</sup>Ibid., p. 697. For a synopsis of the future of Israel, see Louis A. Barbieri Jr., "The Future for Israel in God's Plan," in *Essays in Honor of J. Dwight Pentecost*, pp. 163-79.



Chapter 14 is the climax of this whole revelation: the reign of Messiah. Here we learn that God will deliver Israel through Messiah who will appear (14:1-8). Jesus will return to earth and touch down on the Mount of Olives, the same place from which He ascended into heaven (Acts 1:9). Messiah will then provide final security for the Israelites (14:9-11), destroy Israel's enemies (14:12-15), and the result will be universal worship of sovereign Yahweh (14:16-21). All of these benefits will occur after Messiah appears and sets up His kingdom on the earth.

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