



**Grace Baptist Church
Winterset, Iowa**

Adult Study

2021

ZECHARIAH

TITLE AND WRITER

Zechariah means "Yahweh (the LORD) Remembers". It was a common name in the Old Testament as the name identifies at least 27 different individuals throughout the Old Testament. 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. It is possible that Zechariah was a poet as well as a prophet. His name is in the titles of Psa. 111, 125, 137, 145—150 in numerous translations of the Bible.

Zechariah was born in Babylonian captivity. He was a Levite. He returned to Palestine very early in life, in 536 B.C. with Zerubbabel (the governor) and Joshua (the high priest) and 50,000 other Israelites. He was a young man (Heb. *na'ar*) when he began prophesying (2:4). Nehemiah mentioned Zechariah as the head of a priestly family when Joiakim, who succeeded Joshua, was high priest (Neh. 12:12, 16). Zechariah became the head of his own division of priests in the days of Joiakim and was a leading priest in the restoration community succeeding his grandfather (or ancestor), Iddo, who also returned from captivity in 536 B.C. According to tradition, he was a member of the Great Synagogue, a council of 120 men originated by Nehemiah and presided over by Ezra, which later developed into the ruling council known as the Sanhedrin.

The Lord Jesus referred to Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, in Matt. 23:35 whom the Jews murdered between the temple and the altar. This would make Zechariah one of the last righteous people the Jews killed in Old Testament history.

DATE

Haggai and Zechariah were contemporaries but Haggai was older than Zechariah. Zechariah's prophecies began in the eighth month of 520 B.C. (1:1), approximately 2 months after Haggai began his ministry. His eight night visions followed three months later in 520 B.C. (1:7). He delivered the messages in chapters 7—8 in 518 B.C. A number of scholars believe Zechariah wrote chapters 9—14 during a later period of his life.

THEME

Zechariah, as well as Haggai, challenged the Jews in Israel to finish rebuilding the temple; and to repent and rededicate themselves to the LORD with the prospect of His future blessings. The central theme of the book is encouragement and hope because the Jews in Israel at that time viewed their efforts as making little difference in the present, let alone seeing any hope for the future. Zechariah deals with the future of Israel, and his revelations concerning a future day of the LORD are numerous. Zechariah 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).

STRUCTURE

Zechariah's writing is in the style of a poem. A brief section introduces the whole book (1:1-6), then there are three large chiasmic sections (1:7—6:15; 7:1—8:19; and 9—14). These chiasmic structures contain Zechariah's eight night visions and their accompanying oracles, his four messages prompted by a question about fasting, and the two burdens (oracles) announcing the triumphant interventions of the LORD into history in the future. Note the 8—4—2 structure of this book; 8 visions, 4 messages, 2 oracles. Overall, few books in the Bible are more difficult to interpret than Zechariah.

MESSAGE

The historical background and audience are the same as those for Haggai. The Jews who returned from exile in Babylon began to rebuild the temple (Ezra 3:1 – 4:5) but opposition from without and indifference from within had caused the work to be abandoned (Ezra 4:24). Haggai challenged the Jews in Israel with 4 sermons in 4 months calling them to repentance and to begin again to rebuild the temple. As Israel looked back, they saw former glory and recent shame; and 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 Israelites to finish rebuilding the temple. Zechariah followed this first message with eight visions to inspire hope in his hearers; to answer the question, "Why should they rebuild the temple if there was no future?" Zechariah then explained in four messages that the present sorrowful fasts that the people were celebrating would give way to future glorious feasts. The final two oracles provided hope for the future by predicting the coming of Messiah and His glorious kingdom.

Zechariah has been called the "apocalypse of the Old Testament" by many scholars, because his prophecies relate to his immediate audience as well as to a future audience. People experiencing adversity frequently see only things that are close at hand. Zechariah provides hope to the Israelites, from visions that he saw and from voices that he heard that encouraged his audience to lift their eyes above their current circumstances to see the larger plans and purposes of the LORD. Zechariah is a revelation of the pervasive power and the persistent purpose of the LORD; and the value of Zechariah is that it reveals what the proper attitude and activity of the LORD's people should be in all circumstances.

The title "the LORD of hosts" occurs at least 35 times in Zechariah. The title "the LORD of hosts" describes the LORD as the sovereign LORD and MASTER of the entire universe. "The LORD of hosts" did not have an abstract meaning to the Israelites; it meant the LORD was absolutely the sovereign One who was leading all the stars, angels, and people in the universe. Zechariah lived when Israel had lost its army, had no military power, and had little political organization; so by his referring to "the LORD of hosts," Zechariah was reminding Israel of the LORD's abiding and active sovereignty over all things in the entire universe.

Through Zechariah, the LORD's message to Israel is this; 1) it is His will that He calls His people back to Himself, 2) He will provide the way for them to come back to Him and 3) He promises that if they return to Him, He will return to them. The Jews in Zechariah's day needed to complete the temple and reestablish right relations with the LORD, even though they lived in a trying time, full of 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 the LORD promised and would provide. Haggai called for the Jewish people to repent, to be strong and to work; Zechariah shows the Jewish people the source of their strength for their life, the LORD.

What do we see as we look at our church today? Do we see only the discouraging things, especially when we look at what is happening around us in our culture today? We need to be aware of what the LORD has said He is doing, and will do, to persevere in the work of building His church, which He has called us to do (cf. Matt. 16:18; 2 Cor. 2:14—5:21). If we believe that the LORD is "the LORD of hosts" and that He is sovereign and omnipotent, what are we doing? If we believe what we say we believe in, we should be conscious of the pervasive presence and power of the LORD and be about the work that He has called us to do – sharing the gospel, baptizing and discipling (Matt: 28:18-20). The true demonstration of faith in the "LORD of hosts" is taking hold of our present situation and doing something about it - by trusting in and acting upon the LORD's promises as we work doing His will.

G. Campbell Morgan in his *Living Messages of the Books of the Bible* wrote: "The writer of Hebrews, in Heb. 12:12-13, challenged his readers with words that are very appropriate in light of the message of Zechariah; "...strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet so that what is lame may not be dislocated but rather be healed." 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."

ZECHARIAH

INTRODUCTION - 1:1-6

The opening 6 verses introduce Zechariah's prophetic writing and it is a call to the people of Israel to repentance. Zechariah's call to repentance is foundational to the rest of the book. George L. Robinson wrote: "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." Zechariah's call to repentance clearly outlines a truth that applies to us today – and was best described by Merrill Unger when he wrote; "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.*" That truth applies to us today – we often want God's blessing in spite of habitual, non-repentant sin in our life.

1:1 – Zechariah begins his writing by indicating the time that the "word of the LORD" came to him. The time was the eighth month of the second year of Darius, which was in late October or early November of 520 B.C. (Note: 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 king of Israel at the time of Zechariah's writing, he makes 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, which began at the reign of Nebuchadnezzar and will continue until the future millennial reign of Christ. "The word of the LORD" is a technical term meaning *the prophetic word of revelation*.

1:2-4 – Zechariah begins by telling the Israelites that the LORD had been "very angry" with the Jews' forefathers. The phrase "very angry" literally means "angry with anger", "to break out in long-controlled indignation," which indicates the LORD's extreme displeasure with the Israelites.

"Therefore" Zechariah was to preach repentance to the Jews as the "LORD of hosts" authoritative messenger. The title "the LORD of hosts" describes the LORD as the sovereign LORD and MASTER of the entire universe; the sovereign One who was leading all the stars, angels, armies and people in the universe. The threefold repetition of the "LORD of hosts" stresses the divine imperative of this call to repentance. They were to repent! *Repentance is the LORD's desire for all men, not just the Jews (II Pet. 3:9)*. If the Jews 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). They were to "return to "the LORD of hosts" through a personal relationship and allegiance to Him – a whole-hearted genuine turning to Him, not simply a return to duty by a formal obedience to His law.

Zechariah warned the Israelites not to be like their pre-Exile forefathers who were disobedient and obstinate; they had refused to respond to the preaching of earlier prophets who urged them to repent (e.g., Isaiah, Jeremiah, et al.) prior to their Exile. Charles L. Feinburg correctly wrote this challenge; *"It's one thing to ask God to bless us but quite another to be the kind of people He can bless!"*

1:5-6 – Zechariah warns the Israelites not to delay in repenting by asking 2 rhetorical questions: "Where are your fathers" and "Do prophets live forever?" Their fathers 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 rebellious Jews like a hunter captures his prey.

The Jews did acknowledge 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 Jews Zechariah was ministering to if they failed to heed Zechariah's call to repentance.

The LORD promised to bless His people, but their enjoyment of that blessing depended on their walking with Him in trust and obedience. And this applies to us today. Charles L Feinburg wrote: "... *Zechariah enumerates in his introductory address five great principles: (1) The condition of all God's blessings, verse 3 [repentance]. (2) The evil and peril of disobedience, verse 4 [discipline, judgment]. (3) The unchangeable character of God's Word, verse 6a [infallible, immutable]. (4) God's governmental dealings with His people in accordance with their deeds, verse 6b ('according to our ways and according to our deeds') [justice]. (5) God's immutable purposes, verse 6b ('as Jehovah ... determined ... so did he with us') [sovereignty].*"

EIGHT NIGHT VISIONS AND FOUR MESSAGES

Zechariah 1:7 – 6:8 - Three months after Zechariah called the nation of Israel to repentance (1:1-6) he received eight apocalyptic visions in one night (1:7). On that same day five months earlier the rebuilding of the temple had resumed, albeit slowly (cf. Hag. 1:14-15); on that same day two months earlier Haggai had delivered a stern rebuke to the priest for their impurity and to the people for delay in rebuilding the temple (cf. Hag. 2:10-17); and on that same day Haggai had received a revelation from the LORD (cf. Hag. 2:21-23). The LORD gave Zechariah these visions for the encouragement of the post-Exile remnant in Israel who had been commissioned to rebuild the temple (cf. 1 & 2 Chron.) and to anticipate the day of the LORD's return. The visions concerned the LORD's purpose for the future of Israel, particularly Jerusalem, the seat of the Davidic dynasty and the site of the temple, and Judah. The broad theme of these visions is the coming of the King (the Messiah). The purpose of these visions was to encourage the returnees to persevere in their work of rebuilding the temple.

Each vision follows a pattern: 1) an introduction; 2) a description of what was seen; 3) a question to the angel for the meaning of what was seen; and 4) the explanation by the angel. Oracles (speech or information given by the LORD that reveals hidden knowledge or divine purpose) accompany three of the visions, making their messages clearer (1:16-17; 2:6-13; 4:6-10). All eight visions are meant to be interpreted as one whole. The visions follow a chiasmic pattern.

- A The red-horse rider among the myrtle trees (1:7-17) (Omniscience)
 - B The four horns and the four craftsmen (1:18-21)
 - C The surveyor (ch. 2)
 - D The cleansing and restoration of Joshua the High Priest (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) (Omnipotence)

Zechariah's Eight Night Visions		
Vision	Reference	Meaning
The Red-horse Rider among the Myrtles	1:7-17	The LORD's anger against the nations and blessing on restored Israel
The Four Horns and the Four Craftsmen	1:18-21	The LORD's judgment on the nations that afflict Israel
The Surveyor with the Measuring Line	Chapter 2	The LORD's future blessing on restored Israel
The Cleansing and Crowning of Joshua the High Priest	Chapter 3	Israel's future cleansing from sin and reinstatement as a priestly nation

The Golden Lampstand and the Two Olive Trees	Chapter 4	Israel as the light to the nations under Messiah, the King-Priest
The Flying Scroll	5:1-4	The severity and totality of divine judgment on individual Israelites
The Woman in the Basket	5:5-11	The removal of national Israel's sin of rebellion against the LORD
The Four Chariots	6:1-8	Divine judgment on Gentile nations

The Red-horse Rider Among the Myrtle Trees

Zechariah 1:1-17 – This is the first vision of eight that Zechariah sees in a single night. This vision provides the general theme of the other seven visions, which is the restoration and future of the nation of Israel. Zechariah's first vision establishes hope for Israel by assuring Israel that the Gentile oppression they are experiencing will someday be over, and there will be a future blessing coming from the LORD.

1:7-8 – Zechariah receives a revelation from the LORD – a vision. Zechariah has a vision from the LORD – “I saw by night” – and he saw "a man riding on a red (bay, reddish-brown) horse," among "myrtle trees in a hollow/ravine." He also saw "red, sorrel (Heb. *seruqim*, meaning mixed red and white), and white horses behind the “man on the red horse.” There were riders on these horses too (v. 11). The "man" on the red horse was an angel, possibly Michael (cf. Dan. 10:13, 21; 12:1); and is referred to as the “Angel of the LORD” in vs.11.

"Horses" were instruments of war and prestigious possessions (10:3; 1 Kings 10:26). In the Bible, horses are nearly always mentioned in military and or royal contexts. The colors of these horses apparently represent their mission; possibly bloodshed, a mixed mission (of judgment and blessing), and victory (cf. 6:2; Isa. 63:1-6; Rev. 6:4). In Rev. 6:4, the whole period of Gentile world power is characterized by the red horse, i.e. by the sword (cf. Dan. 9:26; Mt. 24:6-7). The "riders" represent some of the LORD's angelic army (host) that serve as His scouts and report world conditions to Him (v. 10).

"Myrtle trees" were fragrant evergreen shrubs that were resistant to fire, and were used in the Feast of Tabernacles to picture future endless messianic blessings that would come to Israel (Neh. 8:15; Isa. 41:19; 55:13). Here the myrtle trees represent Israel. Of note, all the visions that Zechariah saw deal with Israel, not the church, which God revealed for the first time to the New Testament apostles (Eph. 3:1-12). Covenant theologians take the position that this is a reference to the church, who they believe replaces Israel in the O.T. promises to Israel.

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. This angel was not the “Angel of the LORD”, but was an interpreting angel who spoke with Zechariah.

1:10 - The interpreting angel, who looked like a "man" and who was standing in the grove of trees, said that the horsemen were LORD's representatives (angels) whom He had sent to patrol the earth. The phrase “to walk...throughout the earth” is used in a military sense of patrolling or reconnaissance.

1:11 - The horsemen then reported to the “Angel of the LORD” that they had "patrolled the earth," and had found it "peaceful and quiet." These horses and horsemen represent the omniscience of the LORD; He knows everything that goes on in the earth.

The "Angel of the LORD" can be understood in one of two ways. 1) He is the Lord Jesus Christ - the second person of the Trinity; or he is Michael the arc-angel who is the commander-in-chief of the angelic armies. In either case, the "Angel of the LORD" is a representative of the "LORD of Hosts" and functions as a divine messenger.

Zechariah 1:12-13 - The Angel of the LORD's question / the LORD's answer

1:12 – The Angel of the LORD addresses the LORD. Clearly they were separate persons. The Angel of the LORD is interceding to the LORD on behalf of the nation of Israel. He is asking the LORD about "how long" He was going to continue to discipline "Jerusalem and the cities of Judah," which He had done for the last "70 years." That prophesied period was now over, but the Israelites were still oppressed and under foreign domination, and the city was not rebuilt. If the Angel of the LORD is the pre-incarnate Christ, His activity here anticipates Jesus' role as Intercessor for His people.

1:13 - The LORD responded to the Angel of the LORD's question graciously and "with ... comforting words." This message from the LORD was communicated to Zechariah through the interpreting angel; and this message is found in verses 14-17.

Zechariah 1:14-17 - The angel's instructions for Zechariah

Following are the messages from the LORD that Zechariah was to deliver along with the revelation of the vision. The clause "Thus says the LORD" introduces three oracles (vv. 14b-15, 16, 17) which convey; 1) the LORD's love (jealousy) for Israel, 2) the LORD's wrath on the nations, and 3) the LORD's blessing on Israel.

1:14-15 – The interpreting angel instructs Zechariah to proclaim that the LORD was very "jealous for Jerusalem and Zion" ('jealous with great jealousy'), which speaks to the LORD's zeal to protect His covenant love with Israel. Jealousy here refers to the LORD's careful loving concern for the well-being of Israel. Often in Scripture 'jealously' alludes to the LORD as being a husband who wants to keep His wife, Israel or the church, true to Himself.

The interpreting angel also proclaims that the LORD is "very angry" ('with great anger I am angry') with the Gentile "nations," which were presently "at ease." The LORD was very angry because the Gentile nations had prolonged and intensified the punishment of Israel by overstepping the LORD's intended punishment of Israel; as the LORD was only a "little angry."

1:16 – Therefore, the LORD promised to "return" to Israel and show them "mercy/compassion." The LORD promised that the temple would be rebuilt in Jerusalem 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). "Surveying/measuring" Jerusalem pictures its expanded restoration (cf. Jer. 31:38-40) as the "surveying/measuring line" is a construction tool.

1:17 – The LORD also promised that His cities, Jerusalem and the cities of Judah, would "again...prosper." And that He would "again comfort Zion" and "choose" (to bless) Jerusalem." The complete fulfillment of this vision will occur with the Second Coming of Christ and the establishment of the Millennial Kingdom.

The distinctive features of this first vision is that although Israel is not yet in her promised position, the LORD loves her and is reserving glory and prosperity for her in the Millennium under the rule and reign of Christ, the Messiah. And that the LORD will judge the Gentile nations that have persecuted Israel while they ruled over Israel. The first vision gives us the general theme of all of the visions given to Zechariah.

The Four Horns and the Four Craftsmen

Zechariah– 1:18-21 - The second vision of Zechariah builds and elaborates on the comfort promised Israel in the first vision (1: 13, 16-17). In this vision the LORD details the execution of His anger against the Gentile nations that excessively oppressed His people (1:15).

1:18 -Zechariah has a second vision and he sees "four horns." We presume the horns are on living animals since they could feel terror (v. 21), although there is no mention of animals; so the horns could have been animal, or made of

wood, stone or metal. Horns are a common symbol for the power, pride and strength of a Gentile king or world empire (e.g., Psa. 75:10; 89:17; Dan. 7:24; 8:20-21).

1:19 –Zechariah requests an interpretation of his vision of the horns from the interpreting angel, who explained that the horns represented the Gentile nations that had "scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem." The use of "have/had scattered" is past tense meaning these nations could be Assyria, Egypt, Babylonia and Medo-Persia. But in light of verse 20, the four horns Zachariah saw could represent Babylonia, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome (cf. Dan. 2 & 7); which is my preferred understanding.

1:20 - Then the LORD showed Zechariah "four" craftsmen (Heb. *harashim*, meaning workmen skilled in shaping wood, stone or metal through the use of hammers and chisels). Either the LORD Himself pointed them out, or the LORD did so through Zechariah's interpreting angel.

1:21 – Zechariah again asks for an interpretation. The interpreting angel tells Zechariah that these craftsmen had come "to terrify" the horns Zechariah had seen earlier and to overthrow them for attacking Israel and scattering the Israelites. It is understood that these craftsmen were going to use the hammers and chisels of their trade to threaten and destroy the horns; meaning one nation will rise up to destroy the preceding nation who is in rule. We understand that the kingdoms of Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and Christ's Kingdom (Millennium) are the craftsmen in view in this vision of Zechariah's. 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) at the time of Zechariah's vision. Below is a simple view of the "craftsman" that destroyed the Gentile kingdom oppressing Israel.

The four craftsmen		The four horns	
Medo-Persia	destroyed	Babylonia	
Greece	destroyed	Medo-Persia	
Rome	destroyed	Greece	
Christ's Kingdom	will destroy	(revived) Rome	

Zechariah's vision shows that the LORD will rise up instruments of judgment to deliver His people from their enemies. Charles Feinburg wrote: "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."

The Surveyor

Zechariah 2 - In the first vision (1:7-17), the LORD promised comfort to Israel. In the second vision (1:18-21), the LORD explained that He would bring this comfort by punishing the nations that had afflicted Israel. In the third vision the LORD guarantees the future prosperity and expansion of Israel. This vision pictures Jerusalem in its millennial glory and the LORD as its divine protector. The third vision has continuity with the second vision as the divine judgment of the Gentile nations of the second vision is followed up by the enlargement and divine protection of Jerusalem in the third vision. This 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.

The Vision of the Surveyor - 2:1-5

2:1-2 - In this vision, Zechariah sees "a man with a measuring line in his hand." It is thought by many that the "man" that Zechariah saw was the Angel of the LORD (cf. 1:11; 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 a fore view of a much greater future restoration (cf. Ezek. 40:3-5; Rev. 11:1) in the Millennium.

2:3-4 - "Another angel," possibly the Angel of the LORD (cf. 1:11), came forward to meet Zechariah's guiding angel. 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). During the restoration period at the time of Zechariah, the Jews built walls around Jerusalem to make it secure, but few people wanted to live in it (cf. Neh. 7:4). This prophecy will be fulfilled in the future, but it would have encouraged the people in Zechariah's day to continue to work to rebuild the city as they looked forward to the future.

(Note: Mormons believe that the young man was Joseph Smith and the angel was Moroni, who revealed to him the golden plates of the book of Mormon. Also, Amillennialists spiritualize "Jerusalem" to mean "the church." Amillennialist have written that "this prophecy...looks on directly to the time of Christ...it pictures the gradual expansion of the kingdom of Christ, without bound or limit, whose protection and glory God is, and the character of its defenses.")

2:5 – Zechariah is told by the LORD that He would be Jerusalem's defense ("a wall of fire") and her "glory" as He would be dwelling there. The LORD *Himself* (emphatic in the Hebrew text) would protect Jerusalem by His presence (cf. 1:16; Ps. 24:7-10) in the city. This anticipates the LORD's personal presence in His Kingdom on earth (cf. 2:11-12; 14:9; Isa 60:19; Ezek. 43:1-5; 48:35). The "wall of fire" recalls the pillar of cloud and fire by which the LORD protected Israel by His presence at various times throughout Israel's history (Exod. 13:21-22; 14:19-20; 40:34; Isa. 4:5-6). When the restoration work in rebuilding the walls of Jerusalem was being done by Nehemiah, Zechariah sees a vision of the future Jerusalem as a broad, spreading city with the LORD protecting it and the glory of His presence within it. Such a promise must have been a great encouragement to those in and around Jerusalem.

Since Jerusalem has not been safe for many, many years it is best understood that this vision will be fulfilled in the Millennium when Christ returns....and it is very clear that the LORD's presence is not in Jerusalem today in all of His glory!

The destruction of oppressing enemies 2:6-9

2:6-7 – "*Up, Up*" is a call-to-attention to the Jews in Babylon and to those scattered abroad in numerous nations. The LORD, through Zechariah, was calling on His people to "flee/escape 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 – both of those nations were "north" of Jerusalem. 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.

This was a call for the scattered Jews to return to Israel in Zechariah's day to help rebuild their nation. But it is also, because of the context and lack of fulfillment, a prophetic call to the Jews living in the end times to flee from "Babylon" to escape the LORD's judgment of "Babylon" (cf. Rev. 18:4-8).

2:8-9 - The Jews were to flee because the LORD purposed to send His Son (Israel's Messiah) to judge the nations ("shake My hand against them") for 'plundering' His people who were "the apple of His eye" (lit. gate, the pupil, which is the most sensitive part of the eye - cf. Deut. 32:10; Ps. 17:8). The phrase "He sent Me after glory" is a reference to the Second Coming of Christ as the Messiah (cf. Rev. 19:11-16; Matt. 25:31-32). Christ, as the Messiah, is the only one with sufficient power and authority to fulfill what the LORD predicted here. He would simply "wave" His "hand" over these nations in a menacing gesture, and they would become "spoil" for the Israelites whom they had plundered (cf. Isa. 11:15-16; 14:1-2; 19:16-17). Then Israel would "know" that the LORD had "sent" Christ as their Messiah (cf. Isa. 61:1-3).

The LORD's ultimate blessing of Israel 2:10-13

2:10-11 - The Jews were called to rejoice because the LORD promised to intervene for them and to dwell among them; this a clear reference to Christ's Second Coming. His return to Jerusalem would prompt the nations to come there and acknowledge Christ, the Messiah, as sovereign (cf. Ps. 47:7-9). "Many nations" will turn "to the LORD in that day" (cf. 14:16; Isa. 2:12-27; Joel 2:28-3:21; Amos 5:18-20; 9:11-15; Zeph.3:8-20) and become part of his family of believers (cf. 8:20-23; Isa. 2:2-4). Christ "will dwell" in the "midst" of His people (cf. 8:3), and they will "know" that the LORD had "sent" Him as their Messiah.

2:12-13 - The LORD will 'possess' Judah (lit. come to live among) as His inheritance in the "holy land," and will "choose Jerusalem" for His dwelling. This is the only occurrence of the term "holy land" in the Bible. Jerusalem will become holy (sacred, not common or ordinary) because it will be the site of the throne and habitation of the LORD. "All" the people of the earth should be still (silent) before the LORD, because the LORD will 'arouse' Himself "from His heavenly habitation" to reside on the earth (cf. Ps. 15:1-2).

The typical amillennial interpretation sees these promises fulfilled in the church; and that 'Judah' and 'Jerusalem' are designations of His people wherever they may be found. So 'the holy land' is not specifically Israel but every place where God manifests Himself. But contextual interpretation of Scripture does not support such an interpretation.

THE CLEANSING AND RESTORATION OF JOSHUA THE HIGH PRIEST

Zechariah 3 - In Zechariah 3, Joshua, Israel's high priest represents Israel in this vision. This fourth vision presents Israel's cleansing and restoration as a priestly nation. This vision has two parts: a symbolic act (vv. 1-5) and the accompanying explanation and promises (vv. 6-10). There are 5 actors in this vision: 1) Joshua the High Priest (cf. Ezra 3:2; Hag.1:1), 2) Angel of the LORD (Christ), 3) Satan, 4) attending angels, and 5) Zechariah.

The symbolic act - 3:1-5

3:1 - Zechariah's guiding angel next showed him "Joshua", Israel's current high priest (cf. Ezra 5:2; Neh. 7:7), standing before the Angel of the LORD (Christ). The scene of this vision occurs in the Temple courts, where the high priest officiated and had access to the LORD's presence. Satan (Heb. *Hasatan* – the accuser, the Satan) 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; 1 Chron. 21:1; Rev. 12:10). Standing "*at the right hand*" was the traditional place where an accuser stood in Jewish life (cf. 1 Chron. 21:1; Ps. 109:6). It is thought that Joshua, as High Priest, was standing in a tribunal, where he is being accused by Satan of being unfit for the priestly ministry.

3:2 - "The LORD (Christ)" then spoke to Satan, citing His own authority as "the LORD who has chosen Jerusalem." This is an indication that Joshua, the High Priest, represented Israel. Joshua was secure from Satan's accusations because of the LORD's sovereign choice of Jerusalem (cf. 12:2; Rom. 8:33). The LORD rebuked Satan twice, meaning the repetition added force to the initial rebuke. The LORD then refers to Joshua as a burning stick "plucked from the fire," saving it for His future use (cf. Amos 4:11). We believe that Joshua represents Israel, so the fire may be a reference to the punishment and dispersion of Israel for their disobedience with the stick representing the surviving remnant. Here is a picture of the LORD rebuking Satan and acquitting Israel.

3:3 - Joshua stands before the "Angel" of the LORD, dressed in vile, filthy, dung infested garments (cf. Isa. 4:4). He was ministering to the LORD in this extremely filthy, ceremonially unclean condition. Joshua, as priest, clothed in these filthy garments represents the habitual unclean, sinful state of Israel before the LORD, which was the basis that Satan was going to use to accuse Israel of being morally impure and unworthy of the LORD's protection and blessing. .

3:4 - The LORD instructs others who were standing before Him (angelic servants) to remove and take away Joshua's 'filthy garments' (cf. Exod. 28:8-9, 41; Lev. 8:7-9; Num. 20:28). The LORD then explains that these 'filthy garments' symbolized Israel's sins, which He had forgiven ('taken away'). The LORD then promises that He will replace those 'filthy garments' with 'rich garments' (festal, stately robes - apparel of royalty and wealth), which were garments of purity and righteousness. This symbolized the forgiveness and restoration of Israel to her original calling as a priestly nation (cf. Exod. 19:6; Isa. 61:6).

3:5 - Zechariah now speaks asking the angelic servants to put "a clean turban" on Joshua's head, which they did along with his other new garments. The High Priest wore a turban on their head that has a plaque on the front of the turban that 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 approved and directed all the changes in Joshua's condition.

What is unique here is the command of a man was recognized by the LORD in bringing about His purpose. Similarly, this is how prayer plays a part in the execution of God's will. NOTE: Amillennialists contend that this vision contains no special promises for Israel.

The accompanying promises - 3:6-10

3:6-7 – After Zechariah's vision, the "Angel of the LORD" admonishes Joshua in the name of the "LORD of Hosts" by outlining 2 conditions and 3 results. Joshua was to: 1) "walk" in the LORD's ways (attitude of service) and 2) "keep" the LORD's commands (faithfulness). If Joshua met those conditions he would 1) govern ('judge') the temple, 2) "have charge" of the temple courts, and 3) have a "place" among those in the temple (meaning to have free access into the LORD's presence like the angels who stood before the LORD in His presence). Meaning, Israel was to: (1) to walk in the LORD's ways faithfully in their heart and with their life (cf. Deut. 10:12-22; 28:9 – practical righteousness) and (2) carry out her priestly duties faithfully. If Israel did these things they would: (1) govern the LORD's temple (cf. Deut. 17:8-13; Jer. 31:7); (2) have charge of the LORD's courts in keeping them pure (cf. Isa. 56:7; Jer. 31:23), and (3) enjoy free access to God (cf. Exod. 19:6; Isa. 61:6; Heb. 4:16; 10:19-22).

3:8 - The LORD continues to address Joshua, identifying him as "the high priest." He called the men sitting in front of Joshua, who were fellow priests, "a symbol" (Heb. *Mopheth* – meaning a sign, a token of future events, prophetic sign; cf. Isa. 8:18). (*Note: The priesthood of Israel was laden with guilt and sin, but here, by the grace of God; the priests of Israel have been absolved of sin and accepted by God. This is a tremendous example of the sin-absolving grace of God.*) The LORD also said that He was bringing 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). Kenneth Barker wrote: "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)." The Servant/Branch specifically applies to Christ's incarnation as a man in the first advent.

3:9 – The LORD then directs Zechariah's attention to "the stone." "The stone" 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.); and here it refers to Christ's Second Coming. Charles Feinberg wrote: "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 that they "rejected" (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)." The "Stone" that Zechariah sees has "seven eyes" (Heb. *'ayin*), symbolizing its complete, divine intelligence (omniscience; cf. Rev. 5:6). The "inscription" engraved on the stone was not explained, and is not understood to this day. The LORD also stated that He would "remove the iniquity" of "that land in one day." Christ did that when He died on the cross; and Israel will finally realize this benefit of His death at His Second Coming when He cleanses and forgives Israel as a whole (12:10—13:1; Rom. 11:26-27).

3:10 - "In that day," (the day of the LORD's Second Coming) the LORD promises that Israel will all "invite" their (Gentile) neighbors to join them in enjoying their peace and prosperity. "In that day," Israel will enjoy peace and security as never before; and there will be no more curse on creation so there will be material and spiritual prosperity for all (Isa. 11:1-9; 35; 65:17; Dan. 7:13-14, 27; Mic. 4:1-4).

In summary, vision four describes a day of redemption for Israel as their promises of a King and Kingdom are fulfilled when Christ, as Messiah, comes again the second time as LORD and King.

THE GOLD LAMPSTAND AND THE TWO OLIVE TREES

Zechariah 4 - This fifth vision is an encouragement for Zerubbabel and Joshua, the leaders of the restoration of Jerusalem and the Temple. Zechariah 4 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. This vision is a complement to vision four by its focus on: 1) the menorah (complementing the high priest in vision four), 2) the temple and 3) the strong messianic message.

The vision - 4:1-5

4:1 - Zechariah's guiding angel wakens Zechariah from his sleep. Evidently after the fourth vision, Zechariah had fallen asleep and needed to be awakened.

4:2-3 - The angel asks Zechariah what he saw, and Zechariah replied that he saw a golden "lampstand" with a "bowl" above it. A lampstand supports whatever bears light such as a candle or other light producing material. Lampstands in the temple held 7 removable lamps (bowls with wicks), known as the "menorah," (Exod. 25:31; 1 Kings 7:49). Above the 7 removable lamps on the lampstand, Zechariah sees a "bowl" on top of the lampstand that contains olive oil that constantly replenishes the lamps with oil (cf. v. 12). The Hebrew text indicates "seven and seven pipes to the lamps." So the vision Zechariah sees is a lampstand that holds 7 small lamps with a bowl above the 7 lamps. Each of the 7 lamps on the lampstand has 7 pipes that connect each lamp with the upper bowl, meaning that are 49 pipes coming from the upper bowl that connect to the 7 lower lamps. Each of the lower 7 lamps has 7 wicks (1 wick per pipe) from which 7 lights would be burning. In total there are 7 lamps with a total of 49 lights burning on the lampstand. The large number of pipes stresses the abundant supply of oil from the upper bowl for each lamp. This vision is a picture of a full complement of lamps (7) that manifests a full complement of light (7 flames from each lamp).

Zechariah also sees two olive trees, one standing on either side of the bowl. These olive trees provide the oil to the upper bowl. This indicates that there is a limitless supply of oil being provided by the two trees to the upper bowl, which in turn supplies the 7 lamps. There is no human maintenance of the oil to the lamps. This important feature of the vision stresses the LORD's singular provision of the oil (cf. v. 6). No human being can be the real source of the power that puts into action and maintains the LORD's witness. Therefore, the two olive trees represent Christ, the LORD's Priest-King (cf. Ps. 110:4) and the Holy Spirit (cf. v.6).

This fifth vision represents the restored nation of Israel that presents and shines as the light of truth to the world. The lampstand represents the temple and nation of Israel that holds the light of the LORD as a testimony to the rest of the world. (Note: The amillennial interpretation sees no fulfillment of this vision in the future for Israel, only in the church. Amillennialists interpret the lampstand to be the church.)

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

Two oracles concerning Zerubbabel - 4:6-10

The first oracle - 4:6-7

4:6 – Zechariah's interpreting angel answers Zechariah's question by announcing "the word of the LORD" that Zechariah was to pass on "to Zerubbabel. Zerubbabel was a descendant of David who became the leader of the first group of Jews who returned from exile and he was leading the rebuilding of the Temple. The message Zechariah was to give to Zerubbabel was a word of encouragement: "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit, says the LORD of hosts." "Might" is a reference to military power. "Power" is a reference to human manpower. The restoration of the Temple did not need an army or an army of workers or unusually strong workers; it needed the supernatural grace (help) that the LORD would provide by His "Spirit."

This principle is true today of any work that seeks to carry out God's will in the world (cf. 2 Cor. 12:9). No human effort, strength or wealth is sufficient to accomplish God's work. H.C. Leupold wrote; "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."

4:7 - A "great mountain" would become a "plain ... before Zerubbabel." Mountains epitomize large obstacles (cf. Isa. 40:4; Matt. 17:20; 1 Cor. 13:2). The work to restore the Temple would have seemed like a *mountainous* job to the Jews 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, the LORD would reduce this mountain to a flat plain by assisting the workers. Success would be achieved with the LORD's help as Zerubbabel would "bring forth the capstone," the final stone on the project with shouts of "Grace, grace to it!"

It is a joyful thing to be a part of and witness success in the fulfillment of the LORD's promises when His work is completed by His people!

The second oracle - 4:8-10

4:8-9 - Another word from the LORD also came to Zechariah about Zerubbabel. 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. 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 he and Sheshbazzar had 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 here appears to be the Angel of the Lord – Christ the Messiah (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 of the Temple as insignificant ("day of small things": cf. Ezra 3:12; Hag. 2:3) since it was smaller and less ornate than Solomon's Temple. However, the LORD was glad to "see ... Zerubbabel" building the Temple with his "plumb line," as His omniscient eyes ("these seven") surveyed all that was happening in the world; nothing in this world is hidden from God, especially in Jerusalem (cf. 3:9; 2 Chron. 16:9). With the Temple restored, the LORD's chosen people could serve Him as He purposed. We should never despise the 'day of small things,' for God is glorified in small things and uses them to accomplish great things. He used a shepherd boy and a sling to defeat a giant (1 Sam. 17) and a little boy's lunch to feed a multitude (John 6).

Too often today we measure success in Christendom by the size of the church building, the number of people who attend and the amount of giving. We like our Christian work to be a success story. Are we ignoring or despising the LORD as He seeks to work with us in quiet ways and in quiet places today? Will we allow God to use us in "small things?"

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.

4:11-12 - Zechariah specifically asks his interpreting angel 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 golden olive oil into "two golden pipes" (spouts) that carried the golden oil into the bowl atop the lampstand. The "two branches" refer to the priests and kings with particular reference to Joshua and Zerubbabel who typify the Messiah as Priest and King. The "golden oil" is literally "gold" in Hebrew but here it clearly describes the olive oil that is golden in color representing the pure quality and value of the oil more than its color.

4:13 - The interpreting angel expresses 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.

This verse provides us with understanding that God does not provide additional information to us until we have done all we can to discover His meaning. To do so would discourage our effort to seek God through prayer and study of His Word to serve Him and accomplish what He has called us to do.

4:14 – Zechariah’s interpreting angel tells Zechariah that the two branches represented "the two anointed ones" who stood by the LORD of all the earth (the LORD of hosts). It was their relationship to the LORD of hosts that equipped them for their tasks. "Anointed ones" is literally "sons of oil." There are various interpretations of the "sons of oil" but the context of the vision points toward future fulfillment for the nation of Israel so it is best understood that the "two anointed ones" is a reference to Christ, the Messiah, who combines the Priest and King offices and functions in one person, the Branch (cf. 3:8; 6:12; Isa. 11:1; Jer. 23:5; cf. Ps. 110; Heb. 7).

The point of this vision, and its accompanying oracles, was the LORD's ability to bring a seemingly impossible project of restoring the Temple to a successful and glorious completion. This successful restoration is accomplished through His anointed servants; Zerubbabel and Joshua, who are representative of the Messiah and His supernatural enablement through the Spirit (cf. v.6; 2 Cor. 12:9). The lesson of the vision of Zechariah's is applicable to any project that God has ordained and called His people to do, from rebuilding the temple in Zechariah's day to building the church today (Matt. 16:18). We need to rely on God's power and the Holy Spirit to do His work – and not to try to do His work through our own human effort. We need to humble ourselves before the LORD asking Him to enable and empower us in small things so we can accomplish great things for Him.

THE FLYING SCROLL

Zechariah 5:1-4 - What God promised in the preceding two visions, the cleansing and restoration of the nation of Israel with Christ the Messiah reigning as King, required the judgment of sin as predicted in visions six and seven. The sixth and seventh visions deal with the removal of wickedness from Israel, because the LORD is holy and cannot allow sin to prevail in His Kingdom. This sixth vision deals with the elimination of lawbreakers and the seventh vision with the removal of wickedness from Israel. The sixth vision of the flying scroll depicts the Word of God that has been disobeyed by Israel and the whole world. It calls for the Lord’s righteous judgment of the sinner according to His standard established in His Word.

5:1 - Zechariah sees in his sixth vision an unrolled 'scroll' that is 'flying, through the air. A 'scroll' in Scripture is a symbol that denotes the written word, whether of God or man (cf. Ezra 6:2; Jer. 36:2, 4, 6).

5:2 – Zechariah’s interpreting angel asked him what he saw. Zechariah replies that he saw a "flying scroll" that was 20 cubits long and 10 cubits wide (30 feet by 15 feet). It is an interesting note that these dimensions were the dimensions of the holy place of the tabernacle (Exod. 26:8).

The scroll that Zechariah sees represents the Mosaic Law, which is open and large so people could see it and read it easily – on both sides (v.3). No one could plead ignorance, because the scroll in Zechariah's vision was large enough for all to see and read. The scroll was also 'flying' through the air which indicates that its entrance is rapid and its judgments occur rapidly.

5:3 – Zechariah’s interpreting angel explains that the 'flying scroll', representing the Mosaic Law, declares the punishment ('the curse') that the LORD had decreed against the Israelites who stole and who swore falsely in the Lord's name (v. 4; cf. Deut. 28). 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). (Note: these two commandments probably represent the whole Law, as the two sins mentioned represent transgressions from both tablets of the Law.) According to 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" meaning the land of Israel.

5:4 – The LORD then promises to cause His judgment ('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. 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. The severity and totality of the judgments suggest a future fulfillment in the Millennium under the rule of Christ Jesus as King when divine judgement of sin will be rapid and complete. In spite of the promises of the future restoration and cleansing of the nation of Israel 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).

It is important to note that this vision of Zechariah reinforces the fact that God's Word is true; and all men will one day give an account of their life. Sin of the unbeliever will be judged and the punishment of sin will be severe and eternal. (Note: Amillennialists do not believe that this vision has any reference to the millennial kingdom and its earthly establishment within the land of Israel.)

THE WOMAN IN THE BASKET

Zechariah 5:5-11 - Zechariah's sixth vision (5:1-4) described the future removal of individual sinners from the land through divine judgment. His seventh vision (5:5-11) describes the eventual removal of all wickedness from the nation of Israel; the future "holy land" (2:12; cf. 3:9) of the Millennium.

5:5 – Zechariah's interpreting angel instructs Zechariah to view something else that was happening in his vision – "lift up your eyes and see."

5:6-7 – Zechariah asks what it was that he was seeing, and the interpreting angel replied that it was an "ephah." An ephah was a basket that held about a half bushel (or five gallons) of dry (or liquid) material (cf. 1 Sam. 1:24; Ruth 2:17). The ephah was the largest dry measure among the Jews. The ephah that Zechariah observed was moving ('flying/going forth') and it had a "lead cover" as a lid. The angel "lifted up" the "lead cover" on top of the ephah to reveal "a woman sitting inside." Either the ephah was oversized, like the flying scroll, or the woman was a miniature in Zechariah's vision.

The angel explained that the ephah and its contents were going forth in all 'the earth.' As in the vision of the flying scroll, 'the earth' (*ha'arets*) is best understood as Israel, which is to become 'the Holy Land' (Zech. 2:12). The word "resemblance/appearance" used to describe the ephah in this vision has been interpreted in two ways; 1) it represents the iniquity of people, or 2) it represents commercial materialism. In either interpretation the ephah represents evil. The "lead cover" placed over the opening of the ephah symbolizes a guarantee that what was inside would not get out because lead was heavier than the customary stone covering. The "woman", as used here, is a symbol of religious, civil and ethical evil (cf. Prov. 7; I Tim. 2:12; Rev. 2:20; 17:1-7).

5:8 – Zechariah's interpreting angel explains that the woman personified *wickedness* ("This is Wickedness!"). Evidently the women within the ephah moved to escape as the angel grabbed her up and "threw her down into the ephah" and covered the opening of the ephah with the "lead cover." Obviously some conflict was involved here as "Wickedness" did not want to be restricted. The interpretation of "Wickedness" is varied but the view which seems most appropriate is the woman "Wickedness" represents evil itself in the form of evil-doers and commercial materialism that rejects God – wholly focused on self and self-gratification.

5:9 – Zechariah then sees "two" other "women" flying through the air with "stork ... wings." *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. Some believe the "two women" represent agents of evil, perhaps demonic forces. Others believe that the "two women" are ones sent by God to faithfully carry the ephah and its contents to God's appointed destination. In either case, the two women lifted up the ephah into the air and flew with the divine assistance of "the wind" (Spirit, Heb. *ruah*) to the ephah's final destination.

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

At the appointed time, "Wickedness" will be an object of worship in Babylon (cf. Rev. 17—18) – in a temple on a pedestal. The removal of "Wickedness" from the land of Israel, like the removal of Joshua's filthy garments (3:4), is an act of grace by the LORD.

The two cleansing acts of this chapter are complementary; 1) the removal of lawbreakers (5:1-4) and 2) the removal of wickedness (5:5-11). These cleansing acts will cleanse Israel as a nation as they enter into the Millennium with Christ as their King and Messiah. Amillennialists see no millennial fulfillment in these visions. They teach that this is a reference to the Jews who return from the 70-year captivity that they were not to bring idolatry with them. But this is an assurance to the Jews that the LORD's covenant promise to them will one day be fulfilled in the Millennium.

THE FOUR CHARIOTS

Zechariah 6:1-8 - There are several similarities between this last vision and the first one (1:7-17). Horses of various colors are noted in each vision. Zechariah mentions four horses with rider(s) in the first vision but no chariots; here in his eighth vision he mentions chariots being drawn by horses but no riders. The colors of the horses in the first and in the eighth vision are basically the same. The emphases in the first and eighth visions are similar.

6:1 – In his eighth vision Zechariah sees "four chariots" coming out from between "two ... bronze ... mountains." Chariots and horses were instruments of war and here they symbolize the power of the LORD executing judgment on the earth (Jer. 46:9-10; Joel 2:3-11; Nah. 3:1-7). It is believed that the two mountains are the Mount Zion (cf. Joel 3:16) and the Mount of Olives (cf. 14:4). It may be possible that the 'two mountains' represent the two parts of the Mount of Olives that will split apart when the LORD returns to the earth (cf. 14:1-8). In either case, the mountains that Zechariah sees were "bronze." Bronze (an alloy of copper and tin) can represent judgment against sin in Scripture (cf. Exod. 27:2 [altar]; Num. 21:9 [serpent]) as well as defense against attackers (Isa. 45:2; Jer. 1:18). So this vision represents the LORD's judgment of sin that is not subject to change; an impregnable judgment certain to occur (omnipotence) (Isa. 2:12-22; Rev. 19:11-21).

6:2-3 – There were 'horses' pulling the chariots. "Red horses" pulled the "first chariot;" "black horses" pulled the "second chariot;" "white horses" pulled the "third chariot;" and "dappled (sorrel) horses" pulled the "fourth chariot." All of the horses pulling the chariots were "strong." The colors of the horses may symbolize their function; 1) "red" for war and bloodshed [cf. Rev. 6:4], 2) "black" for famine and death [cf. Rev. 6:5], 3) "white" for victory and triumph [cf. Rev. 6:2, 19:11,14], and 4) "dappled/sorrel (spotted)" for plague and disease [cf. Rev. 6:8], or for prosperity and adversity.

6:4-6 – Zechariah asks his interpreting angel for an explanation. The interpreting angel responded by telling him 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 enemies invaded from (e.g., Babylon - Jer. 1:14-15; cf. 5:5--11). The chariot with the white horses also goes north following the chariot with the black horses. The chariot with the dappled horses headed south. No mention is made of the chariot being pulled by the red horses, so it may be possible that the chariot with the red horses went in any or all directions it desired. The Mediterranean Sea on the west and the Arabian Desert on the east prohibited invasions of Israel from occurring from those directions. Since the chariots went in compass directions, we can interpret and understand that their judgment was universal and the "Lord of all the earth" was executing His judgments against all nations that oppressed Israel and against men who willfully sinned against Him (cf. 2:6; Jer. 49:36; Ezek. 37:9; Rev. 6:1-19:16; Matt: 25:31-46). The title "the Lord of the earth" is a millennial title designating the universal, physical rule of Christ as the Messiah King in the Millennium (cf. 4:14; Micah 4:13).

6:7 – Then the horses and chariots (angels) "went out" from between the 'bronze mountains.' They were "eager "...to walk to and fro throughout the earth" judging nations and men for willful sin. The LORD gave them permission to go and they went.

6:8 - The LORD then called out to Zechariah that the horses and chariots that had gone out into the north had appeased (given rest to) His "wrath in the land of the north." This probably represents judgment on Babylon specifically (cf. Rev. 17-18). Until this judgment is done and the LORD's wrath is at rest, the Millennial Kingdom cannot be established.

It is clear from Zechariah's eight visions that the affairs of all nations, from the beginning of time until the end of time, are under the LORD's control and direction, not man's.

THE SYMBOLIC CROWNING OF JOSHUA

Zechariah 6:9-15 - After the visions ended, Zechariah awakes and the LORD instructs him to perform a symbolic act by crowning Joshua the high priest. The occurrence of this ceremonial coronation event is a historical event and it is significant because it relates directly to the fourth and fifth visions (the center theme of the chiasmic structure) that involved the position of high priest (Joshua) and the Davidic civil ruler (Zerubbabel). Here in this symbolic event, directed by the LORD, these two positions will be symbolically united into one. This is a prophetic activity because this will occur when Israel is restored as a nation under the rule and reign of Christ, the Messiah King-Priest. This prophetic event is one of the clearest presentations in the O.T. of the coming promised Messiah and 1) the offices He would fill (King and Priest), and 2) the mission He would accomplish (rebuilding the Temple).

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." Zechariah was to meet them at "the house of Josiah the son of Zephaniah," where they were evidently staying.

6:11 - Zechariah was instructed by the LORD to make an ornate "crown" out of some or all of the "silver and gold" that had been brought to Jerusalem from the exiles in Babylon. The Hebrew word here is "crowns," not "crown." The plural could indicate a composite crown (cf. Rev. 19:12), a superlative crown, and/or a sacred crown. Zechariah was instructed to place the crown "on the head of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest" (3:1); an act of crowning the high priest as a king. Today Christ is a Priest (Heb. 9:11-14, 24; cf. Gen. 14:18-20; Ps. 110:4; Heb. 7:1-3, 11-21) sitting at the right hand of the Father (Acts 2:32-33; cf. Rev. 3:21) and one day He will come to take His place as the Messiah, the King-Priest of Israel (Rev. 19:11-16).

6:12 - Zechariah was instructed by the LORD to make a specific announcement when he crowned Joshua the high priest. He was to proclaim to those present: "Behold (meaning 'to take note of')... the Man...the Branch." Joshua represented (was a type of) the coming messianic Branch (cf. John 19:5). This name signified that He would shoot up from His humble place of origin (cf. Isa. 53:2; Mic. 5:2). 'He will branch out' is a pun on the word "branch" meaning "the shoot will shoot up from beneath."

The Branch's kingdom will be widespread; and He will build the temple of the LORD. Zerubbabel, not Joshua, was God's choice to build the restoration temple (4:9-10), but the Messiah, whom Joshua prefigured, would build the future temple for the LORD (cf. Isa. 2:2-4; 56:6-7; Ezek. 40—43; Mic. 4:1-7; Hag. 2:6-9). 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.

Interesting is the fact that both the type (Joshua) and the antitype (Jesus) have names that mean "the LORD saves."

6:13 - The LORD repeats this assurance of Christ building the temple for emphasis. The 'Branch' will build the Millennial Temple, and He will: 1) "bear the honor/glory" of royal majesty (cf. Isa. 4:2), and 2) "sit" on David's "throne" (cf. 2 Sam. 7:16; Isa. 9:6-7; Luke 1:32). He "will be a priest," ruling as a king, and "peace" (Heb. *shalom*) will be the results that characterize His execution of the dual "offices" (Psa. 110; Heb. 5:1-10, 7:1-25).

6:14 - The ceremonial "crown" that Zechariah made for Joshua was to be placed and remain in the restored temple as "a reminder/memorial... to Helem/Heldai, Tobijah, Jedaiah, and Hen/Josiah the son of Zephaniah" (v.10). The ceremonial "crown" in the restored temple would also remind all Israelites that the Messiah will be the King-Priest of Israel one day in the future.

6:15 - When the "Branch" appears, Gentiles from afar "will come" and help "build the temple" of the LORD (cf. Isa. 2:2-4; 56:6-7; 60:1-7; Hag. 2:7-9). This will be a literal temple building in Jerusalem where the LORD will reside during the Millennium (Ezek. 40-46). When this happens, everyone "will know" that the LORD "has sent" Messiah to His people (cf. 2:8-11; 4:9). In the new covenant with Israel (Jer. 31:33-34; Ezek. 36:26-28), the LORD personally guarantees that His people will ultimately obey Him in everything because His Spirit will enable them to do so.

J. Vernon McGee summarized Zechariah's visions and the crowning of Joshua stating: "these visions have a threefold meaning: 'the contemporary meaning (what they meant to the Jews of Zechariah's day), the continuing meaning (what they mean to us today), and the consummating meaning (what they mean as prophecy of the end times).'" 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-Priest when He returns to the earth at His second coming. The progressive dispensational, covenant premillennial and amillennial views see Jesus beginning His rule as the Davidic King-Priest at His first advent. Amillennialists believe the temple here refers to the church.

FOUR MESSAGES

Zechariah 7 – 8 - A question posed by a delegation from Bethel provided the occasion for the LORD to give four messages to Zechariah to deliver to the Jews in Israel (cf. 7:4, 7:8, 8:1, 8:18). They all deal with the issue of empty ritual and selfishness. Chapter 7 was a challenge to Israel to repent and live righteously in light of past punishment. Chapter 8 is a challenge to Israel to repent and live righteously in light of future restoration and blessing.

THE QUESTION FROM THE DELEGATION FROM BETHEL

7:1 – The "word of the LORD" came to Zechariah on the "fourth day of the ninth month – Chislev," which would have been approximately December 7, 518 B.C. "Chislev" is the Babylonian name of the month. It was almost two years after he received the eight night visions and about halfway through the period of temple reconstruction (520-515 B.C.).

7:2-3 – The Jews who lived in "Bethel," about 10-12 miles north of Jerusalem (cf. Ezra 2:28; Neh. 7:32; 11:31), sent two representatives to pray at the site of the rebuilt temple and to ask the priests and prophets in Jerusalem if they should continue to "weep" and "fast" during the fifth month. The names of the two representatives were Babylonian, suggesting that they had been born in Babylonia during the exile; and they came from a place that had a historical association with apostate worship (1 Kings 12:28-33; 2 Kings 10:29; Jer. 48:13; Amos 3:14; 4:4; 7:13).

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 by Nebuchadnezzar (cf. 2 Kings 25:8-10). This fast had become a Jewish tradition but it was not a fast that the Mosaic Law required. The only fast that the Mosaic Law prescribed was on the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:29; 23:27-32). The reason for the question from the delegation from Bethel may appear to be legitimate because the captivity is almost over (68 years of the 70 years had passed - Jer. 25:11-12) and the temple was being rebuilt. Since the temple was being rebuilt, should the Jewish people continue to observe the fast that commemorated the destruction of the temple? What appears to be an innocent question was not an innocent question based on the LORD's response.

THE LORD'S REBUKE – (FIRST MESSAGE)

7:4-5 - The LORD spoke to Zechariah with a message to deliver to "all the people in the land," and "the priests." The question asked by the delegation from Bethel had raised an issue that affected the whole nation of Israel. The LORD rhetorically asked if the people had really observed the fasts that they had instituted in "the fifth and seventh months," for 70 years, for His benefit ("for Me – for Me?") or for themselves. As noted before, the fast in the fifth month of Ab

memorialized the destruction of Solomon's temple by Nebuchadnezzar. The fast in the seventh month, on the second of Tishri, memorialized the assassination of Gedaliah, the governor of Judah, and his associates at Mizpah, after the fall of Jerusalem (2 Kings 25:25; Jer. 41:2). The fact is that the Jewish people had created these fasts for an opportunity to express self-pity over their physical condition, not for engaging in prayer and genuine spiritual repentance.

7:6-7 – The Jewish people were eating and drinking for themselves rather than to please the LORD. They were perpetuating the selfishness for which "former prophets" had rebuked their forefathers before they were carried off into captivity, when the whole land and its cities were still full of inhabitants (e.g., Isa. 58:3-9; Joel 1:14; 2:12); even the agricultural areas in the "South" and the "lowlands/foothills."

The LORD's rebuke was against self-imposed fasts (rituals) that were being observed without proper motivation and spiritual intent. The rebuke was against empty formalism that was devoid of any spiritual reality. The rebuke was against rituals that were being followed to appease self-centeredness; public posturing for self-gratification and self-promotion - hypocrisy. The important matter is not ritual but obedience. It was and is obedience to the LORD's commands and will that will bring joy, peace and prosperity. These principles are true today.

THE COMMAND TO REPENT – (SECOND MESSAGE)

7:8-10 - Zechariah receives a message from the LORD that commands His people to "dispense/exercise true justice," to exercise/show mercy/kindness and compassion" toward each other, and "not" to "oppress" the weak and vulnerable among them (widow, orphan, stranger, poor), and "not" to plot or think "evil" against each other. *This exhortation applies to us today (James 1:27, 3:17, 5:9).*

7:11-12 – This command had been heard by the Jews before through "former prophets" but "they refused to heed/pay attention" to the LORD. They had stubbornly "shrugged their shoulders" ("turned away from") at the LORD and "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 from the prophets that the LORD had sent to them. Their willful sin of disobedience to the LORD's commands resulted in their judgment ("great wrath") from the LORD. *True spiritual reality is demonstrated in one's life by a determined obedience to the commands of the LORD.*

7:13-14 - Since the Jews in past years refused to listen to the LORD's Spirit though the ministry of the prophets when He 'proclaimed/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 Jews returning to it during their time of exile in 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).

This action of the LORD is a clear demonstration of the principle that "you reap what you sow" (Gal. 6:7-8). Disobedience to the LORD's commands and self-centered pride yields hypocrisy in one's life, which is a dangerous position to be in with the LORD. This passage in Zechariah deals with the emptiness and worthlessness of ritual in one's heart and life. The outward form of religious activity is useless; it is hypocrisy that brings the LORD's judgment. Only the heart that seeks the LORD with an accompanying spirit of obedience, confession and repentance will have fellowship and blessing with the LORD.

ISRAEL'S RESTORATION TO GOD'S FAVOR – (MAJOR MESSAGE ONE)

Chapter 8 contains two major messages from the LORD (vv. 1-17, 18-23) that contain individual messages introduced by the phrase "Thus says the LORD." Each of these messages contains a promise of future blessing for Israel in the Millennial Kingdom.

8:1-2 – Message One. The LORD's word came to Zechariah with the message that He was very "jealous/zealous" for the exclusive love and commitment of His people. The LORD is a "jealous/zealous God" (Ex. 20:5) meaning He was zealous

to protect the covenant commitment He had made with His people and His relationship with them. (*Note: The English word "jealous" derives from the Latin zelus, "zeal."*) He was zealous to protect His people against all who would come against them. He was zealous to safeguard His people's interests and would come to their defense. His loving zeal burned, "with great wrath," within Him. The zeal with which the LORD had carried through His chastisement of Israel and of the nations that oppressed Israel (cf. 1:15, 21) was now "burning" to restore the covenant with Israel. 'Zion' is a reference to the 'mountain/mound' upon which the temple was built (cf. Psa. 2:6; Isa. 8:18) and Jerusalem (cf. Isa. 2:3; Amos 1:2; Micah 3:10); it is a term referencing Jerusalem and/or the nation of Israel.

8:3 – Message Two. The LORD announces that He will "return to Zion" to "dwell" among His people in "Jerusalem" again (cf. 1:16; 2:10). When He returns to Zion to dwell there, the people would call Jerusalem the "City of Truth," and they would refer to the temple mount as the "Holy Mountain" (cf. 14:20-21). Jerusalem becomes a faithful, holy city for the first time at the Second Coming of Christ, the Messiah; and it is through Him that the temple mountain becomes the "Holy Mountain." This event will stop the recurring cycle of apostasy followed by punishment for the nation of Israel.

8:4-5 – Message Three. Because the LORD resides in Jerusalem after His Second Coming, the elderly will feel secure enough to openly "sit in the streets" of Jerusalem. Also the children would play in the streets of Jerusalem because it had become a safe and secure city. Jerusalem becomes a place of tranquility, long life, peace, prosperity, and security for even the most defenseless and vulnerable; the children (cf. Isa. 65:20-25).

8:6 – Message Four. 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. The LORD's promises of blessing were as hard for the Jews to believe as His threats of judgment had been for their ancestors previously; but these promises were not and are not too hard for the LORD to keep and execute. *Men tend to limit God but nothing is too hard for Him.*

8:7-8 – Message Five. The LORD promises to regather 'His people' from the distant places in the world ("east" and "west") 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, as used here, is a reference to the nation of Israel and the land they would occupy. (*Note: this is not a reference to the "church" as the amillennialists believe.*) Jerusalem identifies the place where His people would come to worship Him. It is there where His restored people would enjoy intimacy with Him in a relationship marked by truth and righteousness. "They will be my people, and I will be ... their God" is covenant terminology that highlights the intimate fellowship of 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). This is one of the greatest and most comprehensive references to Israel's future restoration and national conversion to be found in Scripture.

8:9-13 – Message Six. The LORD tells the Jews 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 536 B.C. and 520 B.C. little work had been done to restore the temple.

Before the Jews who had returned from captivity began to rebuild the temple 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 responsible for this situation and circumstance.

The LORD promises to treat the "remnant" of His "people" differently in the future than He had in the past (cf. Hag. 2:19). The seed that they planted would yield crops and their fields would become productive (cf. Hag. 2:19). There would be abundant moisture so things would grow (cf. Hag. 1:10-11), and they would enjoy the fruits of their labors. 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), which will be completely fulfilled in the Millennial Kingdom.

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. 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 closing exhortation that frames this sixth message of encouragement (cf. v. 9).

8:14-17 – Message Seven. The LORD now promises that "just as" He had "determined/purposed" to punish His people because of their forefathers' sins (cf. Jer. 4:28; 51:12; Lam. 2:17), so He is now "determined/purposed" to "do good to Jerusalem" in the future. Covenant disobedience had brought the LORD's discipline. Covenant obedience will bring the LORD's 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.

The phrase "in these days" (v. 15) means the promise of the LORD, though immediate for the rebuilding of the temple, does not exhaust or limit the full scope and fulfillment of the promise, which is yet to be experienced by the Jewish nation. This message is also a future promise for the nation of Israel. They will be restored to faith and obedience to minister to the nations during the Millennium. Therefore, they should not fear (cf. v.13).

In view of this promise, the Jews 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; Eph. 4:25). In short, the seventh message is "Do the things God loves and avoid the things God hates." The LORD hates attitudes and actions that are contrary to His character. Verses 14-15 explain LORD's part in the people's immediate restoration, and verses 16-17 explain theirs.

KINGDOM JOY AND JEWISH FAVOR – (MAJOR MESSAGE TWO)

Zechariah 8:18-23 - This message answers the question that the delegation from Bethel asked about fasts in 7:2-3; plus it gives a message of hope for the future of Israel in the Millennial Kingdom.

8:18-19 - Zechariah receives another message from the LORD. The LORD promises Israel that in the future, the sorrowful "fasts" that they had observed in captivity would give way to joyful "feasts." The LORD identifies four self-imposed fasts that the Jews were observing: 1) the fast of the fourth month – the remembrance of the breaching of the walls of Jerusalem (cf. II Kings 25:2-4, Jer. 39:2), 2) the fast of the fifth month – the remembrance of the destruction of the temple by Nebuchadnezzar (cf. II Kings 25:8-10), 3) the fast of the seventh month – the remembrance of the assassination of Gedaliah, the governor of Judah, and his associates after the fall of Jerusalem (cf. II Kings 25:25; Jer. 41:2), and 4) the fast of the tenth month – the remembrance of the beginning of the siege of Jerusalem (cf. II Kings 25:1; Ezek. 24:2). *These four fasts are still being remembered and followed today by orthodox Jews.*

The LORD, through Zechariah, tells the Jews in Jerusalem who are rebuilding the Temple that these remembrances would be turned from self-imposed fasts into feasts in the future Millennial Kingdom. Therefore, the immediate, practical application of this message is that they should "love truth and peace" (cf. Lev. 19:18, 34; Deut. 6:5; Psa. 31:23; Amos 5:15). They, as God's chosen people, were to value the truth of this message in their present situation because this truth about the future yielded hope and peace. Before mourning could become joy for them, they needed to love truth and peace. *This message is true even today as it applies to each of us in our daily walk with the LORD.*

8:20-22 - The LORD continues His message to the Jews that in that future time people from around the world will be coming to Israel to pray to and worship the LORD. People from one city will contact people from another city and would plan to go up to Jerusalem to worship ("entreat the favor of") the LORD. They will do this eagerly, not out of a sense of duty or obligation (cf. 2:11; Isa. 2:1-5; Mic. 4:1-5). Jerusalem will become the center of the LORD's dealings with all nations, fulfilling the promise given to Abraham (cf. Gen. 12:3). This also signifies that people will be saved from all over the world during the Millennial Kingdom, fulfilling Psalm 122. With the establishment of the Millennial Kingdom, Israel will be a medium of the LORD's blessing to the entire globe.

8:23 – During the Millennial Kingdom, many Gentiles from many nations and languages will “grasp/lay hold of” a Jew to go together to Israel to worship the LORD. The use of the phrase “ten men...shall grasp” indicates completeness, meaning the Gentiles throughout the world will put their focus upon the LORD and His Kingdom, which is based in Israel in Jerusalem. Men at this time will not be seeking to persecute the Jews, as in times past, but will be asking the Jews for their permission to accompany them to Jerusalem because the LORD’s blessing upon the Jews was very obvious. Israel will be the means of drawing the nations of the earth to the LORD during the Millennial Kingdom. Many Gentiles will be saved by the life and testimony of the Jewish people during the Millennium.

The LORD’s answer to the question of fasting (7:3) had a two-fold purpose; a present objective and a future objective. The present objective was to point out the empty ritual and self-centeredness of the observed fasts of the Jewish people; and their need for repentance, righteous living and faithful worship. The future objective was the LORD’s promise of a future for Israel when He would dwell in Jerusalem with all the Jewish people regathered there as a nation with Him to live in prosperity and peace (when their fasts would be turned into feasts). And this prosperity and peace in Israel would be so evident to the world that the nations of the world would be drawn to Him through His people to believe in, pray to and worship Him. *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.).*

The messages contained in chapters 7 and 8 apply to us today. Is there empty ritualism in the church today? Is there self-centered pride and strife in the church today? Is there a need for true repentance in the church today? It has been said that when Christians are in happy fellowship with their Lord and Savior – and with each other - the unsaved in the world will be attracted to Him. Is this true of us?

ORACLES ABOUT THE MESSIAH AND ISRAEL'S FUTURE

Zechariah 9 – 14 contains two oracles that are mostly eschatological – the Messianic future of Israel in the Millennial Kingdom. These chapters contain the most quoted passages in the New Testament. The phrase "on that day" occurs 18 times and points to a time in the future. There is a definite change of mood, outlook, style, and composition in chapters 9-14, as compared the chapters 1-8.

In the first oracle (chapters 9-11), Zechariah writes about the First Coming of the Messiah as a Savior and His Second Coming as Judge, where the Gentile’s power over Israel is destroyed and Israel is given the strength to overcome all of its enemies. In the second oracle (chapters 12-14), Zechariah writes about the coming Messiah as the King.

Zechariah 9—14 are written in a chiasmic structure. .

- A The LORD comes to protect and bless (chapters 9—10)
- B The people reject the LORD's shepherd (11:1-14)
- C The worthless shepherd hurts the flock (11:15-17)
- C' The nations come to destroy Jerusalem; Jerusalem’s deliverance (12:1-9)
- B' The people repent and turn to the LORD (12:10—13:6)
- A' The LORD comes to protect and bless (13:7—14:21)

ORACLE (BURDEN) ONE: THE FIRST ADVENT AND REJECTION OF MESSIAH

Zechariah 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 (11). The messianic King will come (9:9), but He will be rejected. The Messiah, at His Second Coming, 1) establishes peace (9:10), 2) delivers Israel (9:11-17), 3) destroys the false shepherds (10:1-5) and 4) regathers Israel (10:6-12).

The Coming Of The True King – Zechariah 9

Zechariah 9:1-8 - The destruction of nations and the preservation of Israel

9:1-2 - The LORD sends a “burden” (Heb. *massa'*, a heavy pronouncement / an oracle; cf. 2 Kings 9:25-26; Jer. 23:33) to Zechariah that announces the LORD’s judgment, moving in order from north to south, on "Hadrach," "Hamath" (cf. Amos 6:2), "Damascus" (the capital of Aram/Syria) and "Tyre and Sidon" (Phoenician cities between Aram/Syria and Israel, cf. Ezek. 26:3-14; 28:20-24). Earlier Isaiah, Jeremiah and Ezekiel had prophesized of enemies invading Israel from the north (Isa. 41:25; Jer. 1:14-15; Ezek. 26:7), which occurred. Now the cities who had participated in the destruction of Israel would be punished by the LORD, and He would take the same route. As history shows, an invasion of these cities came from the northeast of Israel when Alexander the Great came in from the north in his advancement toward Egypt after defeating the Persians at Issus in 333 B.C. The nations were worried about what Alexander would do next, especially the people who lived in the cities of Palestine that lay in his path. Alexander was the LORD's instrument to punish these peoples and all the people in his path would have their eyes on him. Because Alexander was the LORD’s instrument of punishment, Zechariah’s message could be understood to say that these people were really looking to the LORD. The people in these cities would have done so without understanding that they were looking at the LORD. However, Israel would have looked to the LORD for protection.

Amillennialist do not believe this prophecy was for Israel but rather the church.

9:3-4 – Tyre was a major trade city built on an island about one-half mile offshore. It was a major center of commerce and was very rich with large reserves of silver and gold within the city. It believed it was impregnable (cf. Isa. 23:1-4) because it had built a 150-foot high wall around the city with reinforced fortifications for its defense. It had withstood a 5-year siege by the Assyrians and a 13-year siege by Nebuchadnezzar (cf. Isa. 23:4; Ezek. 29:18). Tyre (Heb. *sor*, “rock”) was a fortress (Heb. *masor*, “stronghold, rampart”) nevertheless, the LORD would cast ("dispossess") it out, destroy its wealth, and devour it by fire. The LORD used Alexander to destroy Tyre in five months by his building a causeway from the rubble left by Nebuchadnezzar’s siege from the mainland to the island city, and then destroying it, casting much of it in the sea, then burning it. Today the site of Tyre is just like it was after Alexander destroyed it, nothing but a level place in the sea.

9:5-6 – The LORD’s judgment would continue as He used Alexander to punish the Philistine cities of Ekron, Ashkelon, Gaza and Ashdod as he moved south to Egypt. 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 LORD would destroy these cities and the cities would be populated by numerous people groups, intermixing with the citizens of the city, thereby humbling the pride of the Philistines. This happened when Alexander moved south to Egypt.

9:7 – This verse has a “near” and “far” interpretation. In light of Alexander’s destruction, the LORD removed the "blood" and the “abominations” (unclean, forbidden food) that the people of the conquered cities ate in worship to idols. Drinking blood and eating unclean food was part of Philistine pagan worship (cf. Isa. 65:4; 66:3, 17), so the judgment in view here included punishment for idolatry. The LORD would take idol worship from them. When this occurs, some or many Philistines will turn to the LORD and become like the Israelites in their faith in the LORD; just as the Jebusites had become incorporated into Israel in David's day (cf. 2 Sam. 24:16; 1 Chron. 21:18). This event will occur in the future.

9:8 – This verse also has a “near” and “far” interpretation. As Alexander moved south toward Egypt he conquered and destroyed the named cities in Philistine, yet when he came to Jerusalem he refused to destroy it. Josephus reported that Alexander had a dream and because of it decided to spare Jerusalem. Alexander bypassed Jerusalem on his way to Egypt – and again on his way back from Egypt after he had conquered Egypt. The LORD had used Alexander to execute judgment on those who had oppressed His people; and He had protected His people from being conquered (oppressed) by Alexander.

The LORD promised Israel that He would protect them and their land. This occurred at the time of Alexander and it foreshadows His protection of Israel in the future. He will protect them like an army of soldiers being camped around them. "House" is a metonym for the whole land of Israel including its people. The LORD's protection will be so effective in the future that no enemy would oppress them ever again. This promise of Israel experiencing no more oppression anticipates the Second Coming of Christ as the Messiah – King-Priest, where Israel will be under the protection of the LORD during the Millennial Kingdom.

Zechariah 9:9 - The first advent of Israel's King, the Prince of Peace

9:9 – This passage is one of the most significant Messianic passages in Scripture – for Judaism as well as Christianity. Judaism sees in it a basis for a royal messianic expectation, where Christianity sees in it the prophecy of the triumphal entry of Jesus Christ into Jerusalem on the Sunday before His crucifixion (Matt. 25:5; John 12:15).

In this Messianic passage, the Jews are to "rejoice greatly" because their King was "coming to" them (cf. Zeph. 3:15). This verse contains three figures of speech: 1) Zechariah personified "Zion" and "Jerusalem" as daughters rejoicing and shouting, 2) he named the city in place of its inhabitants (metonymy), and 3) he used the city to represent the whole nation (synecdoche). Israel will rejoice when Christ comes as the Messiah at His Second Coming.

Israel's King will have three distinct characteristics. He will: 1) be just, 2) be humble and 3) bringing salvation. He is not proud and boastful. He will enter into Jerusalem riding on a '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 is a purebred donkey, one born of a female donkey rather than of a mule. If a king or ruler rode a donkey into a county or city that was a sign that they came in peace (Judg. 5:10; 10:4; 12:14; 2 Sam. 16:2; 1 Kings 1:33). But if a king or ruler rode a horse into a county or city they came to wage war or as a victor of a war. Therefore, this verse gives the Jews (and Christians) a reason to rejoice because the coming Messiah will establish a Kingdom of peace. It is interesting that Christ's first coming as the Messiah was on a donkey, but His Second Coming will be on a horse!

Zechariah 9:10 - The Kingdom of Israel's King, the Prince of Peace

9:10 - This verse describes the establishment of the King's kingdom – a worldwide kingdom. Matthew and John believed Jesus was the coming King, but they said He fulfilled only verse 9, not verse 10, during His earthly ministry (Matt. 21:5; John 12:15; cf. Rev. 19:11-16). There is a clear difference in tone or emphasis between v. 9 and v. 10. In v. 9 the coming King is described as 'humble' or 'lowly.' In v. 10 the tone is one of triumph and victory that results in a universal, worldwide kingdom. The lowly one of v. 9 does not achieve the fruits of victory until v. 10.

The Second Coming of Christ as the Messiah (on a horse – Rev. 19:11-16) will end war in Israel and establish peace in the world by His sovereign proclamation (cf. Isa. 2:4; 9:5-7; 11:1-10; Mic. 5:10-15). The descriptions of the instruments of war (the chariot, the war-horse, and the battle bow) represent the whole arsenal used in warfare in Zechariah's day so the passage implies the destruction of all weapons of war at the time of Christ's Second Coming. Before the Messiah can reign in peace, He must destroy all enemies, and deliver and restore His people (cf. Ps. 110). Christ's Kingdom will be worldwide, from the Euphrates River in the East to the ends of the earth (cf. Ps. 72:8-11; Isa. 66:18).

Note: "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." Warren Wiersbe

Zechariah 9:11-17 - The deliverance and blessing of Israel

9:11 – The LORD promises His people to set them free from those who hold them as prisoners. He pictured this as taking them out of a dry "cistern," where they were captives ("prisoners") like Joseph and Jeremiah (Gen. 37:22, 24; Jer. 38:6-9). The LORD will free them from Gentile rule and regather them according to His faithfulness to His covenant promises. "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). These covenants will be and are in force as long as God lives – meaning forever.

9:12 - The LORD instructs His people, "prisoners of hope" now free, to "return" to their "stronghold," which is Himself (cf. Ps. 18:2; 31:3; 71:3; 91:2; 144:2; Jer. 16:19; Nah. 1:7). The LORD promises to "restore" to them "double" of what He had allowed their enemy to take from them (cf. Job 42:10). A double restoration pictures a complete restoration (cf. Job 42:12-13; Isa. 40:2; 51:19; 61:7) and it may also involve some recompense for the suffering involved while in prison (exile).

Amillennialists believe that these promises have their full accomplishment in the spiritual blessings of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

9:13-14 – The LORD will use Israel (i.e. Judah represents the Southern Kingdom and Ephraim represents the North Kingdom) as a weapon to subdue the Gentiles. "Judah" will be His "bow," and "Ephraim" will be His arrow ("fill the bow"). The "sons" of "Zion" will be His "sword." The LORD will be in complete command of Israel's welfare. He will strike nations like "lightning," like an army called to advance with a "trumpet," and like strong winds that come from the "south" (cf. Exod. 24:9-10, 15, 18).

These verses saw initial, partial fulfillment when the Jews overthrew the Greeks during the Maccabean revolts in the second century B.C. But the final, complete fulfillment of this prophecy will occur at Christ's Second Coming as the Messiah.

9:15 - The LORD will "defend" Israel, and will enable His people to be victorious over their enemies. They will "trample on the sling stones" (this is a better translation than "subdue with sling stones") used in warfare, meaning they will walk over the "stones" thrown against them by their enemies. These "stones" represent people as well as objects of warfare. His people will be exuberant (drink and roar) over their victory. The death of these enemies will be like a sacrifice to the LORD. This could depict the final battle of the campaign of Armageddon where the armies of the world gather in Israel and are destroyed by Christ at His second coming (Rev. 16:12-16, 19:11-16). The bloodshed will be so great at that battle that it will be seen all over Israel, like blood splattered on the corners of the altar that comes from the basins that caught the blood of the sacrificed animal.

9:16-17 – The LORD will protect and save His people "in that day" (meaning during the battle against their enemies) like "a flock" of sheep being protected by their shepherd. They will be precious and beautiful ("sparkling") in the LORD's land, like jewels in "a crown" that all people can see ("like a banner"). The LORD's people and their land will be very attractive to the world. They will enjoy plenty of the best food and drink; they will flourish and prosper, having an abundance of all that human beings need.

The amillennialist's view spiritualizes this verse. They believe that the believers within the church are the citizens of Christ's kingdom as well as God's ancient people are a "landed people." They use Hebrews 3 and 5 to establish and affirm the believer's "landedness" in the gospel as "at-homeness" in Christ. They believe that the "fruit of the land" that causes its citizens to flourish is the fruit of salvation. And those believers in the church are the precious "stones" in the King's "crown."

Zechariah 10 - The restoration of Israel, God's chosen people

Christ, as the Messiah, comes the second time and exercises His sovereignty over the nations (ch. 9). In chapter 10 the emphasis changes to God's chosen people, the Israelites, who will return to the Promised Land and rule with Christ, the Messiah, the King-Priest. Chapter 10 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 Christ as the Messiah.

10:1 - The LORD urges His people to "ask" Him to send "rain" when they needed it at the time when they sowed their seed. He promised to send them rain that would cause their crops to grow (cf. 9:11-17; Deut. 11:13-14; Jer. 14:22; Amos 5:8). Rain is often a symbol 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).

10:2 - In contrast to the LORD's blessing (10:1), idols ("*teraphim*" meaning household idols; cf. Gen. 31:19; Judg. 17:5, 14; 18:5; 1 Sam. 15:23; Hos. 3:4) and demonic fortune tellers ("diviners") lead people into sin and God's judgment. These demonic "diviners" see misleading "visions" and "dreams" (cf. Deut. 18:9-14; Jer. 23:30-32; 27:9-10; Ezek. 21:29). Their "comfort" is worthless. Consequently, the people who rely on these idols and wicked diviners will wander aimlessly like shepherdless sheep and experience much needless trouble because there is no true shepherd. *A modern parallel to this today is the willful actions of men to ignore God altogether and to assume that no problem is beyond man's power to solve.*

10:3 - The LORD is angry with these false "shepherds" (*rulers*, i.e.: kings, princes, nobles, prophets, and priests) and the other leaders who led His people ('sheep') astray (cf. 1 Sam. 28:3-7; 1 Kings 16:31; 22:6-12; 2 Kings 1:2; 16:15; 21:6). The LORD will "visit His flock," the "house of Judah" (Israel), and He will make them like the majestic ("royal") war "horse" that He will ride into battle to defeat His enemies. The LORD will empower the Israelites with strength to conquer under His leadership. It is possible that the battle of Armageddon may be in view here (cf. 12:1-9; 14:1-8).

10:4 - From the house of Judah "will come the cornerstone," the Messiah King (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 failing (cf. Judg. 20:2; 1 Sam. 14:38; Isa. 19:13). The Messiah will also be like a "tent peg" (Heb. *yathed*), in that He will hold the nation firmly in place (cf. Judg. 4:21-22; Isa. 22:23-24; Acts 15:16). "Yathed" also describes a peg inside a tent on which people hung beautiful things that decorated their homes (cf. 6:13; Isa. 22:22-24; Ezek. 15:3).

The Messiah will be The LORD's "bow of battle," by which He will destroy His enemies (cf. 9:13; Ps. 45:5; Rev. 19:11-16). Various interpretations of the "ruler" exist. A preferred interpretation is that the Messiah will be the overseer ("ruler") whose authority will be over all secondary rulers to assure that His rule is being carried out. Because of this authority every ruler that seeks to oppress the Messiah or Israel will be dealt with.

All these figures picture the strong, stable, victorious, and trustworthy nature of Messiah's rule. This verse sets forth the character and ministry of the Messiah, Israel's King-Priest.

10:5 – Under the leadership and empowerment of the Messiah, the men of Israel will like "mighty men ... in battle." They will overpower and defeat the enemies of the LORD in battle because the LORD will be "with them." Those who oppose Israel, under the leadership of the Messiah, will be defeated and shamed, even though they fight from positions of strength ('riders on horses'). The LORD's infantry will defeat the world's cavalry. It is possible that this may be applied to the *strengthening* of the Israel in conjunction with the events of Armageddon (Rev. 16:14; 19:17-20).

10:6 - The LORD "will strengthen...deliver ("save")...and restore ("bring back") "the house of Judah" and "the house of Joseph" (Ephraim). Judah and Joseph (Ephraim) represent the former Northern and Southern Kingdoms. He will do this because of His "mercy" ("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 (cf. Jer. 32:37). He will do this because He is the "LORD their God," He is a covenant keeping God (cf. Acts 2:39, 3:25). He will hear and answer their prayers for His help.

10:7 – "Ephraim" is referenced here because "Ephraim" often was sighted as the tribe that was prone to idol worship and apostasy. Here it is a reference to the Israelites, who previously had been weak from idolatry and apostasy, that will now be strong. They and "their children" will "be glad," rejoicing in the LORD when He saves them from idolatry and apostasy (Ps. 32:11; Phil. 4:4). The joy of Israel as a restored nation at the beginning of the Millennium is likened to those who had been drinking wine.

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

10:9 - The LORD has scattered His people like seed sown among the other "peoples" of the world. "Sowing" anticipates reaping a harvest, therefore, "sowing" connotes hope (cf. Hos. 2:23). The time will come when the Jewish people (parents and families) will "remember" Him, even though they lived "far" from the Promised Land (cf. Ezek. 6:9; John 12:24; 1 Cor. 15:36). "They" and "their children" will "live" (enter into new life) and "return" to the Promised Land (beginning of the Millennium).

This desire of the Jewish people to be together as a nation exists today. This is an important prophetic passage for the Jews. There are those (amillennialists) who interpret that the promise of the restoration of the land has been forfeited by a rebellious nation due to her failure to keep her part of a conditional covenant – and that the church has replaced Israel. This interpretation of this passage is not true, in part because the hope of the Jews to have their own nation burns brighter today than before, even though they are still scattered among many nations.

10:10 – The LORD "will bring" the Israelites back "from the land of Egypt" (to Israel's south—where they had been slaves), and back from the land of "Assyria" (to Israel's north—where they had been exiles) to live in the Promised Land. Here Egypt and Assyria represent the world (cf. Isa. 11:11-16; 19:23; Hos. 11:10). The LORD will bring them back "into ... Gilead" with its rich pastures east of the Jordan River, and into "Lebanon" with its mighty forests west of the Jordan. Lebanon at times in the O.T. is used as a symbol of strength, dignity and splendor (e.g., 2 Kings 19:23; Isa. 35:2). The mountains of Gilead were used at times in the OT to denote pride. When both are mentioned together it denotes fruitfulness, strength, dignity, splendor and pride; and the combination of the two here may represent the future power, glory and fruitfulness of the Messianic kingdom of Israel. Eventually there will be no more room in this land because so many Israelites will return and come to live there (cf. Isa. 49:19-21; 54:2-3).

10:11 - The LORD will remove all geographical and political obstacles from the Jews who are returning to the Promised Land. He will "pass through the sea" and "strike the waves of the sea" meaning He will remove the physical obstacles for His people's return to the Promised Land, just as He had done to the Red Sea when the Israelites left Egypt in the Exodus and when He calmed the Sea of Galilee. He will defeat and humble Egypt and Assyria, which represent the Gentile world powers. The Gentile leaders of the world, symbolized by Egypt's "scepter," will no longer rule over Israel.

10:12 – The LORD, as Messiah will "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). This is the complete spiritual restoration of Israel that Ezekiel wrote about (cf. Ezek. 36:21-38, 37:1-14, 22-28).

Chapter 10 is a promise from the LORD. It is an unconditional promise in fulfillment of His covenants with the nation of Israel. Amillennialists believe that the hope of the reunification of the 12 tribes of Israel is fulfilled in the church.

Zechariah 11 - The rejection of the true King

Zechariah 9 and 10 prophesy of the LORD's future blessing and prosperity for Israel, but chapter 11 prophesies of Israel's sin, apostasy, rejection of the true Messiah and punishment. 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).

Zechariah 11:1-3 - The announcement of judgment

11:1 - Zechariah uses poetic language to describe the punishment Israel will experience for their sin. He announces that "Lebanon" and "cedars" would experience great loss. 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 cedar tree was the symbol of the royal house of Judah (Ezek. 17:3-4, 12-13).

11:2 – Zechariah continues his use of poetic language in describing the destruction that will come upon the nation of Israel. The "cypress" (juniper, pine) and "oaks of Bashan" will wail because they will perish in the coming judgment. 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 being destroyed indicate that the people of Israel, rulers included, and as well as the entire land of Israel will be judged.

11:3 - Zechariah states that the "shepherds" and "lions" (the rulers and leaders of Israel, cf. Jer. 25:34-38) will "wail" because a coming destruction would leave no pasture for their flocks as well as no places or food for animals – everything to sustain life will be destroyed. The "pride of the Jordan" is not a reference to the river itself, but rather is an expression refers to its fruitful and beautiful valleys and hills, which will be in ruins. This prophecy has a near and far prediction. The near fulfillment is in the Roman destruction of Jerusalem and the scattering of the Jews in A.D. 70. Its complete fulfillment is in the future when destruction will overtake the land of Israel and its people in the Tribulation. *Amillennialists state this prophecy only applied to the Roman destruction in A.D. 70.*

Zechariah 11:4-14 - The fate of the Good Shepherd

The reason for the judgment of the people and land of Israel (vv. 1-3) is because of their rejection of the Messiah, the Shepherd-King (cf. Isa. 42; 49; 50; 53). The LORD will graciously give His people a Good Shepherd (vv. 4-6), but they will reject Him (vv. 7-14). The LORD uses Zechariah as an actor to portray the part of the Good Shepherd and the rejection He encounters.

11:4 – The LORD instructs Zechariah to present himself as *a shepherd* assigned to care for ("pasture" meaning "to feed, lead and defend") a "flock *marked for slaughter*." Zechariah now speaks for the LORD and at times as the Messiah, as though *He* was the Good Shepherd.

11:5 – The "owners" of the sheep purchased them from the "shepherds" (leaders). Those who 'bought' the sheep would then "slay them" (Heb. feminine) and "go unpunished." Those who sold the sheep were Israel's former rulers and leaders who, by their sins and desire for wealth, had set the people up for divine judgment by foreigners – and they did not care. The ones who 'slay' the sheep are the foreign rulers who took over the Israelites and persecuted them; and they have not paid the full penalty for their abusive treatment of them.

11:6 - The reason for the punishment of Israel was the LORD's displeasure because of their sin. He would "no longer" take "pity on them." He will cause them to become dependent on someone else ("give... unto his neighbors hand") and on "another's king" (cf. John 19:5 – 'we have no king but Caesar'). History proves this occurs when Rome destroyed Jerusalem in A.D.70. Caesar, as 'king' directed this destruction; and the LORD did not deliver Israel from that destruction, which took place after Israel's rejection of their Messiah.

11:7 - Zechariah now proceeds to carry out his assignment from the LORD given to him in v. 4, where he portrays the Good Shepherd. He portrays and speaks as a shepherd of the sheep "*marked for slaughter*." He 'feeds' them and specifically focuses his 'feeding; on "the afflicted/poor" sheep of the "flock." By his doing this he becomes a representative of Israel's Good Shepherd, the Messiah. To aid him in his ministry to 'the sheep,' he takes two staff's to guide and protect the sheep. In Zechariah's day a shepherd carried a stout club/staff hewed from a tree to beat away wild beasts that attacked the sheep and a crooked but strong staff for retrieving the sheep from difficult places. Zechariah named the two staffs that he took; one he named "Favor/Beauty" (Heb. *no'am*; meaning beauty, pleasantness, graciousness) and the other he named "Union/Bonds" (Heb. *Hobhelim*; meaning binders, bands, ties unifiers). These staffs represented the LORD's blessing and the unity of the flock (Israel; cf. Ezek. 37:15-28).

11:8 – *NOTE: This verse is challenging to interpret with certainty. This verse has been called "the most enigmatic in the whole Old Testament." There are over 40 different interpretations of this verse. The interpretation that is presented below represents an interpretation supported by Christ's words in Luke 9:22.*

Zechariah, representing the Good Shepherd, dismissed "three shepherds" that had been leading his flock within the first "month" that he took charge of taking care of the 'sheep.' It appears that this was a literal event that took place; and it prefigured the actions of Christ when He ministered to the common man and in so doing took over the leadership of His 'flock' from the hypocritical leaders of Israel.

There are numerous interpretations of the "three shepherds" – who are they and what do they represent? Most conservative theologians believe the "three shepherds" refer to three classes of Jewish leaders; the 1) elders, 2) chief

priests, and 3) scribes (cf. Luke 9:22). The Luke 9:22 reference is particularly significant, since there Jesus named these three groups of leaders as those who would reject Him. Luck took these shepherds to be Israel's prophets, priests, and kings.

The interpretation of "one month" can be understood to prefigure the time prior to the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, which sealed the fate of Israel – their rejection of Christ as the Messiah.

It is also difficult to identify the antecedent of "them." Did Zechariah, representing Messiah grow weary of and detest the 'leaders' (the "three shepherds" - cf. Isa. 1:13-14)? Or did the 'shepherds' despise and detest Him? Or did both of "them" (the Messiah and the shepherds) grow weary of and detest each other? The literal interpretation of the Hebrew here is "my soul was short with them." It does point to the limits of the LORD's patience toward men who refuse to repent. What is clear is there is no harmony only conflict between the Good Shepherd and the 'three shepherds.'

11:9 - Zechariah, representing the Good Shepherd, now turns the 'shepherds and the sheep' over to their fate for rejecting Him as the Messiah. He relegates them to their punishment even though that meant that some of them would die, suffer annihilation, and devour one another. This is an unnatural role for a shepherd – to walk away from the sheep and abandon them – thereby allow them to perish. The 'shepherds and the sheep' that refused to believe and accept the Good Shepherd were given over to pursue their own desires. And in doing so they brought upon themselves judgment for their sin and rejection of the Messiah.

It is believed that this verse was fulfilled in part during the Roman siege of Jerusalem in A/D/70 where some Jews resorted to cannibalism to survive – and they will evidently do so again during the Tribulation.

11:10 – Zechariah now chops his staff "Beauty/Favor" into pieces, picturing the end of the favorable pastoral care that he had provided to the sheep (cf. v.7). The 'covenant' in view is none of the formal biblical covenants that were entered into by two contracting parties, since God never breaks His promise to fulfill a covenant He has entered into. The term 'covenant' here is defined as a formal agreement of two parties. The use of 'covenant' (the formal term) here is best understood as an explanation of his care (i.e. "I will care for you"); similar to a pastor's agreement with a church or a member to a church. As a "type" in this passage, it is not a reference to a formal agreement between two contracting parties. It is however a reference to the security that the LORD had been providing and the restraint that He had been exercising in relation to Israel thus far; meaning that when the nations around Israel did not harm it, it was due to the fact that the LORD had restrained them. The LORD had promised to hold back nations from Israel if Israel obeyed Him (cf. Deut. 28:1-14) but also indicated that they would be punished if they disobeyed Him (cf. Deut. 28:15-68). Deuteronomy 28 is an explanation of what would happen if certain actions took place; it is not a formal covenant.

11:11 – The Israelites who were being ministered to by Zechariah, "the poor/afflicted of the flock" (cf. v. 7), realized that what he had done in breaking the staff was in harmony with "the word of the LORD." The "poor/afflicted" were a group of Jews within Zechariah's society, not the whole community that were in exile. "The 'poor/afflicted of the flock' do represent a 'remnant' those Jews who believed on Him at His first coming (cf. Luke 2:25 – Simeon; Luke 23:51 – a man from Arimathea; Mark 15:43 – Joseph of Arimathea).

11:12 - Since Zechariah was terminating his protection of the flock, he asked the people ('sheep') to pay him his wages or, if they refused, to keep what they owed him. It appears that Zechariah's intention was to bring attention to the work that he had done in ministering to the people; it was not primarily about the money but ministry. The people responded by weighing out 30" pieces (shekels) of silver" as his pay. This was the price of a slave that had been gored by an ox (Exod. 21:32). This was not a worthy amount in light of the ministry he had done on their behalf. Their response to his request was an insult. To offer him this wage was far worse than simple outward rejection (cf. Matt. 26:15 – betrayal and rejection for a price). It was the equivalent of telling him that they could buy a wounded slave who would be as useful to them as He had been.

11:13 - The LORD then instructs Zechariah to "throw" the 30 pieces ('shekels') of silver "to the potter" since it was, sarcastically, such a "princely / magnificent" price. Zechariah's ministry had been worth far more than what he received.

So Zechariah threw the 30 pieces ('shekels') of silver to the "potter" in the temple. Throwing something to the "potter" was an expression of disdain, since potters were typically poor and lowly craftsmen. Potters were often closely associated with the temple, since there was a continual need for sacred vessels (cf. Lev. 6:28).

This prophecy was fulfilled (cf. Matt. 27:3-10). The 'thirty pieces of silver' were literally the price paid for Jesus (Matt.26:15). The money was flung down in the temple (cf. Matt. 27:5) and it was immediately taken up by the priests to purchase a potter's exhausted field (no more clay to use) for an unclean purpose (burying the dead). 'The potter' was literally the recipient of the money (cf. Matt. 27:7). Just like the earlier prophecy of the King (cf. 9:9), the prophecy of the betrayal of the "Good Shepherd" is remarkable for its literal fulfillment.

Note: In Matthew 27:9-10, Matthew attributed this prophecy to Jeremiah. Matthew may have been 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. The joining of two quotations from two Old Testament books and assigning them to one prophet is not that unusual. When that occurs, it is a common custom of the writer to attribute the quotations to 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.

11:14 - Zechariah then symbolically breaks his second staff, "Bonds/Union," to indicate 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 – Jew was attacking Jew. This hostility toward one another accelerated their destruction by the Romans. This lack of unity may also be common among the Jews during the Tribulation.

The order of events outlined by Zechariah in vv. 7-14 is significant and historical: 1) the breaking of God's favor on His people (vv. 4-6), 2) their rejection of the Good Shepherd (vv. 7-9), and 3) the breaking of their unity (vv. 10-11). We know that this destruction will not be permanent, however, because of other promises that the LORD has made to reunite and restore His people; and that He will not cast them off permanently (e.g., Rom. 11).

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

Israel will pay a high price for their rejection of Christ as the Messiah, and for their crucifixion of the Messiah, the Good Shepherd (the One who will ultimately take care of them). Zechariah outlines their response to a bad shepherd, which the LORD will use in His final punishment of Israel for their rejection of Him. Their punishment centers on the reality that they accept a bad shepherd to lead them – and that bad shepherd will rise up to destroy them. Their rejection of Christ (Zech. 11:1-14) results in the dissolution of the Jewish state. In addition to that judgment, another judgment will occur prior to the Second Coming of Christ when they will be punished one final time; a time of unparalleled trouble - the Great Tribulation. After that judgment, the saved remnant of Jews will enter into the Kingdom.

11:15 - The LORD now directs Zechariah to present himself as a "foolish shepherd" (worthless, coarse, hardened, morally deficient, cf. Prov. 1:7). This is done after the people of Israel had rejected the Good Shepherd (cf. Ezek. 34:3-4).

11:16 – Zechariah now represents a bad shepherd who will not do for the sheep the things that a good shepherd would do. The bad shepherd will be self-serving and is a type of the Antichrist that will rise up to try to rule the world (cf. during the 70th week, Dan. 9:27). The bad shepherd will have broken staffs that he will use to beat the stubborn sheep into submission. The LORD permits this bad shepherd to destroy the land of Israel and kill its people. Israel's preference for Barabbas over Jesus showed her willingness, many years later, to accept a bad individual in place of a good one. "Tearing off the hoofs" of the sheep represents the wicked and extreme greed of the bad shepherd, searching for the last edible morsel that he can extract from the sheep that he has destroyed and consumed.

11:17 – The LORD now pronounces judgment on the bad ('worthless') shepherd (cf. Jer. 50:35-37). This condemnation and judgment has a 'near' and 'far' interpretation. The 'near' application applies to all the evil kings of Israel and Judah who, under the guise of 'shepherds' ('caring leaders'), misled and harmed the Israel ever since Zechariah's day. Some believe that 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.

But one particular individual is in primary view here – the Antichrist. The ultimate fulfillment of the verse is the Antichrist. He 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). But the LORD will paralyze this man's power ("arm") and nullify his intelligence ("eye"), rendering him incapable of hurting others or defending himself when he meets the LORD at His Second Coming.

With this climactic scene the first prophetic oracle ('burden') ends. Zechariah's first oracle (Zech. 9 – 11) is prophetic, foretelling the first advent and rejection of Messiah, the Shepherd-King. The way is now prepared for the second prophetic oracle ('burden') that will foretell the second advent and acceptance of Messiah, the King (Zech. 12–14).

THE ORACLE (BURDEN) CONCERNING ISRAEL: THE ADVENT AND ACCEPTANCE OF MESSIAH

Zechariah 12-14 - The final three chapters of Zechariah is an oracle that contrasts the initial judgments on Israel and Israel's ultimate deliverance, restoration, and blessing. The oracle's two main events are: 1) the final siege of Jerusalem and 2) the return of the Messiah as King-Priest to the earth to defeat His enemies and establish His kingdom. These events follow in time after Israel's acceptance of the evil shepherd predicted in Zech. 11:15-17.

Zechariah's oracle is indispensable to an understanding of the two major events that occur as the beginning of the end of time arrives for Israel and mankind: 1) the time of the Great Tribulation and 2) the establishment of the Millennial Kingdom on earth. The repetition of "in that day" and its equivalent 19 times in these three chapters sets these events in the end times; where the LORD, as the Messiah, will openly and publicly manifest His power in delivering Israel from her enemies and establishing her in millennial peace and prosperity.

NOTE: Amillennialists often take "that day" as referring to the day of salvation that began at the first advent of Christ.

Zechariah 12 - The deliverance and repentance of Judah (Israel)

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.

Zechariah 12:1-9 - Israel's deliverance

12:1 – Zechariah declares the "burden of the word of the LORD" introduces this oracle concerning Israel. "Israel" here is understood to be the LORD's chosen people. Zechariah describes the LORD as the Creator of the heavens, earth, and man;" and in doing so reminds every one of the LORD's authority and ability to accomplish what He wants to do, when He wants to do it. The LORD who brought everything into existence is more than able to restore a people in a renewed and universal kingdom.

12:2 - The nations will place Jerusalem under "siege" in the last days (cf. v.3). The LORD "will make Jerusalem" like "a cup" of strong wine to the nations that surround Israel when they try to 'consume' Jerusalem (Israel). The "cup" is a common metaphor for God's wrath (Isa. 51:17; Jer. 25:15; Ezek. 23:33; Rev. 14:10; 16:19) and now the nations that surround Israel will 'drink' the LORD's wrath. This is a prophecy concerning the coming battle of Armageddon.

12:3 - "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). "In that day," Israel will become like "a heavy stone" when the nations try "to lift" and carry it away; and they will be seriously injured ("cut in pieces") when they make that attempt.

12:4 – "In that day" (v.3), the LORD will cause the weapons that Israel's enemies intend to use to destroy Israel 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 - When the LORD afflicts Israel's enemies (v. 4), the leaders of Israel's groups outside Jerusalem will realize that the LORD Almighty is also "their God." They now know that the LORD has chosen Jerusalem His city and the people of Jerusalem are strong supporters of them – their faith in the LORD encourages them to triumph over their enemies.

12:6 - "In that day," the LORD will, through the leaders of Israel, destroy the enemies that surround Jerusalem; like a "fire" that destroys quickly and thoroughly. And the LORD will preserve His city Jerusalem; the city where He will rule the Kingdom.

12:7 – The LORD 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, not the military might of Jerusalem and its leaders. This will end their fighting among themselves (cf. 11:6) and foster unity.

12:8 – "In that day" the LORD, in His defense of Jerusalem, will strengthen the "feeble" among the people, so that they will be as strong as "David," the mighty warrior. The leaders within Jerusalem (and Israel) 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 in defeating all of them. "In that day" when Satan and the nations of the world make their final effort to permanently Israel, they will meet with a crushing defeat at the hands of the LORD Himself.

An amillennial explanation of the passage 12:1-9 is:

"... 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 particularly of the church's victory rather than the victory of Judah after the flesh." H.C. Leupold

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

Throughout Zechariah 12:1-9, first-person speech is used – therefore the LORD is the one who is speaking; and He is the "Me" in these scriptures.

12:10 - The LORD promises ("I will") to "pour out on" the leaders and all others in Israel the "Spirit of grace" (cf. Ezek. 39:29; Joel 2:28-32; Rom. 11:25-27). It will be the Holy Spirit that pours out this spirit of grace and supplication. The LORD's "grace" is the motive for this outpouring, and it results in the Israelite's "supplication" to the LORD. This God-given remorse will cause the Jews to "mourn" when they look to (not 'on') the LORD in faith; they look to the One "whom they" had "pierced" (i.e., stabbed, not killed, Heb. *dqr*; cf. 13:3; Num. 21:9; Isa. 45:22; 53:5; John 3:14-15; 19:34). They will mourn as one who mourns over the death on one's only beloved son; they are deeply grieved. In their mourning they will humble themselves and recognize that they were saved by one whom they had pierced; Israel will mourn for their rejection of their Messiah – King (cf. Rev. 1:7). The nation of Israel will do this 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); like Thomas their cry will be, 'My Lord and my God!' (cf. John 20:28).

12:11 - "In that day there will be great mourning in Jerusalem ('Israel'). Their mourning is compared to "the mourning of Hadad-rimmon in the plain of Megiddo." This is an event that scholars have had trouble identifying. It is believed that is a reference to the event and place where King Josiah died (cf. 2 Chron. 35:20-27), but this is not a definitive conclusion. In light of vv.10 and 12-14, the mourning in view here in v.11 is national, real and intense.

12:12-14 - All the Israelites, "the land," will mourn; this will be a national mourning and repentance. This mourning, as a nation, is a collective mourning as each individual throughout the nation of Israel will mourn. The repeated phrases

"every family by itself" and "their wives by themselves" indicate that families – husband, wife, and child – will mourn *apart* from one another. Each individual will mourn separately and privately as each one realizes their *individual* part in the rejection and crucifixion of the Messiah.

The houses of "David" and of his son "Nathan" represent the political branches of the nation. The houses of "Levi" and of his grandson "Shimei" represent the religious branches of Israel. The entire nation of Israel will mourn – each individual in the political and religious arena – each family – each individual within a family – every Jew will personally mourn over their rejection of Christ as the Messiah and their role in His crucifixion (cf. Lev. 16, Psa. 51; Isa. 53:1-9).

Zechariah 13 - The restoration of Judah (Israel) - Zechariah 13

The connection between chapters 12 and 13 is very close – the same people, the same subject and the same time are in view in both chapters.

Zechariah 13:1-6 - Israel's cleansing

13:1 - "In that day" connects chapter 12 with chapter 13. In that coming day, the LORD 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" is a picture of the abundant cleansing that the LORD will provide and that cleansing will continue indefinitely (cf. Num. 8:7). This is the fulfillment of the LORD'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 from sin is available now, but the LORD will cleanse all the Israelites in the future when they turn to their Messiah in faith (cf. 12:10-14). The totality of this cleansing is noted by the reference to "David" (the leaders of Israel) and the "inhabitants" (all people within Israel).

13:2 – "In that day" the LORD will remove idolatry, false prophets, and unclean spirits from the land. Cutting off the "names" of the idols means not only a physical removing but also a removing of any remembrance of them. There will be an external cleansing as well as internal. Israel, as a people and nation, will no longer worship idols or listen to those who teach idol worship. False prophets, as is clear from the context, will not mislead the people of Israel anymore (cf. Matt. 24:4-5, 11, 15, 23-24; 2 Thess. 2:2-4; Rev. 9:20; 13:4-15). The departure of the "unclean spirit" here in v.2 is the only passage in Scripture that explicitly refers to the banishment of diviners, mediums and demons from Israel during the Kingdom. This is understood in light of the fact that Satan is imprisoned in the abyss (the prison house of evil spirits) during most of the Millennial Kingdom (cf. Rev. 20:1-3).

13:3 – The extent of this cleansing is through and completed. If anyone tries to teach anything false or worship any idol that is in opposition to the LORD, then his own parents, those closest to him, will put him to death. This was what God had commanded the Israelites to do to false prophets (Deut. 13:6-9).

13:4-5 – The punishment of death for being a false prophet will lead them to hide their identity as "prophets." They will not identify themselves in traditional ways (cf. 2 Kings 1:8) and will cease from wearing the ceremonial clothing associated with the idol they are worshiping. They will deny that they were prophets, in order to avoid punishment. They will adopt a clandestine approach to their worship of Idols by wearing coarse working clothes. They will lie about who they are by claiming to have been sold into slavery as field hands or are farmers so they could not possibly be prophets.

13:6 – In the worship of idols, it was sometimes a practice for false prophets to cut themselves 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 the false prophet will claim that he had received his injuries by accident in a friend's "house." The phrase "between your arms (hands)" means wounds that are on their chest or back.

NOTE: Some interpreters believe this verse describes Messiah and His wounds, but the context of this passage and lack of any New Testament citation of this verse does not support this interpretation. This verse carries on and concludes the

subject begun in v. 2. There is no clear change of subject between vv. 5 and 6 such as exists between vv. 6 and 7. Christ did not claim that He was a farmer; He was not bought or sold in His youth.

Zechariah 13:7-9 - The smiting of the Shepherd and the scattering of the sheep

There is a distinct change of direction beginning with v. 7. The focus turns from the 'false prophets' (vv.2-6) to the 'true prophet' (vv. 7-9). Verses 7-9 highlight aspects of the proceeding prophecies in Zechariah: 1) piercing of the Messiah (12:10); 2) abandoning of the sheep (11:9); and the restoration of the covenant (13:1-2).

13:7 – The LORD, through Zechariah, speaks using poetic language of the Shepherd that He had mentioned in chapter 11. The LORD is personified as a sword, the instrument of violent death. This is a figure of speech called *apostrophe*: a direct address to an impersonal object as if it were a person. The LORD addresses the 'sword' as "O sword" and He commands it to execute ("strike") His "Shepherd." The Shepherd is the royal Good Shepherd of 11:4-14. The LORD further describes this Shepherd as the "Man who is My Companion/Associate," He is One who is very close to Him. This Hebrew phrase is used twice in Leviticus (cf. Lev. 6:2; 18:12) and it means 'near relative / kin.' Here it means the "Shepherd" is one who dwells side by side with the LORD as His equal (cf. John 1:1, 10:30, 14:9). In 11:17 it is the 'worthless shepherd' whom the LORD will 'strike,' but here it is the Good Shepherd. The One doing the striking is the LORD Himself, since "strike" is masculine in the Hebrew text, and agrees with "the LORD of hosts." Therefore, it is at the LORD's direction that the Good Shepherd / Messiah's death occurs (cf. Isa. 53:10; Acts 2:23; I Pet. 1:18-20); and it is also Israel's action when they rejected Him as their Messiah (12:10-14).

The 'striking' (death) of the Shepherd would result in the scattering of the Shepherd's sheep (cf., Israel, 11:4-14); Israel would be scattered among the nations because of their rejection of Christ as the Messiah. 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). Merrill Unger stated: "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."

The last line of this verse is open to and capable of two different interpretations, both of which came to pass: 1) the LORD would *scatter* the little sheep (the followers of the Shepherd), and He would *protect* them; or 2) the LORD will *scatter* the little sheep (cf. James 1:1), and He will allow them to *suffer persecution* (cf. John 15:18,20; 16:2). Perhaps a double entendre was intended.

13:8-9 - The 'scattering' of the sheep will result in two-thirds of the sheep dying, and one-third of the sheep ("the remnant who repent at His Second Coming" – cf. 12:10-13:1) remaining alive. The LORD will "refine" the surviving one-third in the fires of affliction (cf. 3:2; Ezek. 5:1-12). Two-thirds of the Jews, the unbelieving, will perish during the Tribulation and as a result of the Sheep and Goat judgment (cf. Isa. 35:10; Jer. 30:11; Matt. 25:31-33, 41-46), and one-third ("third part") will live through it and enter the Millennium (cf. Matt. 25: 31-36; Rev. 7:1-8, 14:1-5). The surviving remnant will "call on the LORD's (My) name" in supplication for forgiveness (12:10). The LORD will respond to their cry by reaffirming His New Covenant relationship with them (cf. Hosea 1-2; Jer. 32:38-41; Ezek. 37:23-28), and they will agree to it (cf. Ezek. 20:33-38; Zech. 8:8; Hosea 2:21-23).

The specific declaration of the two-thirds and one-third foretells of a future event that is yet to come. There are those who interpret this passage to mean that two-thirds of the Jews perished in the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, and the one-third surviving. It is correct to state that the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70 is a foretelling of the future events of the Tribulation and Sheep and Goat judgment.

Zechariah 14:1-8 - The final deliverance of Israel and the return of Messiah

Chapter 14 further describes the events described in 13:8-9 and provides more details on the LORD and the Millennial Kingdom.

14:1 - The LORD announces through Zechariah that "the day of the LORD is coming" when the nations that had plundered Israel victoriously would divide their spoil between themselves in Jerusalem. In this verse, men will have so

thoroughly overwhelmed Jerusalem that they are leisurely dividing the spoils of their victory. This activity will bring the wrath of the LORD upon them ('the Day of the LORD').

As noted previously, when the "day of the LORD" is used in prophesy, it is a designation of any time that the LORD enters into the arena of human events to effect his purposes. It is important to remember that the "day of the LORD" is an extended period of time, not just a 12-hour or 24-hour period. Here, the "day of the LORD" is a time in which He will do His will – from the time of His Second Coming until eternity begins. This is in direct contrast to 'man's day,' in which man conducts his affairs without divine interference in a time that the LORD permits.

14:2 - The LORD Himself "will gather all the nations" to war against and overcome Jerusalem. This 'gathering' is referred to four times in this chapter (cf. vv. 2, 14, 16, 19) and it ultimately results in the battle of Armageddon (cf. Rev. 16:16-21). The LORD will use the 'nations' to purge, refine and judge Israel for their rejection of Him as their LORD. The 'nations' will capture the city, plunder the houses, and rape the women. This event will be the climax of "the time of Jacob's trouble" (Jer. 30:5-7). Half of the Jewish residents in Jerusalem will escape while the other half will remain in Jerusalem (cf. v.5). Two-thirds of these people will die during this time (cf. 13:8-9).

14:3 - The LORD will then take the role of a 'warrior' and will "fight against those nations" for His people Israel (cf. 1:3; 9; 10:4-5; 12:1-9). He has done this before on behalf of Israel (cf. Exod. 14:13-14; Josh. 10:14; 23:3; Judg. 4:15; 2 Chron. 20:15) and He will intervene again for the final time at His Second Coming.

The order of events for the "day of the LORD" in Zech. 14:1-3 is: 1) the nations assemble to war against Jerusalem and to place it under siege (vs. 2); 2) the city is captured and plundered by the nations; (vs. 2); 3) the spoil of the city is divided amongst the nations within its walls (vs. 1); and 4) the LORD intervenes (vs. 3).

14:4 - "In that day" Christ, as the 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). Christ will return to the second time to earth at the exact same place from where He ascended from earth to heaven– fulfilling the truth of the statement of the angel to the disciples (cf. Acts 1:11). Zechariah describes 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 would 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). This is the only place in the Old Testament where this name for this mountain appears (cf. 2 Sam. 15:30; Ezek. 11:23). Charles F. Feinberg stated this: "Words cannot express more plainly the personal, visible, bodily, literal return of the Lord Jesus Christ in power."

14:5 – When Christ comes the second time, places His feet on Mount of Olives and the mountain splits in half, the Jews alive in Jerusalem 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). 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). Their flight at this time compares to the Israelites' flight through the Red Sea during the Exodus.

This occurs simultaneously with Christ's Second Coming as the Messiah King-Priest; and He will "come with all the saints" with Him (i.e. "saints" meaning the "Bride of Christ" ('church') and His angels - cf. Ps. 89:5, 7; Matt. 25:31; Col. 1:4, 12, 26-27; 1 Thess. 3:13; Jude 14; Rev. 19:11-16).

It is noteworthy that Zechariah expresses his own relationship with the LORD, his faith in Him, and his wonder at this revelation by referring to Him personally as "the LORD my God."

14:6 - "In that day" there will be a reduction of light on the earth. The Hebrew word translated as "diminish/dwindle" means "congeal" (cf. Joel 3:15-17; Amos 5:18). This verse means the loss of light occurs because the sun, moon and stars "congeal" and 'thicken' to the point that they cannot shine brightly.

14:7 – The time of these events (v.4-6) will evidently be at evening time where there is twilight (v.6) that is "neither day nor night." The Jews who are still alive are fleeing through a new valley going east out of Jerusalem. They are fleeing at a time of little natural light (cf. Isa. 13:9-10, 24:23; Joel 2:10, 31; 3:14-16; Amos 5:18; Matt. 24:29-20; Rev. 8:12-13, 16:8-9). However, there will be light. Light will be emanating from Jesus Christ – the Messiah King-Priest (cf. Matt. 17:1-8; Rev. 19:11-16; Isa. 60:19-20). It will be "a unique day" (time) in human history (cf. Jer. 30:7). Christ's Second Coming as Messiah King will occur on a day that only the LORD knows (cf. Matt. 24:36; Acts 1:7). Here, just the end of the Tribulation is in view – and the events prior to the beginning of the Millennium.

14:8 – "In that day" "living water" will begin to flow out of Jerusalem. One-half of the water flowing out of Jerusalem will flow east into the Dead Sea, and the other half will flow west into the Mediterranean Sea. Currently, the highest elevation of Jerusalem, the temple mount, is 300 feet lower than the Mount of Olives, but the topographical alternations stated in v.4 and 10 will allow this stream of "living water" to naturally flow to the east and to the west. This "living 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).

The "living water" is literal water, just as Christ's coming as the Messiah King-Priest is 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).

Zechariah 14:9-11 - The security of Israel

14:9 - "In that day" Jerusalem becomes the center of the universe as the sovereign LORD, Jesus Christ the Messiah King-Priest, establishes His throne in Jerusalem (cf. Ps. 2; Dan. 2:44-45; 7:27). "In that day," the LORD will rule over the whole earth. He will be the only "king"; the 'King of Kings and Lord of Lords' (cf. Rev. 17:14, 19:16). There will be no others and He will rule with a 'rod of iron' (cf. Rev. 19:15). "His name" will be number "one" in all the earth; there will be no other so-called gods (cf. Deut. 6:4-5). Christ will be King. His Kingdom will be complete, total, and real on earth as it is in heaven (cf. Matt. 6:9-10). There will only be 'one religion' during the Millennium. The Lord Jesus Christ will do away with all false religions (cf. 13:1-2). This 'day' will be the fulfillment of the Abrahamic, Davidic and New Covenants.

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 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 the totality of the new topography. This plain will be well-watered and fertile. Jerusalem will be rebuilt according to specific plans. It will become a royal city containing the Temple of God and the Throne of Jesus Christ (cf. Ezek. 40-48).

14:11 – When this occurs, the people who will live in millennial Jerusalem will never suffer from war, destruction or from being put under the "curse / ban" (Heb. *herem*). Canaanite cities placed under the 'ban' were totally destroyed (Josh. 6:17-18). "In that day" Jerusalem and those in it will enjoy "security," because Jerusalem will never again suffer destruction. It will be eternally secure (cf. 3:10; Isa. 32:18, 33:20; Amos 9:15; Micah 4:4).

Zechariah 14:12-15 - The destruction of Israel's enemies

Chronologically verses 12-15 describe the LORD's actions that will be taken against Israel's enemies when He fights for Israel (v.3).

14:12 - The LORD will "strike all the people" (i.e., the military of the nations) that fought against Jerusalem (vv. 1-3) with a "plague" that will cause their flesh to "rot" off of them. They will not be able to see or speak (cf. Isa. 37:36). The description of the judgment on the military personnel is very similar to what occurs to a person during a nuclear bomb explosion. This description identifies the power of the LORD's judgment on the enemies of Israel.

14:13 – When the judgment described in v.12 occurs, "panic" will seize those (Gentiles) who have observed the destruction of the military personnel that fought against Israel. They, out of fear and panic, will begin to fight one another (cf. Judg. 7:22; 1 Sam. 14:15-20; 2 Chron. 20:23). It appears that this will happen in and near Jerusalem (v.2).

14:14 – When the Israelites see the power of the LORD (v.12) they react by fighting ("also will fight") their enemies in Jerusalem. In this state of panic and fear, the Israelites will fight against the invaders in their city that were dividing the spoils of their conquest of Jerusalem (v.1). They will also move forward to gather as much spoil as they could get from the people they were fighting.

14:15 - The "plague" that the LORD sent on the military personnel of Israel's enemies (v. 12) will also afflict their animals—precluding their escape (cf. Josh. 7:24-25).

The LORD uses three instruments to defeat Israel's enemies: plague (v. 12), themselves (v. 13), and the Israelites (v. 14).

Zechariah 14:16-21 - The worship of the sovereign King

14:16 - The remaining former enemies of Israel (i.e., Gentiles who were not military personnel) who have not died will believe in and worship the sovereign LORD (cf. 8:20-23; Isa. 2:2-4; 45:21-24; 60:4-14; Ezek. 40—48; Phil. 2:10). They will be believers in Christ as the Messiah King-Priest and will enter into the Millennial Kingdom (cf. Matt. 25:31-46). They will be commanded to make annual pilgrimages to Jerusalem to worship the "King, the LORD of hosts (cf. Ps. 24:10; Isa. 6:5; Rev. 11:15; 19:16) and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles / celebrate the Feast of Booths."

The 'Feast of Booths / Tabernacles / Ingathering' is a fall harvest festival that celebrates the LORD's provision of agricultural bounty and the Israelites' redemption from Egyptian slavery. It was a feast / celebration that also anticipated entrance into the Promised Land and kingdom blessings; it was a time of grateful rejoicing (Lev. 23:34-43; Deut. 16:14; Neh. 8:17).

The 'Feast of Booths / Tabernacles / Ingathering' 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. Strangers were welcome to participate in it in Israel's past history.

It is very possible that Peter thought that the messianic kingdom had begun when he saw Jesus transfigured (Luke 9:33), because he suggested that the disciples make three booths for Jesus, Moses, and Elijah. This is an indication that the Jews in Jesus' day associated the 'Feast of Booths / Tabernacles / Ingathering' with the beginning of Messiah's kingdom; which is the same connection that Zechariah makes here. The 'Feast of Booths / Tabernacles / Ingathering' is the only one of Israel's major feasts that is unfulfilled until it is celebrated at this time.

It is important to remember that the 'temple worship' and 'feasts' celebrated during the Millennium are for the remembrance of the Christ's sacrifice of Himself on the cross; similar to us having communion today. Millennial worship is not 'restored Judaism,' but it is a newly instituted religious order of worship for all peoples, Jew and Gentile alike. It will be centered in Jerusalem and will incorporate some features that are similar to O.T. worship; but it is a new order of worship as Christ, the Messiah King-Priest is alive and ruling on the throne in the temple in Jerusalem.

14:17-19 – The LORD will be requiring that all families make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem annually. As it is a command, there is a 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 (Israel's ancient enemy) did not go up to Jerusalem to worship as commanded, 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 blessing (cf. Ezek. 34:26), but both literal rain and spiritual blessing are in view here.

J. Vernon McGee made an interesting statement in his commentary of these verses: "Someone will say, 'I thought this was the Millennium!' It is, but the Millennium will be a time of testing those in this great multitude—a remnant, but a

large remnant, I believe—who have turned to God. It is like being a church member—not all church members are Christians, by any means. Therefore, this period of the Millennium will be a time of testing."

The command/punishment stated in vv. 16-19 is consistent with the understanding the Christ as King-Priest will rule with a 'rod of iron' (cf. Rev. 19:15).

14:20-21 – When Christ, as the Messiah King-Priest, rules in the Millennium ("In that day") everything, even the most common things, will be as consecrated to the LORD's glory; just like the gold plate on the high priest's turban that stated "HOLINESS TO THE LORD" indicated his consecration to the LORD (Exod. 28:36; Zech. 3:5). Everything in the Millennium will be consecrated to the LORD, even 'bells' that decorate horses and common, ordinary cooking 'pots and pans.' Everything will be 'holy,' set apart to the LORD; everything will be used for the service of the LORD.

Also, all the people will truly be consecrated to the Lord and will fulfill their holy calling (cf. Exod. 19:6; Jer. 2:3). 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 living in Canaan who were morally and spiritually unclean, and doomed to death (cf. Gen. 9:25; Isa. 35:8; Ezek. 43:7; 44:9; Rev. 21:27). They consistently contested Israel's possession of the promised inheritance. The significance of the identification of "Canaanites" here is not just the ethnic Canaanites, but that there will no longer be a people like the Canaanites in the Millennium because all would acknowledge Christ as the Messiah King-Priest – the LORD.

Chapter 14 is the climax of Zechariah's prophecy - the reign of Christ as the Messiah King-Priest. Through Zechariah's revelation we know that the LORD will deliver Israel through Christ the Messiah who will appear (14:1-8). Christ, as the Messiah, will return to earth and touch down on the Mount of Olives, the same place from which He ascended into heaven (Acts 1:9). Christ, as the Messiah, will provide final security for the Israelites (14:9-11) by destroying Israel's enemies (14:12-15). Then the Millennial Kingdom will be established and there will be universal worship of sovereign LORD (14:16-21). All of these events and benefits will occur after Christ, as the Messiah King-Priest comes the second time to earth and sets up His kingdom. "Zechariah portrays Christ, as the Messiah, as the complete and perfect King by identifying the following functions of His rule: 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)." *Kenneth Barker – The Expositor's Bible Commentary*

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