

**WEST VIRGINIA
SCHOOL OF PREACHING**

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**Theme: STUDIES FROM THE
BOOK OF ZECHARIAH**

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PREFACE

The lectureship committee met earlier this year to consider the theme of the Eighth Annual West Virginia School of Preaching Victory Lectures. When the thought was put forth to do the Book of Zechariah, we were immediately in one accord. To my knowledge there has not been a lectureship among brethren in the churches of Christ on this minor prophet book. It was agreed by all that a lecture series on this great book would be a major contribution to the volumes of lectureship books being presented to the brotherhood. We gave careful consideration to the men who would be invited to speak, knowing the difficulty of some of the prophetic themes to be developed. We believe that some of the finest Bible students in our area and from other places have been assembled and have collaborated with us to produce a worthy volume that will be a blessing to all who read it.

When studying a volume of this type there are a number of things needed to be searched out and accomplished:

(1) We want to give an accurate exposition of this important book. Accuracy of interpretation should have the foremost place in the Bible student's mind. If one cannot arrive at the truth on an Biblical passage, then such study will do little to help one's spiritual growth and development.

(2) The prophetic themes to be discussed must be correctly interpreted. Prophecy containing predictions of future things must be carefully and prayerfully reasoned out. One does not read the Bible as he reads the newspaper. Nor does one read prophetic books like he would read the Book of Acts or the epistles. Zechariah is a book filled with highly figurative passages that have led to wild and fanciful interpretations destructive to the soul. Novices to Bible study tend to get lost in the visions and predictions of this

book. But to the wise and mature student great and wonderful benefits are derived, providing blessings to heart and soul.

(3) Important lessons for modern day Christians must be presented to make this study practical. All the speakers and writers in this lecture series have taken great pains to develop lessons that provide food for thought and things that will stimulate growth in the knowledge of God's word.

The great Messianic passages in Zechariah are a challenge to the students of the Scriptures. More than one of our speakers have thanked me for making them do study, research and meditation, in a book that many times is neglected because of its difficulties of interpretation. The personal lessons and thoughts provoked by this study of our Lord Jesus Christ and His kingdom have proved to be of special benefit to them. Our speakers have done well to glean out the lessons to be learned. We pray that it will also be true of those who read them.

Deepest appreciation is given to the elders of the Hillview Terrace church of Christ for the existence of West Virginia School of Preaching, thus making these lectures possible. These are men who have the interest of the church and school of preaching which is under their oversight at heart. Also, we want to extend our great thanks to the men of WVSOP faculty who served on the lectureship committee this year: Charles Pugh, Louis Rushmore, Gene West, and this writer, Emanuel Daugherty. Many hours of planning and preparation have gone into this lectureship program as to topics and speakers. We appreciate their time and talents which are many.

The school secretary, Diana Johnston has worked many hours in typing and computer work, correspondence and phone calls, copying and mail-outs to keep things moving. She is greatly appreciated for her service and devotion to the school. A big thank you must also go to Elizabeth Robison, our faithful librarian, for proofreading

some of the manuscripts. Her knowledge of the writing and language skills is a wonderful asset to our school (for teachers and students alike!).

Last, but by far not least, we want to pay a debt of gratitude to Louis and Bonnie Rushmore, who have been responsible for the printing, assembling, collating, cutting, gluing, binding, etc. of the WVSOP Lectureship book this year and for the past several years. Louis and his wife put in many, many thankless hours and sleepless nights to get the job done. They have always been on time and caused the Director little or no anxiety, for which he is thankful.

A special effort is made each year to produce quality audio and video tapes of all the lectures. These can be purchased for a nominal fee. Please note that the lecture schedule also serves as an order form to purchase tapes. The elders have asked that all tape purchases be prepaid.

Emanuel B. Daugherty
August 14, 2002

AN OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK OF ZECHARIAH

Emanuel Daugherty

My task in this lectureship devoted solely to the prophetic book of Zechariah is to give an overview of this volume. Zechariah is listed in the books of the “Minor Prophets,” so called because of their brevity as compared to the “Major Prophets,” such as Isaiah with its 66 chapters, Jeremiah with its 52 chapters and Ezekiel with its 48 chapters. Zechariah has 14 chapters over all, and though “minor” in comparison, it is one of the “major” prophets when it comes to Messianic content. His prophecies about the Messiah are exceeded only by those of that great statesman-prophet Isaiah.

The Prophet and Historical Background

Zechariah means “He whom Jehovah remembers,” and is one of the three writing prophets of the Persian Period. He is a contemporary and co-laborer with Haggai in stirring up the people to rebuild the temple, and begins his labors about 80 years before Malachi.

The name Zechariah is a popular one in the Old Testament, with some thirty men having that designation. He is one of the few prophets who gives information about his lineage, identifying himself as the son of Berechiah and the grandson of Iddo the prophet. According to Nehemiah 12:1, 4, and 16, Zechariah’s grandfather, Iddo, is listed as one of the Levites and priests who returned with the first group of Jews with Zerubbabel. This makes him then a priest and prophet. He is likely not the slain prophet of the Gospels (Mt 23:35; Lk 11:51). See 2 Chronicles 24:20.

There is nothing said about his call to prophesy, but he is referred to as a “young man” (2:4), and, because of the dating of the books of Zechariah and Haggai, we know that

AN OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK OF ZECHARIAH

each did his preaching within a few months of the other. Both were called of God to prophesy, urging the people of Jerusalem to rebuild the temple. The temple of David and Solomon had been destroyed in 586 B.C. by Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon and had lain waste for nearly 70 years. When the captives first came home from Babylon, they immediately began work on the temple with the foundation being laid in 536 B.C. But they received opposition from the Samaritans and other peoples who had moved into the area in their time of Captivity (Ezra 4). This opposition had begun in the reign of Cyrus the Great and continued through the reigns of Ahasuerus (Cambyses) and Artaxerxes (Psuedo-Smerdis) who wrote an order totally stopping the work on the temple until the second year of the reign of Darius Hystaspes in 520 B.C. (Ezra 4:23-24).

Ezra chapter 5 records that a challenge was made to Darius the king inquiring if King Cyrus had ever really authorized the rebuilding of Jerusalem at all (5:17). A search was made in the archives at Babylon, and the edict of authorization to build the city and temple was found (6:1-5). The opposition was told to stop hindering the Jews and allow the work to go on (6:6-12).

It was at this juncture that the prophets Haggai and Zechariah were called to work to stir up the people from their lethargy and selfishness in thinking of themselves while the Lord's house was lying waste. David Baron is correct in stating that the difference in the work of the two prophets was that Haggai was to rouse the people to the *outward* task of physically *building* the temple, and Zechariah's efforts were to cause the people to have a complete *spiritual* change to be prepared to *worship* in the new temple (**Visions and Prophecies of Zechariah**, p 9). This may be an over simplification, but a close reading of these two books shows this to be a proper general understanding of their work.

Zechariah's dated prophecies are: (1) A call to repentance came in the 8th month, Marchesvan, i.e., November, 520 (1:1-6). (2) A series of night visions, which make up the first half of the book, were given in the 11th month Shebet, corresponding to our month of February 519 (1:7-6:8). (3) The response to the questions about fasting was given in the 9th month, Chislev, December 518 (ch 7-8). Zechariah began his career two months later than Haggai, for his oracle falls between the dates of the second and third oracles of Haggai (between Hag 2:9 and 2:10).

Authorship Questions and Answers

As with all the Bible books, Zechariah has come under great scrutiny by the liberal theologians of the late 19th century. Their contention is that Zechariah is not the sole author of the book bearing his name and that it was edited and added to, even down to the second century B.C. Though their charges against the authorship of the Bible have been answered countless times, the modern scholarly world keeps these issues before the religious public; so they must be dealt with again and again. Let there be no doubt in the minds of the readers of this volume, the present writer and all the writers and speakers on this lectureship are firm believers in the inspiration, revelation, authorship, and credibility of the scriptures. Those who believe that Almighty God could and did cause men to prophesy future events have no problem with these matters.

Following are some of their arguments for the late date of the book. For conservancy of space in this manuscript, brevity will be used in dealing with them.

First, is the quotation of Zechariah 11:12-13 found in Matthew 27:9-10 and attributed to a prophecy of Jeremiah. Thus the critics claim that the whole chapter of Zechariah 11 was written by Jeremiah or some prophet before the captivity and later attached to the prophecy of Zechariah,

AN OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK OF ZECHARIAH

perhaps even “borrowed” by Zechariah himself. However, as pointed out by Archer (*A Survey of Old Testament Introduction*, pp 425-426), there are several references to a potter and purchase of a field in Jeremiah (19:2, 11; 32:6-9). Upon careful reading of what is said in Matthew, one could easily conclude that Matthew is combining Zechariah and Jeremiah to make his case for the purchase of the potter’s field. Another instance of this combining of prophecies is found in Mark 1:2-3, where the quotation begins with Malachi 3:1; then joins Isaiah 40:3 to it illuminating the work of John the Baptist as the forerunner of Christ. Yet Mark refers only to Isaiah as the source.

Second, is the reference to the Greeks in chapter 9 as having already conquered the Palestinian coastal cities, and is cited as proof that this section of Zechariah must have been written after the time of Alexander the Great. This view is clearly anti-prophetic and reveals the bias of the higher critics against biblical prophecy as being predictive of future events.

Third, the references to the false shepherds and the good shepherd in chapter 11 cause the late-date advocates to attempt various historical identifications of Jewish leaders during the Maccabean time frame thus implying a date of writing about 150 B.C. However, Hebrew scholars have compared the Hebrew language of Zechariah’s book with that of the sectarian literature of the Dead Sea Scrolls dating to the 150 B.C. time period. The linguistic style of Zechariah fits the 500 B.C. time period and not the later date.

Fourth, the higher critics argue that the differences in the style of the book from chapters 1-8 and 9-14 mitigate against one author. But, as suggested by many authors, if several decades passed between the writing of the early chapters and the latter chapters, this would account for the

minor differences in style (See Archer, Harrison, Young, etc.).

One of the ways in which unity of both sections of Zechariah is determined is by the peculiar expressions common to both. “Saith the Lord” is found fourteen times in the early chapters and six times in the latter. The peculiar designation of the providence of God “the eyes of the Lord” is found in 3:9; 4:10; and 9:1. The phrase “Lord of hosts” occurs in 1:6, 12; 2:9; and also in 9:15; 10:3; and 12; 5 (Edward Young, *An Introduction to the Old Testament*, pp280-281).

Fifth, Israel and Judah in both sections of the book are considered as one which was recognized in Zechariah’s time (1:19; 8:13; and 9:9,10, 13; 10:3, 6, 7). Edward Young says the “purity of the language in both parts should be stressed,” stating that “the language is remarkably free from Aramaisms” (p 281). [Aramaic = a northwest Semitic language that from c300 B.C.–A.D. 650 was a lingua franca for nearly all of SW Asia and the every day speech of Syria, Mesopotamia and Palestine] (*Webster’s Unabridged Dictionary*, p 106). The book of Zechariah “remarkably free from Aramaisms” thus could not have been written at a late date as the critics claim.

Last, it should be noted that those who contend for more than one writer are not themselves in agreement saying that chapters 9-11 are from the 8th century and chapters 12-14 are possibly as late as the 2nd century B.C. Others say these chapters all belong in the 3rd and 2nd centuries B.C. It is better to accept the unity of the book as we have it and attribute the writing of the whole to the prophet Zechariah.

Analysis of the Book

Section I – Chapters 1-8.

A Call to Repentance (1:1-6). Zechariah reminds the

people of the sinful behavior of their fathers that brought on the Captivity in Babylon and urges them to a mind and state of repentance. The warning, if heeded, would have prevented the dire consequences that later befell Israel as seen ultimately in chapter 14 and the destruction of Jerusalem again.

The Night Visions (1:7-6:8).

A series of eight night visions was given to Zechariah and each is designed to encourage the building of the temple. It seems that all the visions came in one night with short intervals between. While it seems that Zechariah's contemporary, Haggai, appealed to the physical needs of the people, telling them that God's blessings were being withheld because they were seeing to their own affairs and not the work of God, Zechariah appealed to the spiritual reasons for getting the work on the temple going again.

Vision One – The Man Among the Myrtle Trees (1:7-17). Zechariah sees a rider on a red horse with red, sorrel, and white horses behind him. These are patrollers of the earth who report that the earth is at rest, which seems to be bad news. The people of the world (former enemies) are enjoying peace while the people of God are still harassed and suppressed by their foes which is causing a cessation of the work on the temple. The Gentile nations are at rest and secure from war, but Israel is helpless before her enemies and in great misery and depression. God's answer to this is to give "good words, even comforting words" (1:13).

Vision Two – The Four Horns and Four Craftsmen (1:18-21). Horns, symbols of power, represent those nations that have scattered Judah, i.e., Assyria, Egypt, Babylon and Medo-Persia. Or perhaps, these represent the nations identified in Daniel's vision, chapter two—Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. The vision views the horns as already destroyed. This is the Hebrew prophetic perfect used to describe things yet future as having already

been done. The smiths, or craftsmen–artisans that work with wood or metal–are symbols of the destruction of those powers. The import of the vision is that there is no opposition to the building of the Lord’s house that cannot be overcome; don’t be fearful of the foes without, trust God and go to work.

Vision Three – The Man With the Measuring Line (2:1-13). In this vision, the young man with the measuring line is about to lay out the walls of Jerusalem. The walls of Jerusalem acted a barrier between the Jews and their enemies. In this case, the man with the measuring line is restrained, for the Lord is to be her protection. But the walls also acted as an enclosure limiting her growth, and it seems in this vision that the future growth of Jerusalem is being discussed. Thus the interpretation of the vision means that Jerusalem was to be a city without walls, for her growth would be limitless. Since the walls of Jerusalem were rebuilt about 80 years later by Nehemiah, this vision becomes prophetic of the New Jerusalem, the city of God of the New Testament, the church of Christ.

Vision Four – Joshua, A "Brand Plucked Out of the Burning" (3:1-10). Joshua is the high priest immediately following the return from Captivity (not to be confused with the Joshua that conquered the land of Canaan nearly a thousand years previously). Joshua, representing the priesthood, is described standing before the angel of the Lord in his priestly robes which are described as “filthy garments.” He is a “brand plucked out of the burning,” one rescued from the fire of exile because of the nations great sins, as well as the sins of himself and the priesthood. He is being accused by Satan as one not fit to represent the people of God; unsuited to offer sacrifices (3:1-10). The filthy garments are symbolic of the filth and mire of the sin in which they wallowed and a continuing state of moral and spiritual ruin. In the outcome Satan is denounced and the

filthy garments are removed, and clean clothes substituted. God will send the Branch—the Messiah.

Vision Five – The Lamp Stand and the Two Olive Trees (4:1-14). The two anointed ones likely represent Zerubbabel and Joshua, the civil and religious heads of the community are given as assurance that the temple will be completed. Zerubbabel is to complete the capstone amidst applause. Though the new temple did not compare to the glory of the original built by Solomon, one should not despise the day of small things. The seven eyes represent the all-seeing eye of God in his constant rule of earth.

Vision Six – The Flying Scroll (5:1-4). Zechariah now sees in his night vision a huge banner measuring 30 X 15 feet, evidently large enough for all to see. This vision is given to answer the question: How can crime be removed from the land? On the banner are written excerpts from the law which contains threats and curses upon violators of the law. The scroll flies over the land and its curse destroys the houses of thieves and liars.

Vision Seven – The Woman Sitting In a Basket (5:5-11). The woman, representing wickedness, is sitting in a large dry measure (about a bushel). A heavy lid made of lead is placed on top of the container, shutting in the evil personified by the woman. She is then borne by two angels to Shinar (Babylon) where sin finds its natural home. With the temple rebuilt wickedness is to be removed from the land. Vision seven is given to show the removal of the principle of sin from the land of God's people.

Vision Eight – The Four Chariots From Between the Copper Mountains (6:1-8). Zechariah sees in this last vision four horses and four chariots come from between two mountains. They represent four spirits going out from the throne of God. These are to go forth in judgment to avenge the atrocities against God's people that were reported of the horse patrol of the first vision (1:15). They

are to go to the north and south; i.e., to the north where Israel had fallen under the great abuse of Assyria and Babylon, and to the south the land of Egypt their ancient enemies. These seem to symbolize not only God's wrath on the nations afflicting Israel but also His protecting providence. Israel is at peace under the control of God.

In summary this series of visions is designed to encourage Zerubbabel the governor, Joshua the high priest, and the people by showing them (1) their enemies will not be obstacles to the building of the temple, (2) if there is true repentance on their part, sin and wickedness will be removed from the land, (3) Jerusalem itself will be rebuilt and large enough for all, and (4) faith and obedience, especially on the part of their leadership, will bring on the advent of the Messiah, the Branch, and His kingdom.

The Coronation of the Messiah (6:9-15). Returnees from Babylon bring gold which is made into a crown and put on the head of Joshua. This is to be a double-tiered crown and is significant in that the high priest did not normally wear a crown but a miter. Thus Joshua is not the true recipient of the crown, but this act is a reminder of the advent of the Branch, the seed of David who is the Messiah (Heb 8:1). He will be the Priest-King and will minister and rule in heaven.

Questions About Fasting (ch 7-8). A delegation from Bethel wanted to know if the fasts they had been keeping have relevance now, since the exile is over and work on the temple has progressed. The law demanded one day of fasting—the atonement—but they had taken it upon themselves to declare fasts for many occasions in Israel's history. The prophet makes it clear that it is not fasting, but obedience, justice, and kindness that is significant. They had been scattered because of their disobedience. If they would be obedient to God there would be no need for constant fasting.

Section II. Chapters 9-14

Nearly all commentators are united in stating the difficulty of interpretation of this portion of the book, which without contradiction, contains some of the most difficult in all the Bible. Because of the sharp contrast between the first and last part of Zechariah, many have concluded that there must be two different authors. But as stated earlier in the portion of this lecture dealing with the challenges of the higher critics, the unity of the book is established by a continuity of similar words, phrases, expressions, teachings, and concepts. Smith says, "There is no insurmountable obstacle to embracing the traditional view that the entire book was written by Zechariah the son of Berechiah" (James Smith, *The Minor Prophets*, p 575).

These chapters contain three sections not clearly related to the problems of rebuilding. The historical standpoint is different. It is generally concluded that these prophecies were given at a later time, perhaps forty to fifty years after the visions of the first section. But this would not make Zechariah's time of prophetic activity any longer than that of Isaiah (approximately 40-60 years); even then he would not be as old as was Daniel when he received his last prophecies. This conclusion is based on the subject matter of the latter chapters which focuses on the problems of God's people between the testaments, the coming of the Messiah and his kingdom, and the end of the Jewish state. The prophecies of the Messiah of this section are the ones most frequently cited in the gospel narratives of the humiliation, suffering and death of Jesus. One writer says that other than Ezekiel, Zechariah's thoughts have the greatest bearing on the book of Revelation (Joyce Baldwin, *Haggai, Zechariah, Malachi*, p 59).

Two main divisions are introduced with the phrase "An Oracle, (the burden) of the word of the Lord" (9:1; 12:1).

Triumph of Zion Through Her Messiah (9:1-10:12)

Chapter nine records the victory of the Greeks over the neighboring nations who are using the land promised to Abraham (Gen 15:18). The prophet announces the triumph of Zion over the Greeks through the Messiah. The king comes riding into Jerusalem on a colt, the foal of an ass, and his dominion is from sea to sea. Blessings come from the Lord, His signal will bring home the exiles with signs comparable to those at the time of the exodus from Egypt, prefiguring the signs, wonders and miracles of the New Testament.

The Good and the Foolish Shepherds (11:1-17)

Lamenting the fate of the sheep, the Lord commands the prophet to take charge of the sheep and takes two staves which he names “Beauty and Bands,” and in one month three shepherds are cut off. There is much speculation among commentators as to the identity of these three shepherds. The good shepherd despairs and asks for his wages. He is paid with 30 pieces of silver, which are given to the potter; the stick “union” is broken and breaks the tie between Judah and Israel. Terrible consequences are to befall physical Israel for their rejection of the Messiah.

The “Day” of the Messiah Chapters 12-14

In these chapters the phrase “in that day” occurs some 16 times. “That day” points to the time of the Messiah and the events of the Christian Dispensation. Note the references to the Messiah:

Jerusalem will become “a burdensome stone” to its citizens, but the righteous shall be saved. There is great mourning for one pierced, but the spirit of grace and supplication is poured out (12:10).

In chapter thirteen the fountain in Jerusalem is opened for sin and uncleanness; idolatry, false prophets and those with unclean spirits shall pass out of the land (13:1-6).

Chapter fourteen announces the approach of the Day of the Lord with an assault on Zion, the intervention of the Lord, and men fleeing from an earthquake. This chapter deals with the fall of Jerusalem to the Romans in A.D. 70. This destruction came about because of the rejection of the Christ recorded in these chapters. The whole scene changes from great warfare to a transformed earth that ends with all worshipping Jehovah and all things dedicated to his service. Thus, chapter fourteen records the fall of Jerusalem and the glory of the New Jerusalem, the kingdom of Christ coming into its fulness.

The Book of Zechariah, as with all Bible books, fills an important place in the Old Testament canon, giving us information on the times, culture, history, needs, spirituality, and sins of the children of Israel and Judah after the Captivity. It provides a great and wonderful look at the Messiah—His leadership as Shepherd, His place as our King and High Priest, His sacrificial death, His atoning blood, His coming kingdom, and the New Jerusalem.

Zechariah and the New Testament

Zechariah offers greater influence on the Messianic picture of the N.T. than any other minor prophet.

1. Further enlarging upon Isaiah and Jeremiah's promise of the "Branch of Jesse (Isaiah 4:2; 11:1; 53:2; Jeremiah 23:5; 33:15; cf 2 Samuel 7:12f.) he points to the "Branch." (3:8; 6:12).
2. The priest/king lies back of the conception of the Messiah in the Epistle of Hebrews (6:13; Psalm 110).
3. The meek and lowly King (9:9; cf Matthew 21:4; John 12:15).
4. The King who reigns from sea to sea (9:10).
5. The betrayal (11:12f; cf Matthew 26:15; 27:9f); note the 30 pieces of silver and the potter's field.
6. Smite the shepherd (13:7; cf Matthew 26:31; Mark 14:27).

AN OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK OF ZECHARIAH

7. Him whom they pierced (12:10; John 19:37; Revelation 1:7).

8. The fountain for cleansing (13:1; Matthew 26:28).

Paul refers to Zechariah with the demand that everyone speak truth to his neighbor (8:16; Eph 4:25).

The book of Revelation may find antecedent in: (1)

The four horsemen Rev 6:1-8, (2) The two olive trees Rev 11:4, (3) The candlestick and seven eyes Rev 1:12f.

(This section is from *The Minor Prophets*, Jack P. Lewis, pp 79-80, with some adaptation, ebd)

Lessons From Zechariah

A. When the work of the Lord is slowed down, a good preacher can get the people stirred up and working again.

B. Haggai and Zechariah are models of teamwork. All, whether young (Zechariah) or old (Haggai), have a job to do. Work in the church is not a competition nor place for envy and jealousy of what others are able to accomplish.

C. Are we as zealous in building up the church as those of Zechariah's day were in building the temple? Less? Do we need to get busy? Are our material blessings a hindrance or a help?

D. Some of the greatest preaching on Jesus is to be found in the Messianic prophecies which abound in the latter half of Zechariah—meditate, and preach on them.

Addenda #1

**REBUILDING THE TEMPLE
COORDINATING THE DATES
OF EZRA, HAGGAI, AND ZECHARIAH**

Emanuel Daugherty

1. Return under the leadership of Zerubbabel (536 B.C.)
2. Altar Set Up - 7 month, 1 Tishri (Oct) 536 (Ezra 3:1-7)
3. Work on Temple Begun - 2 months, Iyar-Zif, (May) 535 (Ezra 3:8-13)
4. Work Stopped by Opposition From the Samaritans (Ezra 4:1-24)
5. Haggai and Zechariah Begin Their Preaching 520 (Ezra 5:1-2)

AN OVERVIEW OF THE BOOK OF ZECHARIAH

Haggai	Zechariah
Prophecy ONE 6 mo. Elul (Sept 1) 520 Exhortation for Zerubbabel and Joshua to begin the work (1:1-15)	
Prophecy Two 7 mo. Tishri (Oct 21) 520 Builders encouraged (2:1-9)	
	Prophecy One 8 mo. Marchesvan (Nov) 520 Call to Repentance (1:1-6)
Prophecy Three 9 mo. Chislev (Dec 24) 520 Need to remove defilement (2:10-19)	
Prophecy Four 9 mo. Chislev (Dec 24) 520 Zerubbabel encouraged, a signet, God's chosen (2:20-23)	
	Prophecy Two 11 mo. Shebet (Feb.) 519 Series of Night Visions (1:7-6:8)
	Prophecy Three 9 mo. Chislev (Dec) 518 Questions About Fasting (Chapters 7 and 8)

TEMPLE REBUILDING COMPLETED

12 month Adar (March 3), 516 B.C. (Ezra 6:14-15)

Addenda #2

Helpful Books on Zechariah

Teaching the Minor Prophets through the years has enabled me to come across some volumes that one will find helpful in understanding this most difficult book. This listing of books is not intended to be complete nor to give wholesale endorsement of them.

Baron, David. *Rays of Messiah's Glory* (Zondervan Publishing: Grand Rapids, reprint)

Coffman, Burton. *Zechariah and Malachi* (A.C.U Press: Abilene, TX, 1983)

Gill, Clinton. *Minor Prophets, Micah to Malachi* (College Press: Joplin, MO, 1971)

Hailey, Homer. *A Commentary on the Minor Prophets* (Religious Supply Center, Inc: Louisville, KY)

.....*The Messiah of Prophecy to the Messiah on the Throne* (Religious Supply Center, Inc: Louisville, KY, 1995)

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Biographical Sketch

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HORSES AND CHARIOTS

Michael W. Mayo

As the book of Zechariah opens, one sees Zechariah admonishing the people to turn back to God and not to be like their fathers. Immediately after this brief admonition and warning, Zechariah relates his seven night visions. The first vision and the seventh vision will be under discussion in this lesson.

As one looks at the first and seventh visions which Zechariah had, it is important to have a little background about the state of Israel at that time. They have returned from captivity, but they have not yet returned to their former glory. The house of God has still not been rebuilt. At the same time, they look at the nations round about and they seem to be living in all their glory and unmolested. Discouraged by their own situation and the situation of the nations round about them they might well have sung the first two verses of the song *Farther Along... Tempted and tried we're oft made to wonder Why it should be thus all the day long, While there are others living about us, Never molested tho in the wrong. When death has come and taken our loved ones, It leaves our home so lonely and drear; Then do we wonder why others prosper, Living so wicked year after year.* Those words summarize the people's attitudes. They could not understand why even after coming back to Jerusalem they were still being oppressed. They could not understand why the city was still not rebuilt. They could not understand why the people round about them seemed to prosper. They were not motivated to rebuild the house of God. The problem was that even after the people had returned to their land, their hearts had not returned to God.

Two prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, work to motivate the people to rebuild. They want them to rebuild the house

of God and to rebuild their lives spiritually. Haggai motivated the people to begin the work and Zechariah kept them working in this time of discouragement. Zechariah's name means: God remembers. This is a very fitting name for a prophet who is letting the people know that God does remember you, He does love you, He will return you to your praise and honor, and He will punish the wicked nations.

The visions are given in apocalyptic writing. Due to this there are many opposing views as to what the individual parts of the visions mean. In spite of that, the message of the visions is quite clear. Due to space concerns, all the various views will not be discussed. While not neglecting the parts of the visions, the focus will be on the meaning of the visions.

Look first at what Haggai prophesied concerning the kingdoms of the world in chapter two verses twenty-one through twenty-three of the book that bears his name... ***Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I will shake the heavens and the earth; And I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms, and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen; and I will overthrow the chariots, and those that ride in them; and the horses and their riders shall come down, every one by the sword of his brother. In that day, saith the Lord of hosts, will I take thee, O Zerubbabel, my servant, the son of Shealtiel, saith the Lord, and will make thee as a signet: for I have chosen thee, saith the Lord of hosts.*** Here we see Haggai telling the people that the kingdoms of the world would be overthrown. Yet two months later as Zechariah has his first night vision, the nations are still at rest.

Zechariah's first vision is recorded in Zechariah 1:7-17. An angel came and talked with Zechariah and explains the vision. Zechariah saw a man on a red horse among myrtle trees in a bottom. Behind him were red,

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speckled, and white horses. Zechariah asks the angel who these are that he sees. The angel says that he will show him. The angel of the Lord is standing in the myrtle trees. He tells Zechariah that these are the ones that the Lord sent to walk to and fro in the earth. Those that were sent forth give their report to the angel of the Lord who is standing in the myrtle trees. They had gone to and fro and found the earth still and the nations at rest. The angel of the Lord prays a prayer for the people of Jerusalem and Judah. He asks how long would it be before mercy was shown to the people... they had been punished for their wickedness. The Lord answers through the angel that is talking to Zechariah. The answer is good and comforting. His mercy is going to be shown in the rebuilding of the temple, Jerusalem, and Judah. It is also going to be seen in His judgment against the nations. Zion would be redeemed from the oppression which it had been under and would be richly blessed.

The meaning of this vision is clear. While it may not have appeared so to the people of Jerusalem and Judah yet, God had already begun His work for them. The shaking of the kingdoms that Haggai prophesied about is going to take place. God had used the nations to punish Israel, yet the nations had tried to destroy Israel and now they would suffer in their turn. God's house, Jerusalem, and Judah would be rebuilt and the people would be richly blessed. The meaning is enhanced by looking at the symbolism. Horses here, in chapter six, and in Revelation six show God working in the world. A discussion of the color of the horses will be made when looking at the seventh vision. The place where the horses and the angel of the Lord meet is significant. Myrtle trees are very beautiful. They are ornamental trees. This represents God's beloved people, the Israelites. The fact that the myrtles are in a bottom or depression represents the condition that the land and people had fallen into at that time. Some have said that the angel

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of the Lord is Christ. Whether that be true or not, the angel of the Lord among the myrtles shows God's concern for His people. This vision shows not only that God is concerned about His people, but He is actively working for them and will bring them out of oppression and bless them richly. This vision would have given comfort, encouragement, and hope to the people, thus motivating them to build the temple and be God's people.

The seventh vision is recorded in Zechariah 6:1-8. This vision shows the judgment of God being poured out on the nations and God's Spirit being quieted. There is a very interesting contrast between the first vision and the seventh vision. In the first vision we saw the nations still and at rest, while God was upset concerning the state of His people. In the seventh vision we see the nations judged and God's Spirit quieted.

In the seventh vision Zechariah saw four chariots come out from between two mountains of brass. The horses that pulled the chariots were of different colors. One chariot was pulled by red horses, another by black, another by white, and another by grised and bay. They went forth to the north country and the south country executing the judgments of the Lord who rules all the earth. When they had executed their instructions from the Lord, the Spirit of the Lord was quieted.

Since the chariots go to geographic regions, north and south, it would seem that the two mountains of brass from which they come also represent a geographic region. Since the chariots go north and south the region being spoken of must be the region in between. When we look at a map of the Old Testament world we see that the land that lies between the north land and the south land is the land of the Israelites or more specifically Jerusalem. The place where God set His name and had His dwelling place. The chariots are issuing forth from the God of all the earth to do His

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bidding. Keil in his commentary on the minor prophets says that the mountains that are talked about are Zion and the Mount of Olives both of which are places where or from which the Lord judges the world (Zech. 14:4; Joel 3:16). The place between the two mountains is the valley of Jehoshaphat in which the Lord judges the nations (Joel 3:2-8). The chariots and their horses represent the judgments of God being passed on the nations. The colors of these horses correspond to the colors of the horses in Revelation and to the mission they have been given. In both cases God is seen to be active in the world. Although the meaning is slightly different due to the fact that the purpose is slightly different. In Revelation God is revealing His will to saints that are suffering. Here God is pouring out His judgments on the kingdoms of the world. Red represents violent death, probably in this case by war; whereas, in Revelation it represents the martyrdom of Christians. Black here represents famine; whereas, in Revelation it represents economic persecution of God's people. The grisled horses represent death by pestilence, plague, and wild beasts. Notice that the judgments that are symbolized by these three chariots are the same judgments that God said He was going to bring on Jerusalem for their wickedness (Ezekiel 14:21). The white horses represent the holiness of God's judgments and the victory of God over those who oppose Him. It is significant that the chariots with their horses go to the north and the south. To the north lies Babylon and to the south lies Egypt. Babylon and Egypt are both nations which held God's people in captivity. They are symbols for the wicked kingdoms of the world which set themselves in opposition to the Lord. One group of horses goes through the earth executing the judgment of God who is the Lord of all the earth. As these judgments are met out, God's Spirit is quieted.

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Zechariah 1:7-17; Zechariah 6:1-8; and Revelation 6:1-11 deal with the imagery of horses. In each case God's people are comforted, encouraged, and given hope. These passages of scripture show that God loves His people. They show that God is concerned about His people. They show that God is actively working on behalf of His people. They show that God is forgiving and merciful to His people. They show that God's people will be richly blessed. They show that those who oppose God will be justly rewarded for the wickedness that they have done. Truly these passages give comfort, hope, encouragement, and motivation to the people of God.

In the imagery of the horse one sees both the goodness and severity of God. Note what Paul said about the goodness and severity of God in Romans 11:22... ***Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward thee, goodness, if thou continue in his goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off.*** God is both good and severe. He is good to those who walk in goodness, but He is severe to those who do not. It is easy to see the severity of God in the imagery of the horse. In the book of Job, God humbles Job by questions which he cannot answer and by illustrations of things that Job could not do nor control. One of the illustrations that God uses is that of a warhorse. God asks Job if he had given the horse his strength. Then God describes the power and fierceness of the warhorse. It is no wonder that God chose the imagery of the horse to describe His judgments going throughout the earth. However, the goodness of God can also be seen in the imagery of the horse. Notice how the psalmist describes Christ in Psalm 45:3-8... ***Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty. And in thy majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things. Thine arrows are***

sharp in the heart of the king's enemies; whereby the people fall under thee. Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre. Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad. The Psalmist describes Christ as riding forth in majesty and prosperity. He describes the Christ riding forth for truth, meekness, and righteousness. Truly in this one can see the goodness of God in the imagery of the horse.

When talking about the imagery of horses, one other passage needs to be discussed. In Revelation 19:11-21, there is a picture of the victorious Christ and His people. All are mounted on white horses. One sees the goodness and severity of God in this passage as well as the others that have been mentioned. Note what John saw... *And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he hath on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS. And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather*

yourselves together unto the supper of the great God; That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great. And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army. And the beast was taken, and with him the false prophet that wrought miracles before him, with which he deceived them that had received the mark of the beast, and them that worshipped his image. These both were cast alive into a lake of fire burning with brimstone. And the remnant were slain with the sword of him that sat upon the horse, which sword proceeded out of his mouth: and all the fowls were filled with their flesh.

Here one sees the goodness of God in that Christ wins the victory, yet those that are with Him are also victorious. One also sees the severity of God in the fierceness of His wrath.

The imagery of the horse is beautiful because it shows that God is active in the world. It gives comfort, because God is concerned about His people. It gives encouragement, because God is actively working on behalf of His people. It gives hope, because God is going to bring victory to His people. It gives justice, because God is going to repay the wicked for their wickedness. Let us each take comfort, encouragement, and hope from God's horses.

Biographical Sketch

Michael Mayo received a B.S. Degree in Bible with an emphasis on missions from David Lipscomb College in Nashville, Tennessee. While at Lipscomb, Michael married the former Luanne Eli of Nashville, Tennessee. They have three children: Miles, Shaphan, and Rebekah. Michael worked five and a half years on the mission field in Australia. On his return to the States, he worked with the

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“JEHOVAH WAS SORE DISPLEASED WITH OUR FATHERS”

Donnie S. Barnes

Lesson Text: Zechariah 1:2-6

Our lesson text is taken from the Zechariah 1:2-6 – “(1) In the eighth month of the second year of Darius, the word of the LORD came to Zechariah the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet, saying, (2) The LORD has been very angry with your fathers. (3) Therefore say to them, Thus says the LORD of hosts: Return to Me, says the LORD of hosts, and I will return to you, says the LORD of hosts. (4) Do not be like your fathers, to whom the former prophets preached, saying, Thus says the LORD of hosts: Turn now from your evil ways and your evil deeds. But they did not hear nor heed Me, says the LORD. (5) Your fathers, where are they? And the prophets, do they live forever? (6) Yet surely My words and My statutes, Which I commanded My servants the prophets, Did they not overtake your fathers?”

Background

The Book of Zechariah is the 38th book in the Bible, 38th book in the Old Testament, 16th of 17 books of prophecy, and the 11th of 12 Minor Prophets books. It bears the name of its author. Zechariah was a popular name shared by no less than twenty-nine Old Testament characters. Like his predecessors, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, Zechariah was of priestly lineage as the son of Berechiah and grandson of Iddo. According to Zechariah 2:4, Zechariah was called to prophesy at an early age in 520 B.C. He was born in Babylon and brought to Palestine by his father when the Jewish exiles returned under Zerubbabel and Joshua the high priest, the first of three

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returns, this one occurring in 536 B.C. The second return would be led by Ezra some eighty years later, and the third return under the leadership of Nehemiah some 12 years after the second. Among the prophets, he was a younger contemporary of Haggai. According to statements made by our Lord in Matthew 23:35, Zechariah was “murdered between the temple and the altar” in the same way that an earlier Zechariah (son of Jehoiada) was martyred according to 2 Chronicles 24:20-21.

The Book of Zechariah relates historically to the rebuilding of the temple and the re-establishment of the temple service. Construction on the second temple was begun in 536 B.C. but discontinued two years later in 534 B.C. The work was resumed fourteen years later in 520 B.C. and completed six years thereafter in 516 B.C. The rebuilding of the temple involved six years of actual work done over a twenty-year period.

Zechariah uses a series of eight visions (1-6), four messages (7-8), and two burdens (9-14) to portray God’s future plans for His covenant people. The first eight chapters of Zechariah were written to encourage the remnant while they were rebuilding the temple. The last six chapters of the book were written after the completion of the temple to anticipate Israel’s coming Messiah.

The opening message of Zechariah appears to have come between Haggai’s 2nd and 3rd message, between verses 9 and 10 of Haggai 2, when work on the Temple was a little over a month along. Its apparent insignificance was disheartening many of the people. It is in this context that Zechariah warns against their evident rising tendency to return to the ways of their disobedient fathers, whose failures before God had brought them to their present pitiful condition.

A Great Question to Consider

In writing to the brethren in Rome, Paul said:

“Whatever things were written before were written for our learning, that we through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope” (Romans 15:4). This same principle is referenced in 1 Corinthians 10:6 when Paul wrote, “Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted.” Great lessons are to be learned from Old Testament events. God is God . . . man is man . . . sin is sin . . . obedience is obedience . . . disobedience is disobedience . . . faithfulness is faithfulness . . . and unfaithfulness is still unfaithfulness. A good question to ask when studying from the Old Testament is this: “What can I learn from this passage (or story) that will make me a better Christian this side of the cross?” With that question firmly in our minds, let us examine Zechariah 1:2-6.

Zechariah 1:1

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

The first word of the Lord to be addressed to the prophet came in the eighth month of the second year of the reign of Darius. That would make it about two months after Haggai’s first prophecy and the commencement of the rebuilding of the Temple in Jerusalem. Before the captivity the prophets dated their writings by the reigns of the kings of Judah and Israel. After the period of Babylonian captivity they dated their writings by the reigns of the kings of Persia to whom they were subjects. Such would be a reminder that Israel no longer had its own king. Sin and rebellion against God accompanied with a non-repentant attitude had brought that about. Sin changes things . . . sin changes circumstances . . . sin changes the present . . . sin changes the future . . . sin changes directions . . . sin changes history.

Zechariah 1:2

“The LORD has been very angry with your fathers.”

Verse two begins the message that God is sending to the people through Zechariah. The King James renders the passage, “The Lord hath been sore displeased with your fathers.” Please observe that the Lord was not just “displeased,” but rather that He was “sore displeased.” He was displeased with displeasure with their fathers. He was displeased with their sins of:

1. Ingratitude
2. Idolatry
3. Iniquity
4. Rebellion in general.

The judgments of God upon those who had gone before these ex-exiles should have served as a warning for the present audience not to tread in their steps. In so doing God calls them to repentance. Repentance can turn a curse into a blessing.

They were home physically . . . but were they home spiritually? Now that they had returned from exile some 900 miles away, it was time to return to God. While God had helped them in the return from exile, their return to Him would have to be their decision. Already there were indications that when it came to the things of God that their priorities were being misplaced. String beginnings do not always assure strong endings. Under the leadership of Zerubbabel, the first group of exiles had arrived in 536. In that same year the work of rebuilding the house of God (the Temple) began. Two years into the project, the work stopped, and for the next 14 years the Temple remained in a state of inactivity and disrepair. While the people neglected God, they were not neglecting themselves and their physical needs and wants. They were repeating many of the

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same mistakes that their forefathers had made. That is apparent in our text.

The Bible records many occasions when people should have remembered but didn't. In Joshua 24:24, the people said, "The Lord God we will serve, and His voice we will obey." Two biblical chapters later we read in Judges 2:10 – "When all that generation had been gathered to their fathers, another generation arose after them who did not know the LORD nor the work which He had done for Israel." The last verse in that book says, "In those days there was no king in Israel; everyone did what was right in his own eyes" (Judges 21:25). Jeremiah was led to write "Has a nation changed its gods, which are not gods? But my people have changed their Glory for what does not profit" (Jeremiah 2:11).

Jeremiah was a heartbroken prophet with a heartbreaking message. He labored for more than forty years proclaiming a message of doom to the stiff-necked people of Judah. He calls for Judah's repentance before it is too late. Whereas the northern kingdom of Israel had been destroyed by Assyria in 722 B.C. and the southern kingdom of Judah has continued for another 117 years after that before being conquered and taken into Babylonian captivity beginning in 605 B.C., the people of the south had every opportunity to learn from the mistakes of their brethren in the north. Instead, prophet after prophet faithfully tried to summon their repentance for a longsuffering God, only to see Jerusalem captured, plundered, destroyed, and its leaders killed and the captives taken to Babylon. God raised up Ezekiel and Daniel in minister to give hope to the people in Babylon. God wanted the people to repent of their wickedness. In fact:

1. When Assyria began to rise to the status of a world power (about 900 B.C.), God sent Elijah and Elisha to help Israel.

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2. When God began to “cut off” Israel (2 Kings 10:32), God sent Joel, Jonah, Amos, Hosea, Isaiah, and Micah to reveal His will among the people.
3. After the Assyrian captivity of Israel, and the northern kingdom was no more, ten tribes were gone, God sent forth Zephaniah, Nahum, and Jeremiah in order to keep Judah from continuing to follow in the steps of Israel.
4. After Assyria fell in 607 B.C. and Babylon began to rise in its place, God sent Habakkuk and Obadiah to summon Judah to faithfulness.
5. Even after Judah fell to the Babylonians, God raised up Daniel and Ezekiel to provide hope for Judah’s deliverance and restoration once the seventy-year period of captivity ended.
6. After the fall of Babylon in 536 B.C., and the rise of Persia in its place, God raised up Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi to help the people not return to the mistakes of the past.

While God truly cared for His people, He knew that their history had been one of forgetting His goodness to them. While God had a future for His people the bridge from where they were to they needed to be was called faithfulness. No wonder God was “sore displeased” with their fathers . . . their fathers knew better but had failed to do better. What a powerful lesson for God’s people today! Because the Lord was very angry concerning the fathers, those then living needed to repent with sincerity of heart. The nation had experienced the severe anger of God at the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in 586 B.C. at the hand of Nebuchadnezzar and his Babylonian army. Those events were too fresh in their history to be forgotten.

Like them, let us not forget the great deliverance God has provided through the precious blood of Jesus Christ. Let us not forget the bondage that sin held for its captives,

and let us not forget the glorious freedom and spiritual blessings that are provided to us in Christ.

Zechariah 1:3

“Therefore say to them, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts: "Return to Me," says the LORD of hosts, and I will return to you," says the LORD of hosts.”

The then present was beginning to resemble the past that led God to be “sore displeased.” While the people had completed the first of what would be three returns over a total of some ninety-two years, returning to the Jerusalem did not insure that they would return to God. In Egypt Abraham’s descendents had become enamored with the things of the Egyptians. No doubt, to some extent, that would have been true for those in Babylon and Persia as well. Failure to remember good things may allow the memory of bad things to appear appealing. In emphatic language, Zechariah declares God’s displeasure with the fathers of their countrymen. It more than their neglect of the building of the Temple that distressed Him; it was their general spiritual outlook. Return from exile alone was not enough to please the Lord; they needed a heart return to the Lord. Their repentance would find God ready and willing to receive and bless. God had done so much . . . it was now time for them to do their part.

Zechariah 1:4

“Do not be like your fathers, to whom the former prophets preached, saying, 'Thus says the LORD of hosts: "Turn now from your evil ways and your evil deeds." ' But they did not hear nor heed Me," says the LORD.”

To “not be like your fathers” was to not make the mistakes they made, mistakes so grievous that God could not allow them to continue polluting His chosen people.

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This verse references a statement made by Isaiah as recorded in Isaiah 31:6 - "Return to Him against whom the children of Israel have deeply revolted." We read in 2 Chronicles 36:15-17 - "And the LORD God of their fathers sent warnings to them by His messengers, rising up early and sending them, because He had compassion on His people and on His dwelling place. (16) But they mocked the messengers of God, despised His words, and scoffed at His prophets, until the wrath of the LORD arose against His people, till there was no remedy. (17) Therefore He brought against them the king of the Chaldeans, who killed their young men with the sword in the house of their sanctuary, and had no compassion on young man or virgin, on the aged or the weak; He gave them all into his hand." What were their "fathers" doing? "Moreover all the leaders of the priests and the people transgressed more and more, according to all the abominations of the nations, and defiled the house of the LORD which He had consecrated in Jerusalem" (2 Chronicles 36:14). The Bible reveals a hard truth . . . "But they did not hear nor heed me."

Zechariah 1:5

"Your fathers, where are they? And the prophets, do they live forever?"

What were the effects of the word, which God spoke to them by his prophets? The preachers died. . . and the hearers died . . . but the word of God died not. It never has and it never will! Israel has been destroyed and ruined in the bloody wars with the Assyrians; and Judah, in those with the Chaldeans. They also, who spoke unto their fathers, were dead. Nonetheless, their predictions remained; and the events, which had taken place according to those predictions, proved that God had sent them. It was important that the ex-exiles listen better than their fathers had, and heed and obey the words of God.

Zechariah 1:6

“Yet surely My words and My statutes, which I commanded My servants the prophets, did they not overtake your fathers? So they returned and said: Just as the LORD of hosts determined to do to us, according to our ways and according to our deeds, so He has dealt with us.”

Man is mortal, but God's words and statutes are undying. Though the former generation was gone, subsequent events revealed the truth of the message of God in the judgments that befell Israel for disobedience. God fulfilled every prediction to the letter. Zechariah's contemporaries needed to learn the lessons of history, and decide to obey God implicitly.

Lessons & observations from Zechariah 1:1-6

1. Sin serves as a reminder that both its lessons and its consequences are not limited to one generation.
2. The people of this generation may be new . . . but their sins aren't.
3. Question: “Is God displeased with your life, or is He “sore displeased? with it?” The answer depends upon your faithfulness or lack thereof.
4. The judgments of the past should be a warning for the present . . .and for the future.
5. Repentance is a prerequisite for pleasing God.
6. Physically you are here, but where are you spiritually?
7. Being in a church service does not guarantee worship.
8. The failure to remember the failures of the past may be to invite them to return again.
9. The power of a faithful earthen vessel that contains a spiritual message. The prophets into which the messages of God were put have gone the way of all the earth in death. Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 4:7 –

“But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.” The treasure is put into earthen vessels . . . the water of life into earthen pitchers, often cracked, and brought home broken at last. While the vessel may die, the treasure will live on.

The failure of a few may pollute the faithfulness of many.

Biographical Sketch

Donnie S. Barnes was born in South Pittsburgh, TN, and grew up in Bridgeport, AL. He and his wife Elizabeth have three children and two grandchildren. He has earned a Bachelor of Arts degree from David Lipscomb College, a Master of Arts in Social Work degree from the University of Tennessee, and a Doctor of Theology degree from Trinity theological Seminary. He has served on the faculties of Freed-Hardeman University and Lipscomb University. He has served congregations in Tennessee, Florida, and South Carolina. He presently serves the Myrtle Beach church of Christ as its minister and one of its four elders. Since 1971, he has been involved with the Lord’s work in Israel, concentrating in Nazareth, Eilaboun, and other villages and cities in the Galilee. He is the author of *Paul – Hebrew of the Hebrew* and a tract entitled *Are You A Member of the Church you can Read About in the Bible?* He specializes in preparing Bible charts, and is currently developing a number of volumes including *The Old Testament*, *The New Testament*, *The Bible*, *The Church*, *The Cross of Christ*, *The Godhead*, *The Christ*, and *The Christian & Spiritual Growth*. Other subjects are in the planning stages. He enjoys preparing materials designed to help people better understand the Bible.

HORNS AND SMITHS

Neal Pollard

Zechariah 1:18-21

The Context

The context of this passage is set by the stated message given to Zechariah in the second verse of the book. God reviews His attitude toward Zechariah's brethren's forefathers, whose wholesale rejection of Him led them to seventy years of retributive punishment at the hands of Babylon. In fact, God calls King Nebuchadnezzar His servant (Jeremiah 25:9; 27:6; 43:10) to mete out punishment because of Judah's idolatry. Now, in chapter one, God is extending hope and direction to His post-exilic people, encouraging them to pick up their tools and rebuild the temple. As a contemporary of the motivating prophet Haggai, Zechariah through lofty and complex visions spurs his brethren to recognize God's hand of providence in allowing them the opportunity to serve Him once more in restoring, in some form, what they had lost to the heathen nations.

In the first chapter of Zechariah, God's message is consistently comforting. His angel spoke comforting words to Zechariah (1:13). The meaning of the first night vision is comforting to Jerusalem and Zion and threatening to her enemies (1:14-15). The second vision, that of the four horns and four carpenters, is likewise comforting. The craftsman (carpenters) "have come to terrify [the horns], to throw down the horns of the nations who have lifted up their horns against the land of Judah in order to scatter it" (1:21b). That is good news for the remnant Jews. It is a statement from God avowing His assistance and protection in their post-exilic work.

The Symbols

Zechariah's writing is characterized throughout by rich symbolism. Though great application is to be found in each of the eight visions, as will be done later in this lesson, Page Kelley is likely right when he says,

The visions are somewhat like parables in that each one carries a central truth. This should caution us against giving undue attention to the minor details of the visions, many of which are obscure and have defied interpretation.¹

The particular symbols of this third of eight visions illuminate the meaning of the vision. The first symbol is the four horns (1:18). Lewis, drawing on Micah 4:13, which in part says, "Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion: for I will make thine horn iron...and thou shalt beat in pieces many people..." asserts that the horn is a symbol of power.² The exact power referenced by Zechariah is determined clearly by context. They are the "horns of the Gentiles" which "have scattered Judah" (1:21). Undoubtedly, this refers to the oppressing nations like Babylon and Assyria.³ C.F. Keil sees in these four horns the four succeeding world empires,

¹

² Jack P. Lewis. *The Minor Prophets* (Henderson, TN: Hester Pub., 1966), p. 76.

³ In this vein, Adam Clarke has a very insightful thought. He writes that these horns denote "four powers by which the Jews had been oppressed; the Assyrians, Persians, Chaldeans, and Egyptians. Or these enemies may be termed *four*, in reference to the *four cardinal points of the heavens*, whence they came: 1. NORTH. The Assyrians and Babylonians. 2. EAST. The Moabites and Ammonites. 3. SOUTH. The Egyptians. 4. WEST. The Philistines" (*Clarke's Commentary, Vol. 4* (Nashville: Abingdon, nd), p. 770).

thus regarding Zechariah as addressing the same theme as Daniel.⁴

The other principle symbol is that of the four craftsmen. There is no significance in the number four here, as it is with the number of horns. It seems that Zechariah's usage of the number with regard to the workmen is to say that God's power is equal to—of course even exceeding—the power exerted by the heathen nations against Judah. Thus, the number four here negates the number of horns, also four. The import of this symbol is the action taken by the craftsmen. They terrify them and throw them down. Through His providential working, often through the instrument of succeeding nations coming into world dominance, God released Judah from the retribution incurred by the “seventy years” of captivity (cf. Zechariah 1:12).

The symbolism, then, reveals the following. Heathen nations had scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem. Israel's identity had been destroyed in Assyrian Captivity. Jerusalem had been thoroughly ransacked by Nebuchadnezzar in 586 B.C., and was now in dire need of further repair and restoration. Judah had lost many of its inhabitants in the onslaught of three waves of Babylonian Captivity. Yet, God promises the remnant that remains relief. Though history reveals that the Jews in Palestine would remain in subjugation to the overarching rule of the world powers, Darius and successors allowed them to reoccupy their homeland. Thus, they remained there on through the time of the life, death, and resurrection of Christ.

⁴ C.F. Keil and F. Delitzsch. *Commentary on the Old Testament, Vol. 10b* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), p. 239.

The Application

Certainly, contextual application must be of primary importance. The application for Judah in the sixth century B.C., as one has put it, is “teaching that Israel’s foes have finally through war destroyed themselves, and that there is no longer any opposition to the building of God’s house.”⁵ God, working through time and events, kept His promise of preserving Abraham’s seed so as to have a vehicle (the Jewish nation) with which to bring Christ into the world to bless all nations thereby (cf. Genesis 22:18; Galatians 3:8). Now, under the leadership of reformers like Ezra, Nehemiah, Haggai, and Zechariah, the work of rebuilding the temple and the wall and restoring the practice of the old law could occur.

However, principles from the context are relevant to the church today. The church faces pressures and opposition from many places today. It faces opposition from peoples coming from all Four Corners of the world. It faces opposition from many types of philosophies—humanism, hedonism, evolution, atheism, polytheism, and universalism. It faces opposition from all types of false doctrines, propagated in the name of Jesus. It faces opposition, sadly, at times from within the church. This opposition is stiff and widespread. It has done damage to the kingdom of God throughout the ages. Despite this, God’s power is equal to the challenge. Ultimately, all opposition will be overthrown (1 Corinthians 15:24; Philippians 2:9-11). Any opposition in this life can be met and overcome by prayer, study, faithfulness, and faith (Romans 8:31; Philippians 4:13). All the while, there is work to be done in continuing the restoration of the kingdom. Each generation, like Isaac’s servants (cf.

⁵ George L. Robinson. *The Twelve Minor Prophets* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1979), p. 150.

Genesis 26:18), must re-dig the wells of sound doctrine concerning issues like acceptable worship, the role of women in the church, the plan of salvation, the purity of God's law of marriage, divorce, and remarriage, the limits of fellowship, and the like. When the local church and the church universal put forth such efforts, the powers of opposing forces are met and gains are made for Christ and the church. As God has promised to supply every need (Philippians 4:19), this should provide God's people with comfort and consolation in doing their duty serving Him.

Biographical Sketch

Neal, host of the television program God's Wonderful Word, is the proud husband of Kathy and proud father of three boys, Gary, Dale, and Carl. His father, brother, and brother-in-law, as well as several uncles, all currently preach. Neal has preached for the Cold Harbor Road congregation, Mechanicsville, VA, since 1994. Neal has preached in meetings, lectureships, youth rallies, and other opportunities in fifteen states and Ukraine.

HAGGAI COMPARED TO ZECHARIAH

Dan Kessinger

TWO PROPHETS JOIN JUDAH'S STRUGGLE

Aside from the guidance of God, one cannot begin to suitably account for this era of history. Though these are real historical events, to simply learn and list them falls far short of their true significance, unparalleled in man's history. This purposeful unfolding in the warnings, destruction, decree, repopulation, and rebuilding of Jerusalem fairly shout the name of the Almighty to all who listen. It was precisely according to Divine plan.

When the Lord brought back the captivity of Zion, We were like those who dream. (2) Then our mouth was filled with laughter, And our tongue with singing. Then they said among the nations, "The Lord has done great things for them." (3) The Lord has done great things for us, {Whereof} we are glad. (4) Bring back our captivity, O Lord, As the streams in the South. (5) Those who sow in tears Shall reap in joy. (6) He who continually goes forth weeping, Bearing seed for sowing, Shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, Bringing his sheaves {with him}. (Psa 126)

Into this heroic struggle, God accelerates his own involvement. He has been in charge even in those dark days of Jerusalem's fall; has continued to guard the remnant and oversee the fulfillment of his promises. But since the days of Jeremiah, there had been no prophet in the land (though Daniel and Ezekiel were speaking elsewhere). If there had

been prophets, they did not write their words for future generations.

To understand these two prophets, one must be familiar with the world into which they were born. Through disobedience, Judah had lost all that was precious to her.

Historical Setting

Josiah's reign illustrates the attitude which brought about Judah's fall. Though led by the great reformer, the people served Yahweh because of royal decree, not because it was right. Punishment was by then inevitable due to his grandfather Manasseh's sins, and because his well intended reforms were too shallow and came too late.

Surely at the commandment of the Lord
{this} came upon Judah, to remove {them}
from His sight because of the sins of
Manasseh, according to all that he had done,
and also because of the innocent blood that
he had shed; for he had filled Jerusalem with
innocent blood, which the Lord would not
pardon. (II Ki. 24:3-4)

The site of Josiah's death is also significant to the student of apocalyptic literature, as Megiddo is forever marked it as a place of crushing defeat and death.

"In that day there shall be a great mourning
in Jerusalem, like the mourning at Hadad
Rimmon in the plain of Megiddo. (Zec.
12:11)

Josiah's reign was the last that could be viewed in any positive light. During the subsequent weak and ineffective administrations of his successors, Judah suffered the indignation of being a vassal state and suffering increasingly decimating deportations. Though these were damaging, the climactic terror was still to come in 586. Though the devastated skeletal government suffered a fourth deportation in 582 (Jer. 52:30), it was 586's utter

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destruction of the city that proved to be the ultimate symbol of having fallen so completely from God's favor. With the Babylonians came ruin, slaughter, slavery, and destruction of God's dwelling place. In the face of such unmerciful onslaught, many prayed to a God who no longer was listening.

If the Jews' ascendance as a nation was unlikely, revival after captivity was absurd. So it is without the God of mercy and hope. But hope was incredibly still in the picture, because the God of heaven rules in earthly kingdoms. The land rested and was cleansed from moral pollution according to God's schedule. (II Chr. 36:21)

After proud Babylon inexplicably fell without a shot being fired, the decree of conquering Cyrus came almost immediately (Ezra 1:2-4). A grand chapter thus opens in the story of these fallen. Under Zerubbabel and Jeshua the priest, the altar is erected and used according to Moses' command (Ezra 3:2). On the second month of the second year, the Temple was dedicated. (Ezra 3:10-13)

After this promising beginning, the work stagnated for two reasons. First, there was opposition from both enemies and others who were misled concerning the legality of this work (Ezra 5:3-17). The more devastating reason was that the people had lost interest in God's house. It is at this point that God's presence will be felt in a more direct fashion than providential care. To change the minds of the people God brings his own unique weapon to the fray: the truth. In order to lead the people, God sends men, but not just any; they are his men. God did not send a king, a general, a psychologist, or an expert in ergonomics. God sent two preachers.

Then the prophet Haggai and Zechariah the son of Iddo, prophets, prophesied to the Jews who {were} in Judah and Jerusalem, in

the name of the God of Israel, { who was }
over them. (Ezra 5:1)

Both prophets were dealing with invaluable principles for weathering the gathering storms which would send lightning bolts into Judah. Soon the Jews in Palestine would suffer from Greek, and later Roman persecution. Whether or not such prophecies as those especially expressed by Zechariah can be demonstrated to be focused on those times is immaterial. Challenges to the identity and survival of God's people were subject to this constant principle: those who would follow God must endure.

"Prophets"

Haggai and Zechariah were part of a unique godly lineage, though we read of other prophets from sacred and profane sources. Though there are similarities between God's prophets and the Near East diviners, these are superficial. The prophets of God were men of unique character, courage, and consistency. These factors were most notable when prophets were outnumbered, unpopular or in peril (I Kings 18:21-39 and 22:11-24 illustrate differences between legitimate prophets and others).

Three Hebrew words are translated "prophet," none of which means "prognosticator" primarily. They are "Nabhi," "Ro'eh," and "Chozeh," largely interchangeable, though the specifics differ. The first is usually translated "prophet" or "spokesman," while the latter two are usually rendered "seer." Prophecy is a two-part process, consisting of reception (seeing) and proclamation (speaking). Some speak without having seen (Deut. 18:18-22), while others see without speaking (Isaiah 30:9-10); when either is lacking, a prophet is rejected. Since he is a "Nabhi" or spokesman, his voice is to be heeded as that of God. In Exodus 4:15-16, Aaron is designated Moses' Nabhi because of the latter's speech problems. God's prophet was Moses, but Moses' prophet was Aaron. Prediction is commonly

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associated with prophecy because God's spokesmen accurately and routinely foretold the future, providing proof of legitimacy.

Zechariah means "he whom God remembers," a name shared with 27 other Old Testament characters. He is the son of Baruchiah and the grandson of Iddo. He is also called the "son" rather than grandson of Iddo, perhaps because he was an orphan raised by his grandfather. Haggai means "festive one" either because of the joy expressed at his birth, or perhaps because he was born on a holiday. In both cases, the prophets' names can be understood as typical of their work.

Both books are dated explicitly, and the dates virtually coincide. Haggai's first section is dated in late August, 520 B.C., the second section in October of the same year. Zechariah 1:1-6 was revealed in November of 520 B.C. The last section of Haggai was revealed the following month, while Zechariah's prophecies continued through at least February of 519.¹

Both Haggai's and Zechariah's prophecies are focused upon the immediate problems of restoration in Jerusalem. They were sent to encourage the builders of the Temple, though each message is unique. The two messages are a perfect contrast in style, and a perfect compliment in content.

The difference in the two prophets seems to be this, that while Haggai's task was chiefly to rouse the people to the outward task of building the Temple, Zechariah took up the prophetic labours just where Haggai had left it, and sought to lead the people to a complete spiritual change, one of the fruits of which would of necessity be increased zeal in the building of God's House, the

completion of which he witnessed four years later.²

Neither prophet sought this stage, they were called. God's purpose was definite and definitive, as it is in every age. These spokesmen proclaimed God's own great character, and the spiritual issues which challenge His sovereignty. Whether men recognize his authority or not, God intends to dominate every age of the history of this earth. Through obedience to the words of God's men, the survivors would find hope.

THE TEXT CONTRASTED

As we have previously noted, the Prophecy of Haggai was extraordinarily direct. However, it is a grave error to label externals, thus less spiritual. Being led by the spirit of God has always had tangible evidence, and so it was with those who heeded Haggai. After all, why would they obey and build unless they believed it was God's will for them?

Haggai consists of four separate oracles, revealing seven distinct and simple themes. In chapter one, we find the call to rebuild and the condemnation of those who had allowed the word to languish while they built fine houses for themselves. They seemed to have fallen prey to procrastination (1:2) and to worldly priorities (1:4-6). Haggai shows the folly of not putting God first by threatening to bring even physical consequences upon them.

The second theme is that God is with the people, especially with his chosen vessels, Zerubbabel and Jeshua. The third theme concerns the Temple they were building. So far as in riches and in splendor, it would never compare with the Temple Solomon built. Did that make it inconsequential? The Lord promises to shake the earth, and to bring an even greater glory to the Earth through this austere (by comparison) Temple.

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In theme four, Haggai asks if the unholy can be made holy by associating with holy things. Actually, holy things are defiled by such associations. He asks this question in order to call the people to live so that their offerings might not be defiled by their lives. Theme five is a promise from God to bless a people unaccustomed to temporal blessings. In the sixth theme, God again promises to shake the Heavens and Earth, and in the seventh and final theme, declares Zerubbabel a chosen signet ring for himself.

There are two sections in Haggai that we feel safe in declaring Messianic, both of which contain the "shaking the earth" analogy. In the first, it is difficult not to see the "latter Temple" (2:9) having reference to God's spiritual temple, the Church. Though some see the fulfillment in the fact that the savior of mankind saw and worshiped in this very temple, the plurality of "desire" in v. 7 does not suggest this interpretation.³ Rather, then it is in the spiritual temple of Jesus' construction.

Even more clear is the reference to the declaration of God's name through the signet ring Zerubbabel. If indeed this is Messianic, it makes Zerubbabel a type of Christ, and the fact that Jesus descended from him is significant indeed.

In Haggai we learn that worldliness is a daily struggle, that individual decisions and priorities are important to God. We further see ordinary men who are doing God's work, the details of which seemed mundane. Nonetheless they are God's chosen vessels for their obedience. Likewise, Temple is glorious even though it pales in comparison to other structures. Concerning temporal daily blessings, we ought to trust God to defend his people and see to their needs. Finally, there is a promise of a grand declaration of Himself on Earth.

Zechariah, on the other hand is much more complex in content. The apocalyptic style in which it is partially

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written is characterized by highly figurative imagery and extensive use of word pictures depicting a cataclysmic and climactic struggle, ending in battle between the forces of good and evil. The odds are stacked heavily in favor of evil, and what appeared bad then becomes worse. But in the end, good triumphs over evil.

Though much of Zechariah includes the heightened use of imagery, the last section elevates this use of figurative symbols in true apocalyptic style. Zechariah is replete with imagery later seen in John's Apocalypse, but not all of the book should be seen as primarily apocalyptic. Blurring these will cause a reader to over-interpret and misapply symbols primarily intended for Jews of 520 B.C.

Apocalyptic literature arises in the face of some grave danger. Though human eyes may see the external crises, and despair over the hopelessness of the situation, the real crisis is within. This is true whether we are dealing with rebuilding after Babylonians, the invasion of Titus, or facing first and second century persecution. In each of these cases, the real problem (and solution) was spiritual, not political. As well, these examples are seen as great cosmic disturbances based on their importance in the eyes of God.

Zechariah assumes the inevitable success of the project at hand. But this glory is not based on the plans of men, but because God blesses these efforts. The true glorious future is seen in the coming Messiah. Though blessed by God and glorified, these good leaders would meet their reward; the temple was never intended to stand forever. But the great BRANCH of God and his Temple were different.

Hear, O Joshua, the high priest, you and
your companions who sit before you, for
they are a wondrous sign; for behold, I am
bringing forth My Servant the BRANCH.
(Zec. 3:8)

Zechariah has been the subject of much misinterpretation at the hands of premillennialists. These view such a book as virtually irrelevant for any but one generation, our own. This grievous error results in the millennium being found on virtually every page of scripture.

A deeper study of the Sacred Volume dissipates this false prejudice and reveals the fact that not only are "The Thousand Years" of which John speaks found everywhere in both Testaments, but that next to the eternal state, the Millennial Blessedness of God's people of earth, and of the nations, is the one high point in all prophecy, from Moses to John, the bright broad tableland of all eschatology.⁴

The above "evidence" is sufficient to reject premillennialism. If the thousand year reign is only mentioned once, one should interpret it in light of the whole Bible, not the other way around.

The lessons of these prophets are valuable, far beyond the limiting interpretation. There are still those who think that by diligent search they may find in advance in the prophets what they will read in the papers tomorrow. They search for automobiles, atomic bombs, airplanes, tire rationing, and the rise of world dictators....[T]his author is convinced that they read these things into the prophets instead of out of them. He is convinced that this approach is a frame of mind that tends to blind the student to the true and lasting values in the prophets. It leaves the prophet's message a puzzle to the

prophet's hearers rather than being a revelation to them.⁵

The prominence of Messianic prophecy in Zechariah shows primary application to the end of time to be fallacious and dangerous. One must minimize the centrality of the incarnation, the planned power of His death and resurrection in order to apply Zechariah to the end of time. Yet, this is error is common. In a bizarre twist, dispensationalists reject the kingdom which shall stand forever (Dan. 2:44) in favor of the one which waxeth old and decayeth (Heb. 8:13). Oswald Allis called this "a great anomaly in dispensational teaching."⁶ He also wrote

They hold that the kingdom promises are earthly, vastly inferior to the heavenly promises of the Church; yet they insist that it is these earthly promises only which Israel the nation has any claim upon or may ever hope to receive, that the earthly kingdom and the heavenly Church can never become one. It is this attitude, we believe, that deserves to be characterized by the word "robbery." It robs Israel of her true destiny and glory by excluding her from the Church of God. By insisting that her heritage is earthly, it robs her of that better portion which is heavenly.⁷

Aside from the interpretations concerns, Zechariah teaches us of the absolute certainty of God's eventual success. God's control over the future is made certain regulated by his faithfulness to his children, and his position as the master of past present and future.

(as it is written, "I have made you a father of many nations") in the presence of Him whom he believed, {even} God, who gives

life to the dead and calls those things which do not exist as though they did; (Ro. 4:17)

COMMON THEMES

Memory

It is important to know that I ought to remember, and that God always will. Knowing the truth about God's unfailing memory moves us to serve Him acceptably with reverence and fear. But with the passing of time comes a dimming of the once known and treasured. God's children often behave as though He will forget sin rather than forgive it; they despair, assuming he has forgotten their faithfulness.

Memory was a watch-word throughout the history of Israel, as God repeatedly implored his people to remember, but Israel forgot God in action rather than mind. There is little danger of falling into abject ignorance of events, but many conduct their lives as though they never knew God. Few would ever proclaim "God is dead," but many declare it through faithless living.

(8) For if these things are yours and abound,
{ you will be } neither barren nor unfruitful in
the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. (9)
For he who lacks these things is
shortsighted, even to blindness, and has
forgotten that he was purged from his old
sins. (II Pet. 1:8-9)

The Bible, and pointedly Zechariah, portrays the God who never forgets. He remembers offenses of the past, but he remembers his covenant. He remembers Zion, and he also remembers the haters of his children. He who never forgets has engraved the names of the faithful in stone, and they are "the apple of his eye" (2:8).

Likewise Haggai calls his audience to remember their true purpose as returnees to the promised land. By their misplaced priorities in building, they were living as if they

had never known it. Likewise, he assures them that God has not forgotten his children by saying simply "I am with you" (1:13).

Memory of The Holy City

The city of Jerusalem receives special treatment in both of these books, as one might well expect. In the near future of Zechariah 8, there is much to be envied. In contrast to the painful memories of those old enough to have lived through the disastrous events of 586, Jerusalem is a city of peace and safety.

(4) "Thus says the Lord of hosts: 'Old men and old women shall again sit in the streets of Jerusalem, each one with his staff in his hand because of great age. (5) The streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in its streets.'" (Zec. 8:4-5)

A large city safe enough for old people and children to relax in a public park without fear (rare in our own time) is a great blessing. But for Jews who had known the days of alarm and siege, the very idea of such security must have been phenomenal.

"Thus says the Lord of hosts: 'If it is marvelous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in these days, will it also be marvelous in My eyes?' says the Lord of hosts.'" (Zec. 8:6)

The Lord's question demands answer. It is not whether one feels secure, it is whether one really is secure. Only one whose future is secure in the hands of God almighty can know the peace which passeth understanding, while even the most optimistic unbeliever must find he has spent his life "whistling through the graveyard." Our Lord slept while the storm raged, not because of his eternal optimism, but because of faith in His Father.

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So even as God reveals a bright future, He demands recognition of the source of such blessing. It is He; it is His memory. Just as the return was planned and executed by providence, so must rebuilding be seen as the work of his hand. If this future is not marvelous in God's eyes, it is doomed.

Unless the Lord builds the house, They labor in vain who build it; Unless the Lord guards the city, The watchman stays awake in vain.
(Psa. 127:1)

Haggai focuses on promises of abundance in the near future. Though there had been all kinds of want in the past, God would send blessings if the people would but put Him first. The city would be a place of prosperity if the people would but repent (2:15-19).

Remember The Name of the Lord

To know the name of the Lord is not a "Shibboleth" test, nor mysticism, nor academic knowledge; it is faith led by knowledge. Consider God's words to Moses, "I appeared to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, as God Almighty, but {by} My name, Lord, I was not known to them. (Ex. 6:3). It was by writing a detailed account of the will of God that Moses knew him by his name. Judah before the conquest knew not God's name. They knew an entity named "Yahweh," but his law was an irrelevant inconvenience! They knew the names of many gods, and yet they knew nothing of God, and certainly refused to honor him alone. This syncretism is absolute evidence that they did not remember the name of their savior. Because in the Bible, remembering is recalling and acting on one's memory.

(23) Now it happened in the process of time that the king of Egypt died. Then the children of Israel groaned because of the bondage, and they cried out; and their cry came up to God because of the bondage.

(24) So God heard their groaning, and God remembered His covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob. (Ex. 2:23-24)

Three texts from Zechariah forcibly proclaim the name of the Lord to the remnant. First there is the engraving of "Holiness to the Lord" on the bells of the horses and upon vessels (14:20-21), an inscription previously seen on the Turban of Aaron.⁸ But why are these significant?

In this case, horses signified an avenging army. Though the context of Ch. 14 is an apocalypse, if there is vengeance, it is God's. Moreover, we find "Holiness To the Lord" on sacred and profane vessels. Therefore the purpose of these horses is less important than knowing that God's purpose is accomplished through His name's declaration. In both battle and peace, Yahweh's name is proclaimed. In events which are momentous and mundane, God's name will be honored.

There are two other related texts which suggest the proclamation of the Lord's name, both involving the High Priest Joshua. After this morally frail human is dressed in God's righteousness, he and his companions are called a sign of the coming BRANCH. In ch. 4, Jeshua and Zerubbabel are pictured in a vision of two olive trees, with a branch from each dripping oil into a golden bowl of anointing.

While it is certainly true that this vision proclaimed God's approval of these men and their work, there is much more. It may be that the name Jeshua, (another form of the name "Jesus") is a pre-cursor of the Messiah. And while Zerubbabel was not a literal king, he approximated one politically. And while Joshua was a priest after the order of Aaron, he typified the priesthood of Christ.

In his own brief way, Haggai teaches the same lesson. Though brief, his message is emphatic in declaration of the name of the Lord.

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The most striking feature in Haggai's message is its repeated claim of Divine origin: 5 times in the 38 verses of his prophecies, he tell us that 'the word of Jehovah came' unto him...4 times also, he used the formula 'thus saith the Lord of hosts...and 4 times simply 'saith Jehovah'...Altogether he uses the exalted phrase 'Jehovah of hosts' 14 times, besides 19 repetitions of the single but ineffable name Jehovah...⁹

The declaration of the name of God is further seen in Zerubbabel, who is called God's signet ring.

'In that day,' says the Lord of hosts, 'I will take you, Zerubbabel My servant, the son of Shealtiel,' says the Lord, 'and will make you as a signet {ring;} for I have chosen you,' says the Lord of hosts." (Hag. 2:23)

The image of the signet ring, the ancient means of declaring ownership, is striking indeed. With the greatest of clarity, God has stamped on Zerubbabel. With such a personal signature on a man, It is difficult not to apply the true fulfillment of this declaration to be the incarnation of Jesus.

whose minds the god of this age has blinded,
who do not believe, lest the light of the
gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the
image of God, should shine on them. (II
Cor. 4:4)

Those who remember God's name are compelled to declare it through the story of his son, even as God chose to declare his name by the mighty works of Jesus. By the memory of the Lord's name would this house be built, and by declaring God's name to all nations would His great spiritual house be built.

Remember The Words of The Lord

There is yet another declaration of the memory of God which bears investigation. One must conclude that a memory of God's law and covenant is needed along with His name. God always remembers, but men forget because of human limitations and character flaws. God sets forth his covenant as proof of his faithfulness, and his laws in a call to obedience. To the Jews of the dispersion, both were desperately needed.

There are four principles of the memory of God's words taught in Zechariah. First, there is a call to repentance in view of the forgotten Word of God (1:3). The second principle is the conditional blessing for those who remember God's words (8:14-17). The third principle is that God Himself remembers (Zech. 2:5-8). The fourth is that God remembers His plans for a future covenant (Zech. 12:8).

In Haggai, the principles are found in encapsulated form. From the outset the tone has anticipated a positive reaction to the criticisms, and indeed the people are encouraged to work (1:12). But in 2:5 we read

{According to} the word that I covenanted
with you when you came out of Egypt, so
My Spirit remains among you; do not fear!

God's covenant remains sure and steadfast; He has not forgotten. The only question is whether the men of Judah would also remember the Word of the Lord.

Though reconstruction partially fulfilled God's promise to David of blessings upon his house, who could fail to see the greater glory of the covenant delivered by the great and glorified son of David? God remembered his covenant with the house of David. Though that earthly kingdom would someday cease, the heavenly kingdom of Jesus would stand even against the gates of Hell.

THE DAY OF THE LORD

Some hear re-assurances of the memory of God but have yet seen no fulfillment. They ask, "How long Lord?" (Rev. 6:10). The answer is the Day of the Lord, a subject with which Zechariah deals extensively. In Zech 2:13 we see the Lord who never sleeps is nonetheless roused to action. "Be silent, all flesh, before the Lord, for He is aroused from His holy habitation!" He has withdrawn Himself into the holy habitation from a land corrupt with sin. The Lord knew and remembered the trials of His people, but the day has come for Him to demonstrate His Sovereignty. On this Day of the Lord, children find their faith fulfilled. Rebels experience the wrath of a God who is all too real. The home of God is redeemed and purified.

The "Day of the Lord" (14:1) is a concept pregnant with possibilities, bristling with power, virtually shouting the volatile anger of a rejected God. On other days God may extend mercy as He pleads, but when the Day of the Lord is come the time for pleading is no more. Like Jonah, prophets may even be sent to nations which know not God, but on the day of the Lord, there is no avenue for repentance. Time is the shadowy, silent thief which steals opportunities, and when the anger of God reaches righteous critical mass there is no return.

But one must also see the Day of the Lord is a day of reward as well as retribution. For servants of God, the Day of the Lord is a day of blessing, a day when Righteousness rules and Divine promises are fulfilled. This is the very concept so clearly explored in II Thess. 1:6-8. In both Testaments, the Day of the Lord included several days God viewed as belonging to him. It is judgment day (II Pet 3:9) It is Sunday (Heb. 10:25) It is the day of the destruction of Jerusalem (Mt.24:1-35). Though the Ancient of Days owns them all, on certain days he announces himself, thus it is a

day the Lord says is His. Wise men live their lives in fear and reverence of the Day of the Lord.

Zechariah shows some events to belong to a particular era claimed by the Lord. This causes some to apply all pertinent texts to the Earth's last days, ignoring the poetic imagery of a Day of the Lord to a downtrodden people. More importantly, it glosses over the great Day of the Lord which constituted the grand message of the Prophets: on the Day of the Immanuel, God with us.

One's fate upon the coming of the Day of the Lord depends largely upon his actions in previous days. No soul may live in the Day of the Lord who has not prepared by living for Him in the previous day of small things.

For who has despised the day of small things? for these seven rejoice to see the plumb line in the hand of Zerubbabel. They are the eyes of the Lord, which scan to and fro throughout the whole earth." (Zec 4:10)

Haggai does not explore the "Day of the Lord" concept as such. However, we include it in the list of common themes because of the sub-issues each prophet does explore. These issues provide the tests for survival in the day of God's wrath. **The Children in The Day of the Lord**

The Day of the Lord is a day of reward for Children of God. In Zech. 1:7-11, they are a grove of trees, neither stately oak nor towering cedar, but small and delicate Myrtle trees. In the eyes of God, his people are weak but precious.¹⁰ In Zech. 2:8, we read of "the apple of his eye," a reference evidently to the pupil.

[T]he word literally is "the gate," the opening in which the eye is placed, but it is generally, and most probably correctly, understood to mean the pupil of the eye... the member which we so carefully guard as the most precious of our members, the one

which feels acutely the slightest injury, and the loss of which is irreparable.¹¹

God's children are precious to Him; He feels their every injury. On the day of God's awakening the evidence of His love will be made manifest. "Keep me as the apple of Your eye; Hide me under the shadow of Your wings," (Psa 17:8) The "apple of God's eye" is also the source of tears for the plight of His people (Lam. 2:18).

The People of God are more than those with a nominal heritage, but who have honored the heritage of faith. These are the faithful remnant, not those who have rejected the word. Thus, Yahweh speaks lovingly of protection even in the midst of widespread desolation

For I will gather all the nations to battle
against Jerusalem; the city shall be taken,
the houses rifled, and the women ravished.
Half of the city shall go into captivity, but
the remnant of the people shall not be cut off
from the city. (Zech 14:2)

In Haggai's prophesy, three particulars speak to the special place of these people in the heart of God. There is again that simple declaration in 1:13, 'I am with you.' The laws and revelations of God to His people were not from a distant dictator, but to His wayward children. This is further emphasized in 2:5, "My Spirit remains among you; do not fear." There is the promise to make the Temple 'the desire of all the nations' (2:7). Even if we are correct in applying the ultimate fulfillment of this prophecy to the church, it is still true that the savior came through the Jewish nation, and the truth unto them first. Third, Haggai promises that there will be success against the oppressors from other nations (2:22).

Cleansing for the Day of the Lord.

Zechariah also promises cleansing in preparation for the Lord's Day. He includes the priesthood (3:4-5), sin in

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general (13:1), idols (13:2), and false prophets. There is personal cleansing, such as that experienced in the new birth (Jno 3:3-5, I Pet. 3:21). The Child of God need not find personal perfection, for God cleanses those who walk with Him (I Jno.1:7). We read in Zech 13:1, "In that day a fountain shall be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for uncleanness." This is surely the inspiration for the grand old hymn:

There is a fountain filled with blood
drawn from Immanuel's veins
And sinners plunged beneath that flood
lose all their guilty stains
-William Cowper

There was a need for constant cleansing, and for acknowledgment of God in prosperity as well as in need.

There was also the promise of public cleansing which separates God's people from impostors as in Mt. 13:24-30 and 47-50. The idols which have so plagued Judah in the past will no more trouble her. God then proclaims the day of their demise, along with those who have preached in their name (Zech. 13:2-6). They have mimicked the true prophets, but now they will not be tolerated. Their own parents will thrust them through. The danger of such retribution then compels them to explain away their wounds by claiming they had been beaten in a brawl. It may be that even here we have an indication of the coming Messiah. It is difficult to keep from contrasting these from THE PROPHET (De. 18:18-21) who truly was wounded in the house of his "friends."

Haggai addresses the subject of cleansing in a different fashion. He implies that men ought to strive for spiritual cleanliness as he accuses them of uncleanness. As we have already observed, Haggai asked if Holiness is transferable to something unholy (2:10-14). It is of course impossible, rather the unholy contaminates. Though some exhibit

queasiness over this kind of language, the implication is to cleanse oneself. While we realize that all spiritual cleansing is actually accomplished by God, the servant must prepare for and submit to God's cleansing.

Even in the covenant of grace, the acts of obedience can be said to cleanse even though God Himself does the cleansing "And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins, calling on the name of the Lord" (Acts 22:16). Neither Haggai nor Paul were confused as to who did the work of salvation: it is the Lord. But on both occasions the emphasis is on the conditions for cleansing and the response of man to the God who desires to help.

Enemies in the Day of the Lord

Zechariah gives numerous examples of Judah's enemies being brought to nothing. God will awake to remember his enemies in the Day of the Lord. Delay in God's retribution is often mis-interpreted as injustice, but it is only God's patience for the proper day. These are familiar concepts to the student of the New Testament which teaches us of God's patience (II Pet 3:8) and sowing and reaping (Gal 6:7). God brings retribution upon his people who sow to the flesh, often using sinners as tools of destruction. But God's use of such bloody tools are intended to bring life and repentance; they do not render the tools righteous.

In ch. 1, among appeals to repentance, those who have opposed God must pay a price. In 1:15, the nations are said to have fulfilled the Lord's purpose, but with "evil intent." In ch. 1:21, each successive "horn" (signifying military power¹²) does the damage God intended, but this success would be only carnal and short-lived. Each horn of destruction would itself be terrified by God's craftsman.

Zech. 9:1-8, catalogues sinful nations (Syria, Phoenicia, and Philistia) and their sure defeat. In v. 7, these

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tools of destruction are pictured as a vicious animal rising from his fresh kill. The evidence of his destruction drips from his jowls, shining on unmerciful teeth.

I will take away the blood from his mouth,
and the abominations from between his
teeth. But he who remains, even he {shall
be} for our God, and shall be like a leader in
Judah, and Ekron like a Jebusite. (Zech. 9:7)

Those with blood on their hands (Ja. 4:8), even those who have accomplished God's destructive purposes (Acts 2:23) will answer to an angry God.

The vision of Haggai is considerably less dramatic, but no less certain. Since God's servants serve Him, they are part of a triumphal force in the Earth.

(21) "Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying: `I will shake heaven and earth. (22) I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms; I will destroy the strength of the Gentile kingdoms. I will overthrow the chariots and those who ride in them; the horses and their riders shall come down, every one by the sword of his brother. (Hag. 2:21-22)

On the true Day of the Lord, the year of the Messiah, all these enemies of God's children are subject to complete destruction. They are not immediately overthrown, but the beginnings of the demise of all things temporal are demonstrated by the coming of the Messiah and his triumphant spiritual kingdom.

THE HOME OF THE LORD

In the figurative view of the struggles of God's people against His enemies a panorama invisible to human eyes is depicted. These struggles are more than the daily efforts of construction, they define God's forceful overthrow of His enemies and deliverance of his children. Zechariah's purpose was to inspire men to greater effort by lifting their

eyes to a heroic height. Haggai's was to cause them to focus on the task at hand. In both cases, God's great plan had emphasis beyond this time and place, as He intended to carry the battle to the spiritual realm in the coming of Jesus. The Creator would sanctify Zion on that great day.

So the angel who spoke with me said to me, "Proclaim, saying, Thus says the Lord of hosts: "I am zealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with great zeal" (Zec. 1:14).

The Temple may well have been unimpressive to human eyes, but in Haggai's vision was a place of great glory. The presence of the Lord always hallows even the most humble places. The facts are these: in only 24 days after having heard the first oracle of Haggai, the work had commenced (Hag. 1:14-15) And in only four years after God called them to preach, these two prophets saw the completed building dedicated (Ezra 6:15). The place where His name was recorded had suffered great indignity, but God had always loved it.

Believers in those days or any other time are called upon to live in view of the coming day of the Lord. The building will be marvelous if God blesses and remembers it. The builders will build if they remember the Lord who led them. Though a fire is coming, the father's remnant will live and be blessed

I will bring the {one} third through the fire, will refine them as silver is refined, and test them as gold is tested. They will call on My name, and I will answer them. I will say, 'This {is} My people'; and each one will say, 'The Lord {is} my God.'" (Zec. 13:9)

IMPLICATIONS AND PRACTICAL LESSONS

The fact that God raised two prophets to preach to these people at the same time suggests certain principles to

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us. Students of the Old and New Testaments frequently wonder at parallels, or draw erroneous conclusions from their existence. The fact that one event may be truthfully and accurately portrayed with varying points or emphases demonstrates room for variety in style and need for diversity.

The original audience for these two prophets must have certainly been aware of the contrast. Haggai could not have been misunderstood if one tried. Not only was his message brief, it was painfully so to the point of being terse. On the other hand, Zechariah's message was not only deep, but owing to its apocalyptic style, could even have been called mysterious. Understanding will only come after serious study and mediation. Zechariah remains one of the most misinterpreted books in all of scripture.

Among their contemporaries, there were surely preferences expressed between the two prophets. No doubt, some favored the direct message of Haggai for its simplicity; perhaps they were faulted Zechariah saying "we don't need that complicated message, we need more old-fashioned, plain prophesying like that of Haggai." No doubt there were intellectuals who found a joy in the difficult depths plumbed by Zechariah, perhaps scorning Haggai's preaching for being overly simplistic or even shallow.

Judging from the preferences expressed by the Corinthian church (I Cor. 1) and similar modern day experiences, it seems reasonable to conclude that each prophet's style had its advocates. Such preferences are unavoidable, because people have varying tastes (to say nothing of needs), and no one preacher will be the favorite of all. Moreover, if one learns more of God's word, he will doubtless find that he craves the meat more and needs the milk less. Faithful preachers, like the prophets of old, are not preaching to be popular anyway; they preach to please God.

One must also exercise care to avoid placing these prophets in neat categories. Who is to say that Haggai was incapable of more depth than is written in his book? His book honored the purpose for which God sent him, but perhaps in oral prophecy he found an opportunity for other kinds of messages. We certainly must agree that Zechariah at times was equally direct and simple as his comrade. In fact, there is no simpler call to repentance than that found in the opening verses of the book which bears his name.

If it were in our power to eliminate one of these books from the canon of scripture, which one would we choose? The only answer is that we would remove neither of them. According to Ezra, they worked together in harmony to accomplish God's purpose (Ezra 5:1). They were both prophesying in the name of (by the authority of) God. Therefore they were comrades and colleagues. Can we as preachers of God's word do less?

Our maker understands that we need the simple truth, but we also ought to challenge ourselves with deeper themes. And there is room for both kinds of preaching, and both kinds of preachers.

Biographical Sketch

Dan Kessinger was born in Michigan in 1963 and has lived in West Virginia since 1973. His father, Bob Kessinger, is also a Gospel preacher. Dan graduated from Walton High School in Roane County and received his AS and BS in Biblical Science from Ohio Valley College. He began preaching in 1982 and his first located work was at Belle, WV the same year. He has served as located preacher at Proctor, WV and at Dewey Avenue in St. Marys (present). He has spoken on lectureships, preached in several Gospel meetings, contributed to religious publications, and conducted local TV and radio programs.

He is married to the former Mary Amy West and they have two sons: D.J. & Thomas

Endnotes

¹Lewis, Jack *The Minor Prophets* (Baker Book House Grand Rapids, 1966) pp. 71-74

²Baron, David *Commentary on Zechariah, His Visions and Prophecies* (Kregel Publications Grand Rapids, 1988) p. 9

³Op. Cit., Lewis, pp 71-72

⁴West, Nathaniel *The Thousand Years* (Scripture Truth Book Company Fincastle VA) p. 1

⁵Op. Cit., Lewis, p 7

⁶Allis, Oswald T. *Prophecy and the Church* (Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company Phillipsburg NJ, 1945) p. 279

⁷Ibid pp. 279-280

⁸Unger, Merril F. *Zechariah: Prophet of Messiah's Glory* (Zondervan Publishing House Grand Rapids, 1963) p. 269

⁹Robinson, George L, in *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia* Volume II "Haggai," (Wm. B. Eerdmans Pub. Co Grand Rapids MI, 1939) p 1318

¹⁰Laetsch, Theodore *Minor Prophets* (Concordia Publishing House St. Louis MO, 1956) p. 411

¹¹Op. Cit., Baron p. 74

¹²Op Cit., Laetsch p. 416

ANGEL OF THE LORD

Zechariah 3:1

Charles J. Aebi

The question implied in this topic is, who is “the angel of the LORD” in Zechariah 3:1? To answer this question may require some infringement on the topics of other speakers in this lectureship series, since the angel of the LORD is referred to in several chapters of Zechariah. Please allow me to thank those who invited me to study this topic with you and at the same time apologize to other speakers whose topics I may touch on. I wish to use the American Standard Version (1901).

ANALYSIS OF SPEAKERS

Some insight into our topic, if not into the whole message of Zechariah, may be gained by trying to identify the speaker(s) in each chapter of the book. After a summary statement about the speakers in each chapter, a speaker is listed, then the reference, then a brief description of what is said by the speaker in that speech.

The **six speakers in chapter 1** are the LORD, Zechariah, the conversing angel, the man among the myrtle trees, horses, and the angel of the LORD (Jehovah); some speak more than once. It may be that Jehovah in 1:1-6 is actually speaking through Zechariah. Of course, Zechariah writes the whole book as the LORD inspires him to do, but here we are trying to discern whom it is that Zechariah says is speaking, and it is the LORD. The same thing could be said about other cases where Jehovah speaks through a prophet, the angel of the LORD, or any angel: it is the LORD speaking. In listing the speakers, at this point we will not attempt to interpret whether a speaker referred to by one term is the same as another speaker (or one described in

other terms). For example, we will not argue here the case as to the man among the myrtle trees being the angel of Jehovah, since Zechariah does not say that they are the same. The speakers in chapter 1 speak in this sequence:

Jehovah: 1:1-6 — Repent; don't be like your fathers who rejected the former prophets.

Zechariah: 1:7-8 — Tells of 2/244/519 B.C. vision of man and horses among myrtle trees.

Conversing angel: 1:7-8 — I'll show you what these are.

Man among myrtle: 1:10 — These [horses] are sent throughout the earth by the Lord.

Horses (or their riders): 1:11 — (To angel of the LORD): All earth rests quietly.

Angel of the LORD: 1:12 — (To Jehovah): When will you have mercy on Jerusalem?

Jehovah: 1:13 — Comforting words to the conversing angel.

Conversing angel: 1:14-17 — Jerusalem will be populated; God's house will be built in it.

Zechariah and conversing angel: 1:18-21 — Talk about the four horns and four craftsmen.

“The angel that talked with me” is sometimes called “the interpreting angel,” but I have chosen to refer to him as “the conversing angel,” thus not defining him any more than Zechariah does. The “they” who speak in verse 11 and “these” in verses 9-10 are the horses in verse 8, though perhaps the horses all have riders who are actually the speakers here; in this symbolic vision they represent God's messengers who report that peace exists throughout the empire.

Of the **three speakers in chapter 2**, only two (the measurer and another angel) are new; Zechariah spoke in chapter 1. We will not try to identify the other angel, who is thought by some to be the same as “the angel of the LORD.”

If the conversing angel did as he was told, he spoke to Zechariah, but we are not told that in this chapter. The speakers are in this order:

Zechariah: 2:1-2 — (To measurer): Where are you going?

Measurer: 2:2 — (To Zechariah): To measure Jerusalem.

Other angel: 2:3-13 — (To conversing angel): Give this message to Zechariah from Jehovah— Judah and Jerusalem will be inhabited by Jews returning there from their captivity.

Several persons are referred to in **Zechariah 3**, but only three of them speak—Jehovah, the angel of Jehovah, and Zechariah. Joshua the high priest and Satan are standing before the angel of the LORD. Although Joshua is, was, or is to be accused, he remains silent. Satan is there to accuse Joshua, but if he got to do it, we are not told about it; instead, we hear Jehovah rebuking Satan. Unspecified others are standing before the angel of the LORD, and they are instructed to reclothe Joshua. Other priests, Joshua's associates, are referred to in 3:8, which also predicts the bringing forth of the Branch, Jehovah's servant through whom he would remove sin in one day. We cannot be certain whether the "he" who showed Zechariah the vision of chapter 3 is Jehovah, the other angel, or the conversing angel; in any case this "he" is not said to have spoken. The sequence of the speakers is as follows:

The LORD: 3:2 — Rebukes Satan and says he has chosen Jerusalem.

Angel of the LORD: 3:3-4 — Take away Joshua's filthy garments; I have removed his iniquity.

Zechariah: 3:5 — Put a clean mitre or turban on Joshua's head.

Angel of the LORD: 3:6-10 — Admonishes Joshua to obey; promises to send the Branch and remove iniquity from the land in one day.

Zechariah 4 has three speakers, Zechariah, the conversing angel, and Jehovah, although Jehovah is speaking through the angel part (or all?) of the time, and in 4:8-10 may even be speaking through the Holy Spirit in inspiring the prophet to know God's word. The vision of Zechariah 4 is the fifth, and it is of a lampstand between two olive trees; evidently the lampstand represents God and the olive trees symbolize Joshua and Zerubbabel, who are called "the two anointed ones." The speeches are mainly questions of Zechariah and answers of the conversing angel about the meaning of the lampstand and the olive trees. Chapter 3 gives assurance to Joshua that the sins for which Judah had been punished in the fire of captivity would be forgiven, while chapter 4 gives encouragement to Zerubbabel by promising that the LORD is with him and he will finish rebuilding the temple whose foundation he had laid.

Chapter 5 contains two visions, the flying scroll and the woman in the ephah or basket. The two speakers are Zechariah and the conversing angel. Zechariah sees the visions, and the angel explains what they represent. The flying roll or scroll is a curse on sin; the woman (named "Wickedness") in the lead-sealed basket being carried off to Shinar by two other women (with wings) seems to be the removal of sin from God's people.

Zechariah 6 has three speakers — Zechariah and the conversing angel, who talk about the four chariots full of different colored horses coming from between mountains of brass; and Jehovah, who instructs Zechariah to get silver and gold to make a crown for Joshua the high priest, which would symbolize the Branch being both a king and priest as he would build the temple of Jehovah.

The speakers of **Zechariah 7** include a delegation from Bethel asking questions about their fasting, Jehovah in his instructions to Zechariah on how to answer the Bethel messengers, and, by implication, Zechariah, who would deliver Jehovah's message, reminding them of the reasons for their captivity and urging them to listen to the former prophets and practice justice and kindness.

Thirteen times in **chapter 8** the prophet uses the expression "saith Jehovah" ("saith the LORD"), showing that the content of the whole chapter is God's message to Judah. The speaker is Jehovah, giving his message to Zechariah, whether by inspiration, direct address, or through an unnamed angel or messenger. Zechariah introduces God's message by saying, "And the word of Jehovah of hosts came to me, saying, Thus saith Jehovah of hosts. . ." (8:1-2). The LORD obviously expects Zechariah to relay the message, which is one of assurance that God would bless Judah.

Zechariah 9-13 continues Jehovah's word to and through Zechariah. God promises to defend his people from their enemies, to bless and redeem His people, to punish the false shepherds, to restore Jerusalem's glory, to remove idolatry, and to judge the wicked. While much of this, like much else in Zechariah, may have reference to the restoration of the Jews, the citing of some of these passages in the New Testament (like 9:9 in Matthew 21:5 and John 12:15; 11:12-13 in Matthew 27:9-10; 12:10 in John 19:37; 13:7 in Matthew 26:31) suggests a Messianic intent as well. It is like the reference to the Branch in 3:8-9 and in 6:12-13.

Parts of **chapter 11** condemn Judah's false shepherds and refer to a good shepherd who has authority to fire evil shepherds and who cares properly for the sheep, but who is rejected and counted worthless by God's people. Do the "I" and "me" in 11:7-14 refer to the angel of Jehovah, or to

Christ or to Zechariah as a type of Christ? If it is the angel of Jehovah, New Testament usage would identify the angel of Jehovah as Christ.

ANGEL OF THE LORD IN ZECHARIAH

Since “the angel of the LORD” seems to be distinguished from “the angel that talked with me” and from “another angel,” and from “those that stood before him” (1:9-12; 2:3; 3:3-5), it seems clear that the angel of the LORD in Zechariah is intended not to be confused with other angels. Calvin would have us think that the conversing angel is the angel of the LORD (p. 38); the only evidence that might lead to that conclusion is that when the angel of Jehovah asks Jehovah how long it would be that Jehovah would not have mercy on Jerusalem and Judah, Jehovah is said to answer “the angel that talked with me with good words, even comfortable words” (1:12-13). H. C. Leupold insists that this does not prove the interpreting” angel is the angel of the LORD, but rather that the two are distinct with distinct missions (*Exposition of Zechariah*, p. 41).

Whether he is to be identified with any other of the characters in Zechariah’s visions is another question; most writers think he is. G. N. M. Collins declares, “The characters in it [the first vision] are a man riding upon a red horse (8), who is referred to as the angel of the Lord (12). . . The rider of the red horse is clearly more than man or angel; He is the divine Mediator, the Lord Jesus Christ, appearing in this scene as the Protector of His people” (*The New Bible Commentary*, ed. Davidson, p. 749). John Calvin thinks that “the man that stood among the myrtle-trees” in 1:10 is “the angel of Jehovah that stood among the myrtle-trees” in 1:11; he also thinks the angel of the LORD is Christ, and as noted above, that the angel of the LORD is also the interpreting angel (*Commentaries on the Twelve*

Minor Prophets, V, 38). In that case he also would be the leader of the other horsemen, and he would have dismounted to stand among the myrtle-trees. Homer Hailey agrees that rider of the red horse is the man among the myrtle-trees and is also the angel of Jehovah, but not Jehovah himself; he says Jehovah answers the angel's question through the interpreting angel (*A Commentary on the Minor Prophets*, p. 325-326) E. B. Pusey believes the angel of the LORD, the red-horse-rider angel who is twice called a "man," and the conversing angel (he calls him the attendant-angel) are three different persons (*Barnes Notes*, VIII, 343). James Wolfendale also thinks them all different, but says that the speaker called "Jehovah" in 1:13 is actually the angel of Jehovah of 1:12 (*Preacher's Homiletic Commentary*, XX, 585). . C. F. Keil says, "The rider upon the red horse is not to be identified with the angel of Jehovah, nor the latter with the *angelus interpretis* [interpreting angel—CJA]. It is true that the identity of the rider and the angel of Jehovah, which many commentators assume, is apparently favored by the circumstance that they are both standing among the myrtles. . .but all that follows from this is that the rider stopped at the place where the angel of Jehovah was standing, i.e. in front of him, to present a report to him of the state of the earth, which he had gone through with his retinue." (*Keil and Delitzsch X*, 229).

The angel of the LORD is presented in Zechariah 1 as a figure with authority. If Calvin and Hailey are right, the angel of the LORD is the leader of a group of angels who appear as riders of horses and who report to the angel; if Pusey and Keil are right, the lead angel reports to the angel of Jehovah. In either case, the angel of Jehovah receives the report, showing he has authority to represent Jehovah. The angel of Jehovah also is in close contact with Jehovah and

asks him how long he will continue to punish Judah and Jerusalem (1:12).

In Zechariah 3 the angel of the LORD is an even more authoritative figure. He presides over this court-like scene. Satan stands before him to accuse Joshua, much as he stood before Jehovah to accuse Job in Job 1:6-12 and 2:1-7. Joshua the high priest was also standing before the angel of Jehovah as he would before a judge or before one whom he serves. The angel of Jehovah gives orders to “those that stood before him,” other angels apparently, to remove Joshua’s filthy garments. The angel of Jehovah said to Joshua, “Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee” (3:4). And the angel of the LORD spoke for the LORD to give Jehovah’s conditional promise to Joshua that he would be Jehovah’s high priest and have access to Jehovah if he would walk in God’s ways (3:6-7). The angel of Jehovah also gave the prophecy of the Branch (3:8) through whom Jehovah would remove iniquity in one day (3:9) The Branch is also predicted in 6:12-13 as a priest-king, and a crown is set on Joshua’s head in 6:11 as a mitre is in 3:5, that he might fitly prefigure Christ the eternal priest-king.

ANGEL OF THE LORD IN OLD TESTAMENT GENERALLY

My computer search lists 51 references in which the words “the angel of Jehovah” are found — 6 in Genesis, 1 in Exodus, 10 in Numbers, 15 in Judges, 1 in 2 Samuel, 1 in 1 Kings, 3 in 2 Kings, 5 in 1 Chronicles, 2 in Psalms, 1 in Isaiah, and 6 in Zechariah. Many of these passages have the angel of Jehovah saying or doing things that only God could do, or that only one with God’s authority could do. Time will not permit an examination of them all, but some do not make a distinction between the angel of Jehovah and Jehovah himself. In Genesis 18 three men appeared to Abraham to tell him Sarah would have a son; two of the

men are called “angels” (19:1), and the third is called “Jehovah” repeatedly in 18:17-33. In Exodus 3:2-7 the angel of Jehovah is called “Jehovah” and “God.” In Numbers 22:22-38 God, Jehovah, and the angel of Jehovah are used interchangeably as the one angry at Balaam and putting words in Balaam’s mouth. In the cases of Gideon and Manoah and his wife (Judges 6, 13), we have the distinction between Jehovah and the angel of Jehovah blurred to the extent that both seem involved in accepting worship, which angels do not accept (Revelation 19:10; 22:9).

Hailey says, “Throughout Scripture Jehovah is represented by His angel, often called ‘the angel of Jehovah’ (Gen. 22:11, 15-16; etc.). It was he who redeemed Jacob (Gen.48:15ff.), who went before Israel as a cloud by day and a fire by night (Exod. 13:21; 14:19), and whom the people were to obey (Exod. 23:20ff). He is referred to as the ‘prince of the host of Jehovah’ (Josh. 5:14), and is called ‘the angel of his [Jehovah’s] presence’ (Isa. 63:9)” (p. 326).

Leupold identifies the angel of the LORD as Christ: “Two well-established reasons lead us to believe that wherever ‘*the* Angel of the Lord’ appears and not merely ‘*an* angel’ we have the second person of the Holy Trinity appearing in angelic form before the incarnation. The one reason is that He consistently identifies Himself with the Lord and is recognized as divine by those to whom He appeared, cf. Gen. 16:7ff; Josh. 5:31ff; and many more instances. The second is that Mal. 3:1 (according to the preferred interpretation) plainly identifies the Angel of the Lord with the One for whom John the Baptist prepared the way” (p. 38).

Edward P. Myers believes that the angel of the LORD is the second person in the Godhead. He says, “There are two problems that arise if the angel of Jehovah is not identified

with Jehovah Himself, or with the preincarnate Logos. (1) How is it to be explained that the *angel* is called *Jehovah* in some of the passages? (2) How is it to be explained that the angel accepted worship? He must have been deity. Since he is identified with Jehovah, and yet differentiated from Jehovah, our conclusion is that he is the preincarnate Logos” (*A Study of Angels*, pp.78-79).

The second person of the Godhead is said to have been active in Old Testament times. Jesus said, “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, that killeth the prophets, and stoneth them that are sent unto her! How often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!” (Matthew 23:27). This had to refer to Old Testament times. Paul in 1 Corinthians 10:4 said the Israelites in the wilderness “drank of a spiritual rock that followed them: and the rock was Christ.” Hebrews 11:26 refers to Moses choosing the reproach of Christ over the treasures of Egypt. Jesus in John 8:56-58 said that Abraham saw His day and that He existed before Abraham. And it may not be far afield to see in Daniel 10-11 a vision of Christ and Michael the archangel being involved in the protection of God’s people during the times of the Greek kings Alexander the Great and his successors, the Ptolemies and the Seleucids.

CONCLUSION

Where has all this led us? I began this study some months ago saying that I didn’t know for sure who the angel of the LORD was in Zechariah 3:1. I still don’t know for sure— I can’t prove it — but I am more convinced now than at the beginning of the study that the angel of Jehovah in Zechariah 1, 3, and 12 must be Jesus, the preincarnate Word who was with God and was God from before time. He whom we now know as Jesus Christ our Lord and Savior apparently assumed human form for the benefit of

those men who needed to see Him, whether in visions like Zechariah and Daniel or in full and normal consciousness like Abraham and Gideon. In that anthropomorphic form Christ seems to have been called in the Old Testament “the angel of the LORD.”

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Charles J. Aebi is a native of southwestern Pennsylvania. He was raised with a denominational background, but obeyed the gospel in 1949 and began preaching in 1952. He has a B.S. degree from Penn State, an M.A. from Abilene Christian, and a Ph.D. from Ohio University. He has served as minister for churches in Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Texas, and has preached and held workshops in several states and in foreign countries. He taught Bible for 34 years at Ohio Valley College, where he served for 15 years as academic dean and for 6 years as chairman of the Bible Department. He retired from Ohio Valley College in 1998, and currently serves as a minister for the Rosemar Road Church of Christ in Parkersburg, WV, and speaks on lectureships and holds several workshops and meetings each year. He teaches at the West Virginia School of Preaching, and he writes for West Virginia Christian, Gospel Advocate, and other papers, and has authored seven books and chapters in several other books. Charles and his wife Imogene have four children and twelve grandchildren. Among their children and their spouses they count four school teachers, two medical doctors, a preacher, a nurse, three deacons who all preach on occasion, and eight Bible class teachers.

JESUS THE PRIEST/KING

Donnie S. Barnes

Lesson Text: Zechariah 6:9-15

Our lesson text is taken from the Zechariah 6:9-15 – “(9) Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying: (10) Receive the gift from the captives--from Heldai, Tobijah, and Jedaiah, who have come from Babylon--and go the same day and enter the house of Josiah the son of Zephaniah. (11) Take the silver and gold, make an elaborate crown, and set it on the head of Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest. (12) Then speak to him, saying, Thus says the LORD of hosts, saying: Behold, the Man whose name is the BRANCH! From His place He shall branch out, and He shall build the temple of the LORD; (13) Yes, He shall build the temple of the LORD. He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule on His throne; so He shall be a priest on His throne, and the counsel of peace shall be between them both. (14) Now the elaborate crown shall be for a memorial in the temple of the LORD for Helem, Tobijah, Jedaiah, and Hen the son of Zephaniah. (15) Even those who are far away shall come and build the temple of the LORD. Then you shall know that the LORD of hosts has sent Me to you. And this shall come to pass if you diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God.”

Background

The Book of Zechariah is the 38th book in the Bible, 38th book in the Old Testament, 16th of 17 books of prophecy, and the 11th of 12 Minor Prophets books. It bears the name of its author. Zechariah was a popular name shared by no less than twenty-nine Old Testament characters. Like his predecessors, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, Zechariah was of priestly lineage as the son of Berechiah

and grandson of Iddo. According to Zechariah 2:4, Zechariah was called to prophesy at an early age in 520 B.C. He was born in Babylon and brought to Palestine by his father when the Jewish exiles returned under Zerubbabel and Joshua the high priest, the first of three returns, this one occurring in 536 B.C. The second return would be led by Ezra some eighty years later, and the third return under the leadership of Nehemiah some 12 years after the second. Among the prophets, he was a younger contemporary of Haggai. According to statements made by our Lord in Matthew 23:35, Zechariah was “murdered between the temple and the altar” in the same way that an earlier Zechariah (son of Jehoiada) was martyred according to 2 Chronicles 24:20-21.

The Book of Zechariah relates historically to the rebuilding of the temple and the re-establishment of the temple service. Construction on the second temple was begun in 536 B.C. but discontinued two years later in 534 B.C. The work was resumed fourteen years later in 520 B.C. and completed six years thereafter in 516 B.C. The rebuilding of the temple involved six years of actual work done over a twenty-year period.

Zechariah uses a series of eight visions (1-6), four messages (7-8), and two burdens (9-14) to portray God’s future plans for His covenant people. The first eight chapters of Zechariah were written to encourage the remnant while they were rebuilding the temple. The last six chapters of the book were written after the completion of the temple to anticipate Israel’s coming Messiah, a part of which serves as the basis for this study.

The “Branch” – the “Priest – the “King”

Zechariah provides more specific Messianic predictions than any other of the Minor Prophets. In the lesson text before us, Zechariah is led to see the “Branch,”

the future Messiah (Christ) as both a priest and a king. Most unusual, wouldn't you say? As we note from among the 2,930 Bible characters, priests do not wear a king's crown, and kings do not wear priestly robes. Further study will note that some men were priests but not prophets or kings. Some men who were prophets were not priests or kings. Some men who were kings were not priests or prophets. And too, there were some priests who were prophets but not kings. There was a least one king was also a priest. David was the king of Israel and the prophet of the Lord (2 Samuel 23:2). Samuel was both a prophet and a priest (1 Samuel). Likewise, Jeremiah was both a priest and a prophet.

Melchizedec was king of Salem and priest of the "God Most High" (Genesis 14:18). As great as these characters are, none has ever claimed the titles of prophet, priest, and king simultaneously. The Scriptures reveal that Jesus Christ was the only Bible character to be all three (Prophet, Priest, & King), and all at the same time. Our Lord faithfully performed the duties required of each office. To know what all three were is helpful in conveying Who Christ was . . . and is.

Jesus Christ as Prophet

The word "prophet" means one who speaks for another. Thus, a prophet of God is one who speaks for God. While there have been some false prophets, some good prophets, and some great prophets, let it be know that the greatest prophet of God is Jesus Christ. Over 1400 years before Jesus' birth, of Him Moses prophesied in Deuteronomy 18:15, 18 - "The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your midst, from your brethren. Him you shall hear . . . I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and will put My words in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all that

I command Him.” As a prophet of God, the prophet about Whom Moses spoke, would speak for God. Jesus said in John 7:17 – “My doctrine is not Mine, but His who sent Me.” He continued in John 8:26 – “. . . I speak to the world those things which I heard from Him.” And again in John 14:24 – “He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father’s who sent Me.” In Matthew 17:5, God said, “. . . This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased. Hear Him!”

Jesus Christ as High Priest

The work of a priest and the work of a prophet are not the same. Through prophets God spoke to man. Through priests men came to God with their worship. In Leviticus 10:10-11, priests were told to “. . . distinguish between holy and unholy, and between unclean and clean, and that you may teach the children of Israel all the statutes which the LORD has spoken to them by the hand of Moses”

According to the Law of Moses there was always to be one high priests. The Hebrew writer wrote, “For every high priest taken from among men is appointed for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins” (Hebrews 5:1). Continuing in Hebrews 9:7, we read: “But into the second part the high priest went alone once a year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the people’s sins committed in ignorance” (Hebrews 9:7). Through all of their service, the Levitical priests were to help bring the people of God to Him through worship and to provide for the dealing with man’s sins in the manner prescribed by God.

The term “priest” occurs more than 700 times in the pages of the Old Testament, and approximately 80 times in the New Testament. While there were many faithful high

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priests who served in Israel, none could compare to our great High Priest-Jesus Christ.

While the Levitical priests were servants, Jesus was more . . . He was the Son of God!

While the Levitical priests offered animal sacrifices, Jesus offered more He offered Himself. “Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption” (Hebrews 9:12).

While the Levitical priests offered many sacrifices . . . Jesus offered one sacrifice for all sins forever. “So Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many. To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation” (Hebrews 9:28).

While the Levitical priests served the tabernacle . . . Jesus served the greater tabernacle. “But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation” (Hebrews 9:11). We read in Hebrews 10:19-22 – “Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.” We are told in 1 Timothy 3:15 that the “house of God” is the “church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.”

While the Levitical priests served the tabernacle . . . Jesus served the true tabernacle. “Now this is the main point of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a Minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man” (Hebrews 8:1-2)

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Through the efforts of our great High Priest, our own sins are removed through His own blood, and we are made a part of the true tabernacle of God. Albert Barnes in his *Bible Notes* writes: “The ‘real’ tabernacle in heaven, of which that among the Hebrews was but the type. The word ‘tabernacle- means properly a ‘booth, hut, or tent,’ and was applied to the ‘tent’ which Moses was directed to build as the place for the worship of God. That tabernacle, as the temple was afterward, was regarded as the special abode of God on earth. Here the reference is to heaven, as the dwelling place of God, of which that tabernacle was the emblem or symbol. It is called the ‘true tabernacle,’ as it is the real dwelling of God, of which the one made by Moses was but the ‘emblem.’ It is not moveable and perishable like that made by man, but is unchanging and eternal. The word ‘pitched’ is adapted to express the setting up of a ‘tent.’ When it is said that ‘the Lord pitched the true tabernacle,’ that is, the permanent dwelling in heaven; the meaning is, that heaven has been prepared by God himself, and that whatever is necessary to constitute that an appropriate abode for the divine majesty has been done by him. To that glorious dwelling the Redeemer has been received, and there he performs the office of high priest in behalf of man.” The true High Priest now dwells in the true tabernacle of God—Heaven.

By way of contrasting the old and new priesthoods: (1) Under the old covenant the Aaronic priesthood was maintained. Under the new covenant the priesthood of Christ functions. (2) Under the old covenant Aaron was the first high priest. Under the new covenant Christ is the first and only high priest. (3) Under the old covenant God called Aaron to the office of high priest. Under the new covenant God called Christ to be the high priest (Hebrews 5:1-10). (4) Under the old covenant Aaron bore on his forehead marks of his consecration to Jehovah. Under the new

covenant Jesus bore the greater marks in His body of His consecration to God (Hebrews 7:26-28).

Jesus Christ as King

While a prophet speaks to man for God and a priest helps man worship God, a king whom God has appointed rules over a kingdom God has appointed. Upon returning to Heaven, Jesus sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high (Hebrews 1:3). He is now ruling over the house of God, which is the church (Hebrews 10:21; 1 Timothy 3:15). He is now head over all things to the church (Ephesians 1:22). The clear teachings of God's Word in this matter utterly refute the false doctrines put forth by the premillennialists. Does Jesus sit on an earthly throne ruling over an earthly kingdom? The proper answer is no. In John 18:33. Pilate asked Jesus, ". . . Are you the king of the Jews?" Jesus answered him in John 18:36 – ". . . My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here." Jesus was saying that his kingdom was not from this earth. Jesus was saying that his kingdom was not an earthly one, but a spiritual one. The debate has long ranged as to whether or not the church and the kingdom are the same. According to God's Word they are. In Acts 2:31-35, the apostle Peter told the vast audience on that day that Jesus was sitting on the throne of David. The implication was that he was reigning as a king. In 1 Timothy 6:15, the apostle Paul described Christ as ". . . He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords" In Colossians 1:13-14, Paul wrote: "He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love, in whom we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins." It is great to have a king like Christ and be in a kingdom like the church.

Jesus Christ-Prophet, Priest, King—What Does it All Mean?

As a prophet, Jesus has brought to man the very words of God regarding any and all areas God want communicated to us. In times past some prophets betrayed their calling and in so doing became false prophets. God's ultimate message about the fulfillment of all things and the total cleansing of the sins of men, could not be trusted to just any prophet but rather to the Prophet of all prophets. Jesus has brought us God's words on many subjects, and God has said, "Hear ye Him!" Oh how we need to hear Him as He tells us God's will about the church . . . about faith. . . about repenting of our sins . . . about being baptized for the remission of sins . . . about the church . . . about Heaven . . . about hell . . . about eternal life . . . about the judgment . . . etc. The Hebrew writer said in Hebrews 1:2 – "God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds."

As a priest, Jesus has provided for us what we could never provide for ourselves-remission of our sins. Throughout the Old Testament, while there were many priests, there were fewer high priests. Josephus reckons that 83 high priests officiated from Aaron to the fall of the Second Temple in A.D. 70. Each priest was born, served, and died. They were prevented by death from continuing. Jesus, on the other hand, because He continues forever, that is He holds His priesthood permanently. Because Jesus was of the tribe of Judah rather than of the priestly tribe of Levi, we read in Hebrews 7:12 – "For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the law." In order for Jesus to be a priest God had to change the covenant . . . the law . . . the agreement he had previously

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made. That was done. God said to Jeremiah in Jeremiah 31:31-33 – “Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah-- not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.” The Hebrew writer said in Hebrews 9:15 – “And for this reason He is the Mediator of the new covenant, by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions under the first covenant, that those who are called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance.” With that new covenant man now has a new high Priest-Jesus Christ. Hebrews 7:17 tells us that Christ was “. . . a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek.” Melchizedek Is the first priest mentioned in the Bible and Jesus is the last High Priest mentioned in the Bible. Jesus has done for us what all other the other eighty-three high priests combined could not do for those to whom they ministered. Instead of offering the blood of animals, He offered His own blood. Jesus offered Himself as the sacrificial Lamb (John 1:29). Instead of taking the life of an animal, He gave His own. Instead of rolling forward the sins of the people annually, He removed them. Instead of serving in a tabernacle or temple build by the hands of men, He served in the tabernacle (church) built by the living God. “Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people” (Hebrews 2:16).

As King Jesus reigns over His spiritual kingdom (the church) and His devoted people (Christians) as His law (the Gospel) is carried out daily until such time when all His kingdom is taken up and presented to the father (1 Corinthians 15:24). And just as any kingdom, the kingdom of Jesus Christ has its terms of admission (John 3:5). And just like any kingdom, the kingdom of Jesus Christ has rules which must be obeyed in order to remain in good standing with those that rule (2 John 9-11). But unlike all other kingdoms and all other kings, the kingdom of Jesus Christ will never be brought down . . . will never be destroyed (Daniel 2:44).

Conclusion

While there was only one high priest, there were many other priests that served. By contrasting the old covenant with the new covenant we note that:

1. Jesus is our great High Priest (Hebrews 8:1-2), and each Christian is a serving priest (Revelation 1:5-6; 1 Peter 2:9).
2. Under the old covenant, in the consecration of the priests, they had to be brought to the door of the tabernacle and washed with water before being clothed with the garments of the priest (Exodus 24:4-9). All who become priests under the new covenant must be washed with water (baptism) before being acknowledged as a priest.
3. Under the old covenant, the laver was not in the holy place. Therefore, those who would enter the holy place must wash in the laver BEFORE entering. By comparison, baptism is not in the church, but is the last act of obedience before entering the church.
4. Under the old covenant, priestly apparel could not be put on until the washing had been completed

(Exodus 40:12-15). Under the new covenant, Christ cannot be put on without baptism (Galatians 3:27; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Romans 6:4).

5. Under the old covenant the priest was supposed to not defile himself (Leviticus 21:1-6). Under the new covenant, priests (Christians), are not to defile themselves (Colossians 2:20-22; 2 Corinthians 6:15-7:1; Revelation 21:27).

It is an interesting to observe that under the old covenant, one had to be of age in order to become a priest. “From thirty years old and above, even to fifty years old, all who enter the service to do the work in the tabernacle of meeting” Numbers 4:3. Jesus was about thirty years of age when He was baptized, and about thirty-three years old when he became our High Priest. Under the old covenant, the Levitical priesthood was imperfect” “Therefore, if perfection were through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need was there that another priest should rise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be called according to the order of Aaron?” Hebrews 7:11. We now have a perfect priesthood (Hebrews 7:11-17).

Thankfully, God has provided us with a better prophet, priest, and king-Jesus Christ. He brings a superior message, offered a superior sacrifice, and rules over His superior kingdom. Since Jesus is the superior prophet, priest, and king, we must submit to him, for there is nothing to follow which can supercede His word (John 12:48), His sacrifice (Hebrews 10:14), or His authority (Matthew 28:18). Let us heed His message, take full advantage of His sacrifice, and yield ourselves to His authority before the opportunity to do so is gone.

JERUSALEM, A CITY WITHOUT WALLS

Skip Andrews

Zechariah 2:1-13

We sing that God is “a wall of fire about me.” But did you know that we get that term from Zechariah 2? The term, its meaning, and other truly good things are before us as we open our Bibles to this great chapter.

Let us determine to learn its meaning in light of the entire Bible story, in light of the life and times of Zechariah, and in light of the New Testament fulfillment of the vision of “the measuring line.”

My plan for this lesson is to do three things: first, we will set the stage by noting the circumstances and characters in the chapter; second, we will explain the text; and, third, we will learn the lessons that can come from a reverent study of these verses.

It is appropriate that we begin with a note on the need for reverence as we learn about the plan of God for our souls, and the many ways that He has chosen to tell us about that plan in the Bible. That note is the last verse of our chapter: “Be silent, O all flesh, before the LORD: for he is raised up out of his holy habitation.”

SETTING THE STAGE

The time of the prophecy was 519 B.C. In the immediate past, Judah had been released from the 70-year captivity that was permitted by God at the hands of the Babylonians. The change was due to the conquering of Babylon by the Medes and Persians 20 years earlier. The results of that war included the fact that when Judah (the southern kingdom) was allowed to go back to the homeland, the remnants of Israel (the northern kingdom)

were given the same opportunity. (They had been taken away by the Assyrians more than a century earlier than Judah—Israel in 722/721 B.C.; Judah in 606/605 B.C.). Among those who lived and worked at the time of Zechariah was Haggai. A study of these two prophets shows that they had much to say to the people of their day in the way of strong rebuke for not making more progress in the rebuilding of physical and spiritual things to the glory of God. However, in addition to the preaching that they did to the people, they wrote of that which was still future—the kingdom/church of Christ. Zechariah was to write several things about the One Who would be priest and king over that spiritual kingdom: THE BRANCH (Jesus Christ).

The chapter we are studying now is the record of one of the visions that Zechariah had. It was a vision from the “LORD (Jehovah) of hosts.” This name of God is used in verses 8, 9, and 11. It signifies the position that Jehovah occupies as the sovereign of the universe. In the New Testament, the same title is “Lord of Sabaoth” (see Romans 9:29 and James 5:4). We must not forget to think about the place that He occupies in a passage when we “set the stage” for study, meditation and application.

EXPLAINING THE TEXT

There are two divisions in Zechariah 2. In the first part, the vision is recorded (2:1-5). In the second part, the vision is explained (2:6-13).

In the first section of the chapter, four “characters” come before us: Zechariah (1a), a second man (1b, 2), an angel (3a), and a second angel (3b-5).

Let us read these five verses:

“I lifted up mine eyes again, and looked, and behold a man with a measuring line in his hand. Then said I, Whither goest thou? And

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he said unto me, To measure Jerusalem, to see what is the breadth thereof, and what is the length thereof. And, behold, the angel that talked with me went forth, and another angel went out to meet him, And said unto him, Run, speak to this young man, saying, Jerusalem shall be inhabited as towns without walls for the multitude of men and cattle therein: For I, saith the LORD, will be unto her a wall of fire round about, and will be the glory in the midst of her.”

Verse 1: Zechariah reminds his readers that he is the one who saw these visions. Here, in the third one, he sees a man with a measuring line. The man intended to measure the city with it, but you will note that he never actually did it. But the event was going to be used to announce things that related to punishment (of the enemies of God’s people) and blessing (of all who would come into the city “without walls”).

Verse 2: The prophet asks the man where he is going. The answer is that he is going to measure Jerusalem. We would naturally assume that this would be earthly Jerusalem, but the vision will continue so that we can get a view of the Jerusalem that God had in mind rather than the one that still needed to be rebuilt. Leupold remarks that this is “about how large the city of the future *is to be*” (p. 54).

Verse 3: The angel that is mentioned first had talked with him in chapter one several times. However, before he speaks, another angel comes into the scene.

Verse 4: The second angel has a message for the first one. He is to speak to the “young man.” It is not specified whether the young man is Zechariah or the man with the measuring line, but since he had been speaking to Zechariah, and since it is Zechariah who records his words, I would say that the “young man” is the prophet. The angel

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is told to “run” to him, signifying the importance, and, in this case, the pleasantness, of his news. The news had to do with Jerusalem—“the ideal Jerusalem—the church—and of an ideal dwelling in her—membership in the church of God” (Leupold, p.56). The measuring line would not be needed, for the city would be inhabited as towns (open villages; literally, “plains”, or open country). “The walls that mark the city’s boundaries will not be needed, for the city ‘shall be as open villages,’ ... These are not strictly ‘villages without walls’ (A.R.V.); they are the open country which never needs walls” (Leupold, p.55). Bob Winton remarks, “This Jerusalem will be inhabited even though it is to have no walls to protect it (p. 265). The mention of cattle (livestock) signifies the fact that this Jerusalem would have that which its occupants needed.

Verse 5: This is the conclusion of the first part of the chapter, and it is the verse that makes the previous verses understandable. This is because Jehovah **completes the picture by revealing His position in the vision!** “The fact that spiritual issues are involved and not material growth and external prosperity is best established by this verse” (Leupold, p.56). He is to be “a wall of fire round about” this Jerusalem. Its protection is not on the basis of physical walls. There will be full protection for those who are in it. He is able to keep out—and/or destroy—all who would pose a danger to the “apple of his eye.” And then, in order to keep our attention on something that really matters, He says through His angel, “I will be the glory in her midst.” This one point—the position that God occupies—would change almost everything in the world, in the home, and in the church—**if we would just acknowledge it.**

In the second section of the chapter, two groups of applications are made. In verses 6-9, there is an urgent call to Zion regarding a danger (6), responsibility (7), glory and tenderness (8), and easy reversal (9). In verses 10-13, there

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is a great promise to Zion regarding an overview (10), a complete view (11,12), and the best view (13).

Critics of the Bible text look for things to alter. Some say that verses 6-13 were added later. Leupold makes a fitting remark with these words:

“The verses 6-13 are not to be regarded as a later appendage to the vision. They are the section in which the spiritual greatness of God’s city is unfolded to the full, the substance to which the vision was largely introductory. It will always be a precarious contention to assert that a certain section is not an original part of a passage but was added later. Such decisions are so largely dependent on subjective viewpoints that men should readily discern how impossible of convincing proof such assertions are.” (p. 52).

Let us now read these eight verses:

“Ho, ho, come forth, and flee from the land of the north, saith the LORD: for I have spread you abroad as the four winds of the heaven, saith the LORD. Deliver thyself, O Zion, that dwellest with the daughter of Babylon. For thus saith the LORD of hosts; After the glory hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you: for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye. For, behold, I will shake mine hand upon them, and they shall be a spoil to their servants: and ye shall know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me. Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion: for, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the LORD. And many nations shall be joined to the LORD in that day, and shall be my people: and I will dwell in the midst of thee, and thou shalt know that the LORD of hosts hath

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sent me unto thee. And the LORD shall inherit Judah his portion in the holy land, and shall choose Jerusalem again. Be silent, O all flesh, before the LORD: for he is raised up out of his holy habitation.”

Verse 6: “Ho, ho” equals “Up, up!” This is an attention-getting device. The words that were coming next were essential in order for anyone to be able to understand the vision. “The thought of the vision continues to be the subject of this information. The restoration of literal Jerusalem is in the foreground, but descriptions concerning spiritual Jerusalem are intermingled” (Bob Winton, p. 266). They were told to flee, for many of the Israelites had not actually returned from the lands of their punishment, and those who now occupied those lands would be punished. The phrase, “I have spread you abroad as the four winds,” has been given two very different meanings. The past participle in the King James is used to refer to the events of the previous century—their scattering due to punishment at the hands of the pagans. Leupold maintains that it should be translated as a future: “shall spread”—thus indicating the spiritual idea of the future expansion of the kingdom. Commentators are divided, with the majority taking the first position—God has spread them, and now He is calling them back. As intriguing as Leupold’s idea is, I am settling with the former position as fitting this part of the context better. The use of the “four winds” is another illustration of the power (of God) that was really behind the captivity and its consequences.

Verse 7: Jehovah stresses the individual person’s responsibility to take advantage of the opportunity that is being given here (see Acts 2:40 for an example of it as a fulfillment). “Zion” represents all true believers (by metonymy, Leupold, p. 59). And since there is such great

danger in remaining with the “daughter of Babylon,” it is imperative to flee! “Escape!”

Verse 8: This verse introduces glorious potentials for those who listen and respond to the offer of the “Lord of hosts.” “After the glory” is said to be the most difficult phrase in the chapter. Here is what I have found. Lange says, “after the bestowment of the glory of v.5”; hence, to acquire it. Winton says, he was sent “to obtain glory for God.” So, if Zechariah were to be asked, “What are you after?”—he would answer, “I am after glory for God!” Thus, his mission was to obtain glory for God by inviting those who were the “apple of God’s eye” to come into the city that does not have walls. And it does not have walls because it does not *need* walls! The Lord of hosts is a wall of fire around it! In this verse, we are taught that God can obtain glory by inviting those who are in danger to come to Him and by dealing effectively with those who cause the danger. The “apple of his eye” deserves some comments.

“The pupil, or aperture, through which rays pass to the retina, is the tenderest part of the eye; the member which we most sedulously guard from hurt, as being the dearest of our member; the one which feels most acutely the slightest injury” (JFB, p. 665; see Psalm 17:8; Deuteronomy 32:10).

Verse 9: Here we have a lesson on “easy reversal.” With the mere wave of His hand, the Lord of hosts is able to reverse the position and direction of the lives of the spoiler and the spoiled. His people had been hurt and now they would be lifted up. The enemy had been used as a weapon against them, and now He would “wave” them out of their high position! And what would be the result?

**“and ye shall know
that the LORD of hosts
hath sent me.”**

Verse 10: Here is the overview of the picture that the vision presents: They were to sing and rejoice—with good

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reason! They had been released! They had been allowed to return! And they had spiritual renewal! Restoration of fellowship with God is always sufficient reason for this.

Verse 11: Here is the complete view of the picture that the vision presents: All people can come into this city! What other “city” can this be than the church of Christ? All of the world has been called out of sin into this realm since the dawning of the new dispensation in Acts 2. This did not happen during the Mosaic age (But it does happen now; Mark 16:15,16; Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 10:34-38; Colossians 1:6,23, Romans 10:18; Bob Winton, p. 267). “That day”—the Messianic age—is now. God wants to—and can—dwell among us. It is up to us to come out from “among them.” And when we do this, we can “know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto you” (see 2 Corinthians 6:14-18; Hebrews 13:5,6).

Verse 12: Under the figure of terms that remind us of earthly people and places (Judah, the “holy land”; Deuteronomy 32:9), the prophet learns more about how highly God regards His people. To be His inheritance and His portion ought to mean everything to us. To be chosen by Him—when He knows how sinful we are—ought to mean everything to us. In Christ, sinners become spiritual Israel (Romans 2:28,29; Galatians 6:16). The earthly place that is often called the “holy land” is anything but that today—God forbid that the church would become a disgrace to Him! “Wherever the people of God are found, there is the holy land” (Lange, p. 35).

Verse 13: Here we have the best view! It is a call for reverence. This God can do so much with so little! He can take that which is so dirty and make it so clean! He can take that which is so unholy and make it so holy! “In this verse, a direct connection is made between the reason the land is holy and him whose presence makes it holy” (Winton, p. 268). God has been “aroused”—stirred—to

take this action and make this invitation. What better response is there than to be still, observe, and prostrate ourselves in submission?

LEARNING THE LESSONS

We have noted many lessons already, but let me give a brief list of some of them—

1. Before enlarging something—take a survey (and do not leave God out).
2. God is a wall without and a glory within!
3. God's people are very dear to Him: "In all their affliction, He is afflicted."
4. The gospel is an invitation to all nations.
5. Do not allow abuses of the prophets to rob us of understanding their fulfillment through the reign of Jesus Christ (Acts 2: 29-36).

Hailey offers a concise statement for our conclusion:

"The heathen nations would be judged, Jehovah would build and inhabit the new Zion, and He would fulfill His promises concerning Jerusalem. This is Jehovah's answer to the Jews who could not see beyond the immediate physical temple and city and to those indifferent to His purpose" (p. 332).

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Skip was born and reared in Michigan, and is a graduate of the Memphis School of Preaching and Southern Christian University. He is married to the former Helen Burch, who is from West Virginia. They have a daughter, Lori, and a son, Michael. Skip has done located work in Bates Hill, Lisbon, and Bethesda, Ohio; Verona, Mississippi; Elkins, West Virginia; and Duluth, Georgia. He serves Duluth as one of her elders, as well as the preacher.

MY SERVANTS THE PROPHETS

Neal Pollard

The phrase, “My servants the prophets,” is beautiful for multiple reasons. First, God is speaking and as such is speaking possessively of the object considered. Whatever belongs to God is special and valuable. Second, God commends the object of the phrase by calling them “servants.” Elsewhere, He identifies those who serve as “great” (Matt. 23:12). Jesus was the chief of servants, thus elevating the status of those who serve (cf. John 13:12ff). Then, God identifies His precious, exalted possessions as “prophets.” A prophet was one who was filled with God’s Spirit and thus spoke the word of God by His authority. A prophet was chosen, handpicked, by God to do the work, but he had to be willing (with rare and notable exceptions, such as Balaam). The prophet’s life was difficult. It might mean a trip to a cistern filled with mud, as it was for Jeremiah (Jeremiah 38:6). It might mean a slap on the face, as it happened to Micaiah (1 Kings 22:24). It might mean a trip to a den of lions, as it happened to Daniel (6:7ff). It might mean going naked and barefoot for three years, as it happened to Isaiah (20:2-3). It might mean marrying a whore, as it happened to Hosea (1:2). Hebrews eleven says the prophets were among those having... “trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth” (36-38). The prophets were special men. God says so. The Bible records such.

One comes across the phrase that serves as the caption of this lecture a total of nine times in the Old Testament.

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With each reference, another integral segment of revelation is laid bare about these special men, of which Zechariah was one, and their work. Consider what is learned from the passages wherein God says, “My servants the prophets.”

God had jealous concern over His servants the prophets (2 Kings 9:7). 2 Kings nine begins with Elisha, the prophet, sending a young prophet on an errand to secretly anoint Jehu as King of Israel in the place of wicked King Ahab. Jehu was tasked with avenging the death of Naboth and, according to verse seven, that God might “avenge the blood” of His servants the prophets and “all the servants of the Lord.” Jehu zealously set out to exact vengeance, first killing Ahab’s seventy sons, forty-two allegiants, and then tricking all Baal-worshippers in Ahab’s temple to their deaths. Though Jehu would leave a wicked legacy himself, he was God’s instrument to avenge His servants the prophets. It is apparent that Ahab was no friend to any godly man, especially one relating the authoritative message of God. He was a persecutor of prophets, and God would not let that violation go unpunished.

What a comfort that God holds a special fondness for those who deliver His message faithfully. Through a prophet God originally stated, “How beautiful upon the mountains Are the feet of him who brings good news, Who proclaims peace, Who brings glad tidings of good things, Who proclaims salvation, Who says to Zion, "Your God reigns!" (Isaiah 52:7). Through preaching, of all means of communication, God has chosen to reveal His saving plan (1 Corinthians 1:21). Though He disdains a false gospel messenger (Galatians 1:6-9), He will richly reward those who speak a word for Him faithfully (cf. 2 Timothy 4:8; Isaiah 50:4).

God spoke through His servants the prophets (2 Kings 17:13). In the course of their history, particularly from the ninth through the sixth century B.C., Israel and Judah had

been warned by sixteen literary prophets and an unspecified number of non-literally prophets, such as Nathan, Iddo, Micaiah, Elijah, Elisha, Ahijah, Jehu the son of Hanani, and others. These men had specific messages to deliver. Most of those who heard them rejected them. Yet, this did not change the fact that God spoke through them. In fact, canonicity of each Old Testament book from Genesis to Malachi is dependent upon the prophetic nature of them all. God spoke through each Old Testament writer. As such, each and every prophet was a mouthpiece of Jehovah. Daniel's prayer includes the statement, "Neither have we obeyed the voice of the Lord our God, to walk in his laws, which he set before us by his servants the prophets" (9:10). God's voice was set before the people by his serving prophets.

Each and every word of scripture is God-breathed (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Thus, in the sense of carrying an authoritative message, each word is prophetic in nature. It was a critical work of Old Testament writers to record and disseminate God's message. The great epistle, Hebrews, begins, "God... at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets" (1:1). Even today, by faithfully proclaiming the gospel, gospel preachers are a mouthpiece to reveal divine truth. Each person who accurately handles the gospel in teaching a lost soul or further instructing another Christian is an ambassador of God's message. Barfield's definition of prophet, influenced by Hebrew scholars Frederick Meyrick and Samuel Sandmel but concise and accurate, stresses how vital revelation was to these servants' work.¹

¹ Barfield defines prophet as "a spokesman who delivers intelligible verbal messages, believed to originate with Deity, that often include references to future events and actions." Kenny Barfield. *The Prophet Motive: Examining the Reliability of the Biblical Prophets* (Nashville: Gospel Advocate Co., 1995), p. 12. Of relevance to the point at hand,

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God revealed His longsuffering nature through His servants the prophets (Jeremiah 9:25). The message of the prophets was not exclusively one of judgment and punishment. The tone of such books as Isaiah, Nahum, Habakkuk, and Zechariah contain much comfort and hope. The other books catalogued as prophesy, even stern books like Amos (cf. 9:13-15), Jeremiah (23:5-24; 30:3ff; 31:31-34), and Malachi (3:16-4:3), offer conditional promises and betray profound Divine love. In Jeremiah 7:25, God reminds Judah that He had sent His servants the prophets from Moses' day up to then. This is a period of time no less than nine hundred years (approximately B.C. 1491-586)! He strove with His people for nearly a millennium! Another three verses in Jeremiah (26:5; 29:19; 35:15) relate God's perseverance toward His people through the message of His servants the prophets.

Those things written aforetime are for our learning today (cf. Romans 15:4). By looking at Old Testament history, one can see Divine attitudes (1 Corinthians 11:10). In the context of the judgment day, Peter admonishes, "And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation..." (2 Peter 3:15a). At the Judgment bar, no one will be able to successfully contend that God was not patient with sinful man (cf. 2 Peter 3:9). Even as Christians, counted among sinners (Romans 3:23), view with disgust such sins as abortion, homosexuality, adultery, pornography, drunkenness, murder, and lust, a perfect God sorrowfully witnesses every vile act of humanity. Thus He has witnessed every public and private iniquity of countless generations. Yet, the world still stands. This is attributable to God's longsuffering nature. One day will mark the last day of God's profound patience, however. Then, He will take vengeance on the spiritually ignorant and disobedient

faithful prophets' message came from God and were delivered to fellow man.

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(cf. 2 Thessalonians 1:8). As He did for so long with His chosen people under Moses' Law through His prophets, so today through His servants, faithful Christians, He expresses patience in giving sinners the opportunity to turn from sin toward Him.

God sternly warned His people through His servants the prophets (Jeremiah 44:4). The prophets were not compromising men, when it came to God's immutable law. There was no room for negotiation when it came to Divine truth. Near the end of his prophesy, Jeremiah wrote, "Howbeit I sent unto you all my servants the prophets, rising early and sending them, saying, Oh, do not this abominable thing that I hate" (Jeremiah 44:4). As the subject of Jeremiah's writing was primarily condemnation of spiritual adultery, he in line with this is warning against idolatry. Judah did not heed the warning. God sent Babylon to punish them, reviewed this with them, and said,

Wherefore my fury and mine anger was poured forth, and was kindled in the cities of Judah and in the streets of Jerusalem; and they are wasted and desolate, as at this day.

Therefore now thus saith the LORD, the God of hosts, the God of Israel; Wherefore commit ye this great evil against your souls, to cut off from you man and woman, child and suckling, out of Judah, to leave you none to remain;

In that ye provoke me unto wrath with the works of your hands, burning incense unto other gods in the land of Egypt, whither ye be gone to dwell, that ye might cut yourselves off, and that ye might be a curse and a reproach among all the nations of the earth?

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Have ye forgotten the wickedness of your fathers, and the wickedness of the kings of Judah, and the wickedness of their wives, and your own wickedness, and the wickedness of your wives, which they have committed in the land of Judah, and in the streets of Jerusalem?

They are not humbled even unto this day, neither have they feared, nor walked in my law, nor in my statutes, that I set before you and before your fathers.

Therefore thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel; Behold, I will set my face against you for evil, and to cut off all Judah. And I will take the remnant of Judah, that have set their faces to go into the land of Egypt to sojourn there, and they shall all be consumed, and fall in the land of Egypt; they shall even be consumed by the sword and by the famine: they shall die, from the least even unto the greatest, by the sword and by the famine: and they shall be an execration, and an astonishment, and a curse, and a reproach.

(Jeremiah 44:6-12).

God has not mellowed in His attitude toward sin, despite the passage of time from Jeremiah's day down to the present. 2,600 years later, sin is still sin. Sin is so terrible, His Son had to die to destroy its power. Sin is so terrible, He often executed the offenders on the spot, from Nadab and Abihu's day to Ananias and Sapphira's. Sin is so terrible, He created a place so awful as hell to punish it for a never-ending eternity. Through His Word, He warns of judgment to come (Acts 24:25), eternal punishment (Matthew 25:46), and heavenly vengeance (2

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Thessalonians 1:8). This was a vital part of His Old Testament prophets' service, toward God and men. It is a vital part of the New Testament message.

God demonstrated His power through His servants the prophets (Zechariah 1:6). As this lesson approaches the book which forms the basis of study for the entire lectureship, yet one more statement pertaining to God's servants the prophets will be examined. Zechariah writes, "But my words and my statutes, which I commanded my servants the prophets, did they not take hold of your fathers? and they returned and said, Like as the Lord of hosts thought to do unto us, according to our ways, and according to our doings, so hath he dealt with us." Zechariah had just taught of how his brethren's forefathers had rejected the powerful, divine message, to their own peril and destruction (Zechariah 1:4ff). Ultimately, according to God, the power of His message overwhelmed them. It was too late. They realized the truth only after judgment was exacted, but it finally did "take hold" of them.

God demonstrates His unparalleled power through the gospel (Romans 1:16). Writers were moved to write God's message, and the finished product was verbal, plenary inspiration. As in times of old, New Testament writers, too, "spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit" (2 Peter 1:21). That powerful message may harden many hearts, but it has melted many also. Lives have been totally transformed by God's Word (cf. Romans 12:2). Men, like Paul, have changed from persecutors of Christ to being persecuted for Christ. Honest hearts will ultimately succumb to the power of the gospel, obeying its message, and enjoying the surpassing peace of salvation and faithful living. If men will preach it in its unadulterated form, the gospel will continue to wield its power upon the hearts of men and women throughout this world.

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The prophets God lauds should be upheld as true heroes. Though men sought to strip them of dignity, God clothes them with honor. Though the wicked sought to destroy their bodies, God preserved their souls for eternal reward. Though so many ignored them, God pays them special attention and high honor. He takes ownership of them—“*My servants the prophets.*” He signals their greatness—“*My servants the prophets.*” He

He salutes their important position—“*My servants the prophets.*” God has reserved the highest honor for those who obey Him (cf. Hebrews 5:9).

THE WORK OF THE FORMER PROPHETS

ZECHARIAH 7:8-14

Dan C. Bailey

Over 700 years before the birth of Christ there lived a prophet from the small town of Moresheth. He was a true prophet of God. He was a courageous man of God. When the former prophets of God spake, their words at times were like mighty lightning bolts. Their true success came because they were devout, sincere believers in God. They believed in the power of God, the judgment of God, the love of God, the mercy of God, the providence of God, the holiness of God, and the loving-kindness of God. With faith in the Almighty, Micah preached and said, "But truly I am full of power by the spirit of the LORD, and of judgment, and of might, to declare unto Jacob his transgression, and to Israel his sin. Hear this, I pray you, ye heads of the house of Jacob, and princes of the house of Israel, that abhor judgment, and pervert all equity. They build up Zion with blood, and Jerusalem with iniquity. The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money: yet will they lean upon the LORD, and say, Is not the LORD among us? none evil can come upon us. Therefore shall Zion for your sake be plowed as a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of the forest" (Micah 3:8-12). How many preachers today are willing to expose the prevailing sins of our times? The answer is, every faithful gospel preacher! Preachers need to be praying more. Elders need to be praying more. Deacons need to be praying more. Bible school teachers need to be praying more. And every single member in the Lord's church needs to be praying that the truth will be

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fully preached with no reservations and with no favoritism. Can you imagine being from Jerusalem and hearing a prophet of God tell you that Zion was going to be plowed as a field as a result of the sins of God's people? Perhaps we may be surprised to know how often the prophets were simply ignored, just as billions today ignore God's coming judgment, hell, and the return of His Son.

The work of the former prophets, as of all of God's prophets since the beginning of time, was to teach and preach about "true religion." They taught in essence, just exactly what the Son of God taught when a lawyer tempted him by asking, "Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Matthew 22:36-40). God has never, and will never be satisfied with "mere lip service." Jesus told the scribes and Pharisees, "Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matthew 15:7-9). God wants the heart, the whole heart. As we are taught by God in the book of Psalms, "Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart¹⁴. With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments" (Psalm 119:2, 10). The Holy and the Most High God of heaven and earth desires and expects first place in our lives. Jesus taught in the sermon on the mount, "But seek ye **first** the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33). Luke-warmness, apathy, and indifference are simply unacceptable to Jesus, our

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Lord. The church in Laodecia was strongly rebuked for their lack of zeal (Revelation 3:14-22). May God help us all not to be lukewarm.

In the context of Zechariah chapter seven, some were asking questions about whether or not they should continue fasting as they had done previously because of the former destruction of Jerusalem. It is clear that their fast was not to honor God. Fasting without the heart or without doing God's will is like saying one is on a diet and yet eating pies, cakes, ice cream, French fries, and all the fatty junk food in the world! A sincere heart must be present in everything that we do in worship and in serving the one true God. "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:24). In this lesson, we will consider some of the key elements that made up the work of the former prophets, and in general, all the prophets. They are as follows.

1. They spake a "thus saith the Lord."
2. They preached that there was **one way**, and encouraged God's people to follow it.
3. They denounced and exposed all sin and exhorted God's people to repent.
4. They exalted the character and the attributes of the Almighty God.
5. They foretold about Christ, His kingdom, the gospel, and the blessings that would spring from the Savior.
6. They exalted the word of God.
7. They condemned wicked nations and, at times, preached to save the heathen from destruction.
8. They preached to a hard-hearted, stubborn, and rebellious people.
9. They prayed to, trusted in, and were willing to die for the one, true, everlasting God.

THEY SPAKE A THUS SAITH THE LORD

The former prophets did not originate their messages. The apostle Peter tells us, “Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost” (II Peter 1:20-21). God’s prophets were strong believers in the authority of God. Many spineless and weak-kneed preachers in the church today would do well to respect God’s Word to the same degree as the former prophets did. Let us listen to some of the claims of the former prophets as to the origination of their sermons.

“**Hear ye now what the LORD saith**; Arise, contend thou before the mountains, and let the hills hear thy voice” (Micah 6:1).

“Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: **for the LORD hath spoken**, I have nourished and brought up children, and they have rebelled against me. The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider” (Isaiah 1:2-3).

“Come now, and let us reason together, **saith the LORD**: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool” (Isaiah 1:18).

Isaiah 8:1 – “¹/₄the LORD said unto me¹/₄”

Isaiah 8:3 – “¹/₄the LORD said to me¹/₄”

Isaiah 8:5 – “The LORD spake also unto me¹/₄”

Isaiah 8:11 – “For the LORD spake thus to me with a strong hand, and instructed me that I should not walk in the way of this people, saying,”

Amos 1:1; 1:3; 1:6; 1:9; 1:11; 1:13 – “Thus saith the LORD”

Amos 3:7-8 – “Surely the Lord GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the

prophets. The lion hath roared, who will not fear? the Lord GOD hath spoken, who can but prophesy?"

Hosea 12:10 – "I have also spoken by the prophets, and I have multiplied visions, and used similitudes, by the ministry of the prophets."

When a man preaches a "thus saith the Lord," he will preach exactly what God says and he will not add to His words, neither will he take away from His words. This is precisely what God told Jeremiah. "Thus saith the LORD; Stand in the court of the LORD'S house, and speak unto all the cities of Judah, which come to worship in the LORD'S house, all the words that I command thee to speak unto them; diminish not a word^{1/4}" (Jeremiah 26:2). Many so called "doctrinal problems" in the church would never become problems if brethren would make a more diligent effort to simply speak as the Bible speaks. Let us be prayerfully careful not to add nor take away from God's Holy Word. (Deuteronomy 4:2; Proverbs 30:5-6; Revelation 22:18-19).

THEY PREACHED THAT THERE WAS ONE WAY AND ENCOURAGED GOD'S PEOPLE TO FOLLOW IT

The only safe way, acceptable way, and good way, is God's way. Former prophets such as Jeremiah were keenly aware of this most important fact. The children of Judah and Jerusalem abandoned God's way for the polluted and false systems of idolatry. God said through his great prophet, "For my people have committed two evils; they have forsaken me the fountain of living waters, and hewed them out cisterns, broken cisterns, that can hold no water" (Jeremiah 2:13). There was only one way to walk successfully in Jeremiah's day. "Thus saith the LORD, Stand ye in the ways, and see, and ask for the old paths,

where is the good way, and walk therein, and ye shall find rest for your souls. But they said, We will not walk therein” (Jeremiah 6:16). God wanted his people to humble themselves, to live right, and to do the things that would please Him. “Thus saith the LORD, Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches: but let him that glorieth glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, that I am the LORD which exercise lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness, in the earth: for in these things I delight, saith the LORD” (Jeremiah 9:23-24). As there was one way in Jeremiah’s day, “O LORD, I know that the way of man is not in himself: it is not in man that walketh to direct his steps” (Jeremiah 10:23). So, there is only one true way today (Matthew 7:13-14; Luke 13:24; I John 2:3-4). The church as well as our nation needs to hear the former prophets such as Isaiah and Jeremiah. I can hear them now, “Seek ye the LORD while he may be found, call ye upon him while he is near: Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon” (Isaiah 55:6-7). “Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is” (Jeremiah 17:7).

THEY DENOUNCED AND EXPOSED ALL SIN, AND EXHORTED GOD’S PEOPLE TO REPENT.

Isaiah 1:16-20 – “Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be

red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.”

Jeremiah 7:3 – “Thus saith the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel, Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place.”

Jeremiah 32:33 – “And they have turned unto me the back, and not the face: though I taught them, rising up early and teaching them, yet they have not hearkened to receive instruction.”

Even though Ezekiel preached during the Babylonian captivity, he preached to the hard-headed, red-necked, stubborn Israelites who failed to listen to Jeremiah. All of the former prophets would have given a hearty amen to what God told Ezekiel. “Have I any pleasure at all that the wicked should die? saith the Lord GOD: and not that he should return from his ways, and live?” (Ezekiel 18:23). Joel who prophesied about 796 B.C., preached that God’s children needed to sincerely and truly repent. “Therefore also now, saith the LORD, turn ye even to me with all your heart, and with fasting, and with weeping, and with mourning: And rend your heart, and not your garments, and turn unto the LORD your God: for he is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repenteth him of the evil” (Joel 2:12-13). It has been said that repentance is the hardest command. One thing is certain, God still expects it today (Matthew 3:1-2; Matthew 4:17; Luke 13:3, 5; Acts 2:38; Acts 3:19; Acts 17:30-31).

THEY EXALTED THE CHARACTER AND THE ATTRIBUTES OF THE GREAT GOD OF HEAVEN AND EARTH

The great prophet, Nahum, who prophesied about 640 B.C. proclaimed, “The LORD is slow to anger, and great in

power, and will not at all acquit the wicked: the LORD hath his way in the whirlwind and in the storm, and the clouds are the dust of his feet” (Nahum 1:3). The majestic language of the former prophets ought to thrill the soul of every Christian who reads his Bible. The great prophet Isaiah, in essence, said, no man can instruct God, teach Him judgment, or show Him the way of understanding. To God, the nations are as a drop in the bucket, like the small dust of a balance. All the islands of the earth are but very little things in the sight of God. To the Creator, the great nations of the world are as nothing. There is no one like God or equal to God. He is the everlasting God, the LORD, the Creator of the ends of the earth and there is no searching of His understanding (see Isaiah 40:12-31). The great apostle Paul uttered similar sentiments in Romans 11:33-36. We can never be guilty of exalting God too much. Jeremiah, in praying to God, actually said, “Ah Lord GOD! behold, thou hast made the heaven and the earth by thy great power and stretched out arm, and there is nothing too hard for thee: Thou shewest lovingkindness unto thousands, and recompensest the iniquity of the fathers into the bosom of their children after them: the Great, the Mighty God, the LORD of hosts, is his name, great in counsel, and mighty in work: for thine eyes are open upon all the ways of the sons of men: to give every one according to his ways, and according to the fruit of his doings” (Jeremiah 32:17-19). It seemed like a great thing to Jeremiah for the Chaldeans to prevail against God’s people, but God responded to Jeremiah, “Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for me?” (Jeremiah 32:27).

THEY PREACHED TO A HARDHEARTED, STUBBORN, AND REBELLIOUS PEOPLE

God’s prophets were commanded by the Almighty to

preach the truth, regardless of whether or not the people would listen. Elders in the Lord's church need to have a good understanding of this principle. Preachers need to believe it with all their hearts and pray for courage to proclaim the whole counsel of God. The Lord said to Isaiah, "Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed" (Isaiah 6:9-10). The great prophet Ezekiel had a similar mission to people with the same mindset. "And he said unto me, Son of man, I send thee to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that hath rebelled against me: they and their fathers have transgressed against me, even unto this very day. For they are impudent children and stiffhearted. I do send thee unto them; and thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD. And they, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, (for they are a rebellious house,) yet shall know that there hath been a prophet among them" (Ezekiel 2:3-5). Zechariah himself pleaded for the people not to be like they were in the days of Hosea, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Micah, Joel, Zephaniah and all the former prophets, when he said, "The LORD hath been sore displeased with your fathers. Therefore say thou unto them, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Turn ye unto me, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will turn unto you, saith the LORD of hosts" (Zechariah 1:2-3). Let us teach the truth at all times (II Timothy 4:1-8; Titus 2:1; II John 9-11).

THEY FORETOLD ABOUT CHRIST, HIS KINGDOM, THE GOSPEL, AND THE BLESSINGS THAT WOULD SPRING FROM THE SAVIOR.

The great prophet Isaiah almost wrote the gospel of

THE WORK OF THE FORMER PROPHETS

Christ in prophetic language. He foretold His virgin birth. “Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel” (Isaiah 7:14). He prophesied the exaltation of Christ and His rule upon the throne of David. “For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will perform this” (Isaiah 9:6-7). He foretold of the gospel of Christ. “How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth! Thy watchmen shall lift up the voice; with the voice together shall they sing: for they shall see eye to eye, when the LORD shall bring again Zion” (Isaiah 52:7-8). He pinpointed the sufferings of Christ in Isaiah 53:1-12. Jeremiah would later talk about the King who would rule over God’s people. “Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS” (Jeremiah 23:5-6). The message is so important he basically repeats it. “In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land. In those days shall Judah be saved, and Jerusalem shall dwell safely: and this is the name wherewith she shall be called, The LORD our

righteousness” (Jeremiah 33:15-16). While the great prophet Micah announced the birthplace of our Savior saying, “But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting” (Micah 5:2). All glory be to God for His great foreknowledge, power, wisdom and understanding as demonstrated by all His prophets.

THEY EXALTED THE WORD OF GOD

Every time one of God’s prophets said, “thus saith the Lord,” or “hear ye the word of the Lord,” or “thus saith the Lord of hosts,” he was exalting the word of the living God. There is no use in preaching any other message. The only word in the universe with light is God’s. “To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them” (Isaiah 8:20). The only eternal message for men today is God’s word. “The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever” (Isaiah 40:8). The only profitable, spiritual message for lost souls is the truth of God’s eternal word. “For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it” (Isaiah 55:8-11).

THEY CONDEMNED WICKED NATIONS AND, AT TIMES, PREACHED TO SAVE THE HEATHEN FROM DESTRUCTION.

The following nations, among others, were rebuked and their punishment was foretold by God. For example in Isaiah 13-19, we read about the fall of Babylon, the fall of Assyria, and prophecies against Philistia, Moab, Damascus, Ephraim, Ethiopia, and Egypt. Obadiah prophesied against the Edomites. Jonah prophesied against the Ninevites and they repented. Nahum prophesied about the fall of Nineveh. Habakkuk foretold the downfall of the Chaldeans or the Babylonians. The great God of heaven not only deals with individuals, but He deals with nations as well. America would do well to study Proverbs 14:34. "Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people."

THEY PRAYED TO, TRUSTED IN, AND WERE WILLING TO DIE FOR THE ONE, TRUE, EVERLASTING GOD.

The best commentary on this point is Hebrews 11:32-40. My space is gone, my time is up, so get your Bible and read this passage at home. And while you read, think about the difficult work of the former prophets. May God bless your reading and your life. To Him be glory forever and ever. Amen.

Biographical Sketch

DAN C. BAILEY

Born in Wadsworth, Ohio - November 25, 1949

Currently residing in Bristol, TN

Serving as minister of State Street Church of Christ in Bristol, VA

Graduate of Wadsworth High School - 1968

Attended Campbellsville College, Campbellsville, KY -- 1970

Attended Kent State University - 1968 to 1971

Graduate of Memphis School of Preaching - 1971 to 1973

Attended Athens State College, Athens, AL

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Attended Alabama Christian School of Religion, Montgomery, AL

Returned to Kent State University and received BA - 1985

Received Masters from Kent State University - 1987

Completed basic course work for Doctorate at Kent State; (withdrew prior to completing dissertation to give full attention to local evangelistic work)

Minister of local work in: Ohio, Georgia, Alabama, Mississippi, Tennessee

Preached in Arkansas, Mississippi and Missouri while attending Memphis School of Preaching

Served as an elder while in Mississippi

Gospel Meetings and Lectureships in Ohio, Michigan, Georgia, Alabama, Tennessee, Kentucky, Mississippi, Florida, and scheduled in West Virginia, Wyoming (fall of 2002)

Former director of Meridian School of Biblical Studies

Radio and television work

Married to Charlotte (Bowen) for 28 years.

Have 4 children: 3 sons, 1 daughter; and two grandchildren

SATAN THE ACCUSER

Charles C. Pugh III

Zechariah 3:1-10

Introduction

Then he showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the Angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right hand to oppose him. And the Lord said to Satan, 'The Lord rebuke you, Satan! The Lord who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you! Is this not a brand plucked from the fire?' Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and was standing before the Angel. Then He answered and spoke to those who stood before Him, saying, 'Take away the filthy garments from him?' And to him He said, 'See, I have removed your iniquity from you, and I will clothe you with rich robes.' And I said, 'Let me put a clean turban on his head.' So they put a clean turban on his head, and they put the clothes on him. And the Angel of the Lord stood by. Then the Angel of the Lord admonished Joshua, saying, 'Thus says the Lord of hosts: 'If you will walk in My ways, and if you will keep My command, then you shall also judge My house, and likewise have charge of My courts: I will give you places to walk among those who stand here. Hear, O Joshua, the high priest, you and your companions who sit before you, for they are a wondrous sign: For behold, I am bringing forth My Servant the BRANCH. For behold the stone that I

have laid before Joshua: Upon the stone are seven eyes. Behold, I will engrave its inscription,' says the Lord of hosts, 'And I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day. In that day,' says the Lord of hosts, 'everyone will invite his neighbor under his vine and under his fig tree'" (Zech. 3:1-10).

The theme of the Bible is redemption. The Holy Scriptures "are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Jesus Christ" (2 Tim. 3:15). There are 1189 chapters in the Bible. In one sense, every single chapter contributes to the development of this theme of the redemption of man to the glory of God in Jesus Christ. However, some chapters in the Bible make a more obvious contribution than others. Such chapters as Genesis 3, Isaiah 53, Daniel 2, Acts 2, 1 Corinthians 15, et al, are just a few examples of how some Biblical chapters develop, and summarize, in greater depth than others, the basic doctrine of the plan of redemption.

Zechariah 3 is one of the chapters in which redemption (salvation) is pictured in remarkable summation. The chapter contains ten verses which provide the record of the fourth vision of Zechariah as seen during the restoration period that followed the return of some 50,000

Jews from Babylonian captivity (536 B.C.). This vision, along with the other seven (Zech. 1:7; 6:8), was seen by Zechariah at sometime between 520 and 516 B.C. Zechariah's prophecy was designed to comfort and encourage the returned remnant with regard to God's future work with His people. It is thus filled with "good (gracious, NASV) and comforting words" (Zech. 1:13). Some of the most gracious and comforting words of Zechariah are found in this third chapter.

Although the title given this lecture is, "SATAN THE ACCUSER," the assigned text (Zech. 3:1-10) is much

wider in scope than the awry accusations of Satan who is the adversary of mankind. Baron has affirmed that the words of this chapter “form one of the richest and most beautiful Messianic passages in the Old Testament... a terse summary of glorious announcements concerning the coming Redeemer in the ‘former prophets’” (107). Laetsch cited the German writer, Fuerbringer, who wrote, “Among all the visions of Zechariah this might be called the most beautiful one, for it leads us into the very center of our holy Christian faith” (422). The “very center of our holy Christian faith” is redemption, and this chapter is a marvelous summation of what redemption is all about. The scarlet thread of redemption runs through the ten verses of Zechariah 3 as six basic essentials of the Bible’s plan of redemption are addressed. We will approach our study of this chapter through the development of each of these essentials as immediately seen here, and in harmony with the total context of the Bible.

REDEMPTION’S PROBLEM

The first essential of redemption with which Zechariah is concerned is the problem which necessitates redemption. This problem involves two major elements. They are as follows:

1. **SATAN WITH HIS ACCUSATION.** The vision of Zechariah 3 has its setting in a kind of heavenly courtroom scene. Joshua the high priest (Ezra 3:2, 8ff; 5:2ff; Hag. 1:1, 14; 2:2,4) is seen standing before the angel of the Lord. The angel of the Lord first appears in Zechariah at 1:11. Although I doubt that one ought to say “without question this is the Second Person of Deity” (Taylor 284), it does seem to me that the conclusion that the angel of the Lord in Zechariah is the Logos (the Pre-Incarnate Word - John 1:1-3, 14) is highly probable. Leupold concurs with this conclusion and has written: “Two well established reasons

lead us to believe that wherever ‘*the* Angel of the Lord’ appears and not merely ‘*an* angel’ we have the second person of the Holy Trinity appearing in angelic form before the incarnation. The one reason is that He consistently identifies Himself with the Lord and is recognized as divine by those to whom He appeared, cf. Gen 16:7ff; Josh. 5:31ff; and many more instances. The second is that Mal. 3:1 (according to the preferred interpretation) plainly identifies the Angel of the Lord with the One for whom John the Baptist prepared the way” (38).

In the text of the vision with which we are concerned, Satan is also seen to be standing at Joshua’s right hand. *Satan* is literally “the Adversary” or “Accuser.” This is “the accuser of our brethren who accused them before our God day and night” (Rev. 12:10). The construction of the Revelation text (12:10) implies this trait of Satan is habitual and unceasing in its activity (cf. Laetsch 422). In the Zechariah passage, Satan is said to *resist* (KJV), *oppose*, (NKJ), or *accuse* (NAS) Joshua the high priest. The Hebrew word used here means to antagonize (Ps. 38:21; 71:13; 109:4, 20, 29). The noun is used of an opponent in battle (1 Sam. 29:4; 1 Kings 5:18; 11:14-23, 25) and in court (Ps. 109:6).

The phrase “standing before” (verses 1, 3) is used Biblically in both a (1) judicial and (2) ministerial sense (Wright 46). It is used judicially in reference to (1) the plaintiff (Num. 27:2; 1 Kings 3:16) and (2) the defendant (Num. 35:12; Deut. 19:17; Josh. 20:6). The idea of “standing before” is used ministerially in reference to an inferior standing before his superior for service as he ministers to him (Gen. 41:46; Deut. 1:38; 1 Kings 1:2; 10:8). Both ideas (i.e. judicial and ministerial) may be involved in Zech. 3:1,3. As Wright has summarized, “The high priest was probably seen in the vision, busied about some part of his priestly duties. While thus engaged, he

discovered that he was actually standing as a criminal before the angel while the great Adversary accused him..." (48). It brings to mind the scene in the opening chapters of the Book of Job when Satan, before God, accused Job and said, "Stretch out Your hand and touch all that he has, and he will surely curse You to Your face!" (Job 1:6-12; 2:1ff). In Job, Satan's accusation was "Job *will* sin!" In Zechariah, his accusation is, "Joshua *has* sinned!"

2. **SIN WITH ITS CONDEMNATION.** Much as a prosecuting attorney, before heaven's tribunal, Satan appears at Joshua's right hand before the angel of the Lord to advance his charge of sin. The Psalmist described a similar situation when he wrote, "Let an accuser stand at his right hand. When he is judged, let him be found guilty" (Ps. 109:6-7). The explicit statement of Satan's accusation is not given in the text. However, the nature of his accusation is implied in the statement: "Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and was standing before the angel" (Zech. 3:3). According to Baron, "The word, *tsoyim* (i.e. filthy), which is found only here as an adjective, is the strongest expression in the Hebrew language for filth of the most loathsome character..." (90). The word is used elsewhere to refer to human waste (Ezek. 4:12; Isa. 36:12) and the filthiness of vomit (Isa. 28:8). It is used in Zech. 3:4 as a symbol of sin and the guilt of it (cf. Prov. 30:12; Isa. 4:4). Laetsch summarized what is signified when he wrote the following:

Were these clothes the irrefutable evidence that Joshua was a sinner (Isa. 64:6) and therefore unqualified for his office? Satan was ready to challenge the Lord's own institution for the forgiveness of sin, to deny the right of God to pardon the sinner. He seeks to overthrow the Throne of Grace, so hateful to him, and turn it into a seat of

judgment and condemnation. With one fell stroke he hopes to obtain even the child of God as his victim and fellow prisoner in the flames of hell (422).

As the high priest was representative of the priesthood, and the priests were representatives of the nation which was “a kingdom of priests and a holy nation” (Ex. 19:6), so Joshua’s iniquity is spoken of as “the iniquity of that land” whereby the whole people were defiled (cf. Zech. 3:4, 9). The accusation of guilt is not limited to Joshua alone, but involves Jerusalem (verse 2) which represents the entire nation. Typologically, such likely represents all accountable persons because there is “no one who does not sin” (2 Kings 8:46; cf. Rom. 3:23).

REDEMPTION’S PROCESS

Not only is it the case that the problem with which redemption is concerned is set forth in this text in the picture of (1) Satan with his accusation and (2) sin with its condemnation but, additionally, we see here the process of redemption through (3) the Savior (God) with His salvation. This process of the Savior with His salvation involves (1) *choosing*, (2) *cleansing*, (3) *clothing*, and (4) *crowning* the redeemed (verses 2-5).

The Lord said to Satan, “The Lord rebuke you, Satan!... Is not this a brand plucked from the fire?” (verse 2). To *rebuke*, as used here, signifies a reproof which sweeps away both the accuser and his accusation (Keil 252). It includes the idea of “actual suppression” and “involved a withering rejection of the blasted spirit and his accusations” (Baron 92). Satan arrogantly presents his case against God’s child, but the heavenly counterpart, the divine Advocate, defeats the accusations of the Adversary with divine salvation (cf. 1 John 2:1-2). The salvation received by Joshua and his people is pictured in the

question God asked Satan: "... Is not this a brand plucked from the fire?" (verse 2). The fire out of which Joshua (and the released captives) had been plucked (saved) was the captivity. In the fires of captivity their very existence as a nation had been threatened. God, through Amos, said, "I overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, and you were like a brand plucked from the burning: Yet you have not returned to Me" (Amos 4:11). Jude wrote, "And on some have mercy, who are in doubt; and some save, snatching them out of the fire..." (Jude 22:23). God, who says, "Besides me there is no Savior" (Hos. 13:4), had "snatched" His people from the fires of captivity. Satan would have them destroyed, but God had saved them, the faithful remnant. Israel had gone through the "furnace of affliction" (Isa. 48:10) and, as God had promised, He was with them as they walked through the fire (Isa. 43:2). He saved them as "a brand plucked from the fire" and caused them to multiply and be a blessing to the world.

The process of redemption is pictured further in the following four figures presented in these verses:

1. **CHOSEN (Election)**. The Lord answered the Accuser's effort to antagonize and oppose Joshua. His answer was the affirmation: "... The Lord Who has chosen Jerusalem rebuke you" (Zech. 3:2). The Adversary was rebuked because what he desired was opposed to the gracious purpose of Almighty God. The Lord had chosen Jerusalem. Israel would not be abandoned. The election of Israel by God is a key-note in redemption's sweet song. In the first three chapters of Zechariah it is mentioned three times (1:17; 2:12; 3:2). Why did God choose Israel? He said, "The Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth... I did not... choose you because you were more in number than any other people, for you were the least of all peoples; but because the Lord loves you, and

because He would keep the oath which He swore to your fathers..." (Deut. 7:6-8). The Lord's love is at the heart of why He chose, and saved, Israel. It is a picture of how "He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love" (Eph. 1:4). "Beloved by the Lord... God from the beginning chose you for salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief in the truth, to which He called you by our gospel..." (2 Thess. 2:13-14).

2. **CLEANSED (Justification)**. Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and the Lord said, "Take away the filthy garments from him" (Zech 3:4) . He then said, "I have removed your iniquity from you..." (Zech. 3:4). Here is a picture of justification. John wrote, "To Him who loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood" (Rev. 1:5).

3. **CLOTHED (Sanctification)**. As the filthy garments were removed, the Lord said to Joshua, "... I will clothe you with rich robes" (Zech. 3:4). *Rich robes* (change of raiment, KJV) is from the Hebrew, *machalatsoth*, and is only found in one additional passage in the Old Testament (Isa.61:10). The "festal garments" were the "holy garments for glory and beauty" (Ex. 28:2ff) which were worn by the high priest when he served in the Temple (Ex. 28:3, 29, 38, 40-43).

Josephus said these garments were so beautiful that they were evidence that Moses who wrote about them was inspired (3:7). The high priest would bathe his flesh in water and then put on these "holy garments" (Lev. 16:4). He was cleansed and clothed for service. Today, "the Israel of God" (Gal. 6:16), the "royal priesthood" and "holy nation" (1 Pet. 2:9), the church, has been sanctified and cleansed "with the washing of water by the word, that He might present it to Himself a glorious church, not having

spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish” (Eph. 5:26-27).

4. **CROWNED (Glorification)**. Zechariah responded to these events with the cry, “Let them set a clean mitre upon his head” (verse 5). The word (*tsaniph*) rendered *mitre* or *turban* was not worn by just anybody, but was the headdress of royal and rich people. Elsewhere, it is translated *diadem*. Job said, “I put on righteousness, and it clothed me; My justice was as a robe and a diadem” (Job 29:14). In what seems to clearly be a reference to things which would occur during the Messianic era (i.e. “the last days” Acts 2;17; Heb. 1:1-2), Isaiah wrote, “The Gentiles shall see your righteousness, and all kings your glory. You shall be called by a new name which the mouth of the Lord will name. You shall also be a crown of glory in the hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God” (Isa. 62:2-3). The mitre (turban) in the Zechariah text appears to be a synonym for the *mitsnepheth* which is the technical term for the tiara worn by the high priest under the law of Moses. This was the crowning headgear of the high priest which was made of white linen. Fastened to this turban was a plate of gold with the inscription: “HOLY TO THE LORD” (Ex. 28:4, 36-39; 29:6; 39:28-31; Lev. 8:9; 16:4). This turban, or mitre, was “the glory and complement of the high priest’s sacred and symbolical attire” (Baron 99). It was the portion of his clothing “in which he carried his office, so to speak upon his forehead” (Keil 255). Holiness is the foundation for glory. Christians are commanded to “pursue peace with all men, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord” (Heb. 12:14; cf. 1 John 3:2-3). Leupold has observed that the mitre indicates not what has been received, but what we are to aspire after (73). This conclusion harmonizes well with the preceding Scriptures just cited.

REDEMPTION'S PURPOSE

It has been suggested that what follows in verse six is “the strongest possible encouragement to live up to the requirement found on the plate of the mitre: ‘Holy to the Lord’” (Leupold 74). The angel of the Lord “protested unto” (KJV; ASV) or “admonished” (NKJ; NAS) Joshua to walk in the way of the Lord and keep His testimonies. He was given the assurance, if these conditions are met, that he would be given the right to (1) judge His house (i.e. be given authority to rule all affairs pertaining to the temple service) and (2) keep His courts (i.e. possess the honor of guarding, and keeping away from God’s house all that would desecrate it). Paul wrote, “But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work” (2 Tim. 2:20-21).

The final promise in verse seven identifies one of redemption’s ultimate purposes. God said, “I will give thee a place of access among these that stand by.” Wright concluded that this is “referring to some future atonement, whereby the iniquity of Israel would in reality be removed, and a secure access be forever opened to the Divine throne” (67). It “points to a time when the restrictions of the Old Testament will be swept away” (Keil 257). Laetsch beautifully described the wonderful promise stated herein when he wrote the following:

While the high priest was permitted to enter the Most Holy Place only once a year, and then only under certain conditions (Lev. 16:1ff), the Angel of the Lord here promises that a time was coming when the high priest and his assistants together with the entire congregation here represented by them

would have access not only to the Most Holy Place, but even to the very throne of God; a time when all believers, young and old, would have paths among the angels, the boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus (Heb. 10:19) and would no longer need any human priest or mediator (John 16:23-27) [424-425].

Paul wrote, “For through Him we have access by one Spirit to the Father” (Eph. 2:18). Because we have boldness and access with confidence through faith in Him (Eph. 3:12), we can draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith (Heb. 10:22) that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need (Heb. 4:16).

REDEMPTION’S PERSONS

In verses eight and nine the angel of the Lord identifies those persons through whom God will accomplish this marvelous redemption. “ ‘Hear, O Joshua, the high priest, you and your companions who sit before you, for they are a wondrous sign; For behold, I am bringing forth My Servant the BRANCH. For behold, the stone that I have laid before Joshua: Upon the stone are seven eyes. Behold, I will engrave its inscription, says the Lord of hosts...’ ” (Zech. 3:8-9). Redemption’s persons include (1) the Redeemer and (2) the redeemed.

1. **THE REDEEMED.** Joshua and his companions (NKV), or fellows (KJV, ASV), who sat before him are said to be “a wondrous sign” (men that are a sign, ASV). These fellows (colleagues, friends) of Joshua were likely other priests who, in the discharge of their priestly office and duties, often sat before the high priest to receive instructions pertaining to their office (Wright 68). The expression is used of the sons of the prophets who sat under the instructions of Elisha (2 Kings 4:38; 6:1), and also the

elders of Israel who came before Ezekiel to discuss and receive direction from the prophet (Ezek. 8:1; 14:1; 20:1). That these were “men that are a sign” (verse 8) or “men of portent” (Laetsch 425) means they were a type of future events. Laetsch explains, “The Hebrew term is used of men rousing the attention of the people to a coming event by their strange, symbolical names (Isa. 8:1-4, 18) or actions (Isa. 20:3 and context); Ezek. 12:6, 11 and context; 24:24, 27; cf. vv. 15-18). Joshua the high priest, and his fellow priests were, types prefiguring the New Testament High Priest (Ps. 110:4; Heb. 5:6, 10; chs. 7-10), and the New Testament royal priesthood (1 Peter 2:5,9; Rev. 1:6; 5:10; 20:6).” (425). In one of his eight lectures on Zechariah, delivered at Oxford University, in 1878, Charles H. H. Wright summarized the beautiful meaning of Joshua and his fellows as a sign in the following:

The vision had pictured to the eye of the priest-prophet the manner in which the priesthood of Israel, represented by Joshua, though defiled with iniquity, had been cleansed by Divine grace and rendered acceptable to God. By that grace priests and people had been snatched like half-burnt brands from the fire of a well-deserved punishment. That deliverance was, however, typical of a greater salvation, which the angel was now about to reveal. Hence Joshua and his fellows were typical men. What had been done to them in the vision pointed to “things to come” (70).

2. **THE REDEEMER.** “... For behold, I am bringing forth My Servant the BRANCH. For behold, the stone that I have laid before Joshua...” The Redeemer (the Messiah) is marvelously presented here in three prophetic figures. He is (1) *The Servant* (2) *The Shoot* and (3) *The Stone*. The

Servant is the Messianic Servant of Whom Isaiah wrote (Isa. 42:1-9; 49:1-12; 50:4-9; 52:12; 53:13). He is called such because of His willing, patient, and perfect obedience to His Father (cf. Ps. 40:6-8). The *Branch* (***Tsemach***) is a proper name for the Messiah and means Sprout or Shoot. According to Smith, the Hebrew word (***tsemach***) which is rendered, *Branch*, was “never used of a twig or branch, but of that which grows directly out of the ground” (345). It refers to a tender Shoot which became a mighty cedar (cf. Ezek. 17:22-23). Isaiah prophesied in the 8th century B.C. of this One who “shall grow up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of dry ground” (Isa. 53:2). What a faith-strengthening name this is! Keil explains that the name ***BRANCH*** “denotes the Messiah in His origin from the family of David that has fallen into humiliation, as a sprout which will grow up from its original state of humiliation to exaltation and glory...” (260). The *Stone* we also believe to be Jesus Christ who is the tried and precious cornerstone and a sure foundation (Isa. 8:14-15; 28:16; Ps. 118:22; Matt. 16:18; 21:42; 1 Cor. 3:11; Luke 2:34; 20:17; Acts 4:8-12; Rom 9:33; Eph. 2:20-22; 1 Pet. 2:4, 6-8). It may be the case, as suggested by Wright (71), that a stone was actually seen by Zechariah and that it was the foundation stone of the second temple which had been laid years before (Ezra 3:8-13). This stone would have typified the Messiah and His kingdom which was seen in Nebuchadnezzar’s vision as “a stone cut out of the mountain without hands” which became a great mountain and filled the whole earth (Dan. 2:34-35, 45). Upon the stone are seven eyes (verse 9). This may signify the watchful, providential care of God (cf. Zech. 4:10) which guarded His Servant/Shoot/Stone. Divine Power protected that Stone until the time came to cut it out and shape it. A man’s eyes rest on something in order to care for it. (Leupold 78). Cf. Job 24:23; Ps. 33:18; Gen. 44:21. This

figure is also a reminder of John's vision of the Lamb (Jesus Christ) Who had seven horns and seven eyes which represented "the seven spirits of God" (Rev. 5:6). Thus, Zech. 3:9 could refer to the sevenfold nature of the Spirit of the Lord (Keil 261) as possessed by the Messiah and which is manifested in Isaiah 11:2ff. Concerning this Stone, the Lord said, "I will engrave the graving thereof" (verse 9). What this "engraving" involves is not stated. However, it may simply be what makes this Stone the precious corner-stone it is—the glory and beauty He possesses as He has been anointed with the Spirit without measure (John 3:34). Also, the same wounds which make Him so ugly to the eyes of the world make Him so precious to the believer (cf. Isa. 53:3-5; 1 Pet. 2:6-7). Baron quotes an unnamed writer who eloquently described this "graving" in the following:

Beautiful were the gifts and graces which Christ received as a man; but beautiful beyond all beauty must be those glorious scars with which He allowed His whole body to be riven, that throughout the whole frame His love might be engraven (118).

REDEMPTION'S PERFORMANCE

The bringing in of the Servant/the Branch/the Stone would manifest itself in the cutting out of that Stone into something precious and beautiful---far more precious and beautiful than the great foundation stone of a rebuilt temple. Additionally, the laying of this precious corner stone, and the manifestation of the Messiah, would evidence itself in the removal of sin. The Lord said, "... And I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day" (verse 9b). Baron says this is "the key to the whole vision" (118). Here is *the performance* of redemption through the finished work of the Redeemer.

“AND I...” This is God. He says, “I, even I, am He who blots out your transgressions for My own sake. And I will not remember your sins.” (Isa. 43:25). The scribes were right. No one can forgive sins but God alone (Mark 2:7). However, they failed to see the implications of Jesus’ power on earth to forgive sins - viz. He is God (Mark 2:8-11).

“And I WILL REMOVE...” This is the expiation of sin. It means to cause to depart, to wipe away (Keil 261). It is the blessed, beautiful, and bountiful promise of the New Covenant: “... I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more” (Jer. 31:34).

“And I will remove THE INIQUITY...” Iniquity is sin. Through Jeremiah, God had said, “The iniquity of Israel shall be sought, but there shall be none; And the sins of Judah, but they shall not be found; For I will pardon those whom I preserve” (Jer. 50:20).

“And I will remove the iniquity OF THAT LAND...” The land is primarily, in context, the land of Judah or Israel. However, mention has already been made that “many nations shall be joined to the Lord in that day” (Zech. 2:11). Therefore, as Wright has stated: “... The passage... may be understood to have a reference to the whole earth (the Hebrew word which here we variously translate *land* and *earth* being identical)” (77).

“And I will remove the iniquity of that land IN ONE DAY.” Rashi, one of the most popular Jewish commentators, confessed that he did not know what day this is (Baron 118). However, those who know the gospel surely can see the beautiful harmony between this and the finished work of the Messiah. The expression “in one day” is substantially the same as that rich terminology (*once for all, ephapax*), used by the writer of the epistle to the Hebrews. In contrast to those high priests who had to continually offer up sacrifices daily (Heb. 7:27), year by

year (Heb. 10:10), the Branch (Jesus Christ) “with His own blood entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption for us” (Heb. 9:12). Therefore, “... we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus once for all” (Heb. 10:10). The “one day” of Zechariah is equivalent to the “once for all” in Hebrews, and is the Day of Calvary (Golgotha) as connected with the essential activity of the Messiah’s resurrection, ascension, and coronation:

One day they led Him up Calvary’s mountain,
On day they nailed Him to die on the tree,
Suffering anguish, despised and rejected;
Bearing our sins, my Redeemer is He.
Living, He loved; dying, He saved me;
Buried, He carried my sins far away;
Rising, He justified freely forever;
One day He’s coming
Oh, glorious day!

REDEMPTION’S PEACE

The vision closes with a brief, but beautiful picture of security and peace which is the result of the removal of sin and free access to the throne of grace. “ ‘In that day’, says the Lord of hosts, ‘Everyone will invite his neighbor under his vine and under his fig tree’ “ (Zech 3:10). Since the time of Solomon, the phrase “under his vine and under his fig tree” was synonymous with happiness, peace, prosperity, and security. Micah used this imagery to picture the spiritual blessings connected with the establishment of the house of God (the kingdom, the church) [Micah 4:1-5; cf. Isa. 2:-14; 1 Tim. 3:14-15]. Keil states that the thought of this final verse in Zechariah’s fourth vision describes when “all the discontent and all the misery which flow from sin will be swept away, and a state of blessed peace will ensue for the purified church of God” (262). It is “the

glorious day of the New Testament” (Laetsch 426) when “the justified members of God’s Church, enjoying peace with God, will share their joy with their fellow believers and urge one another to rejoice and sing with them, to taste and see that the Lord is good!” (Ps. 34:8) (426).

Jewish tradition indicates that when the high priest had performed his duties on the day of atonement he was escorted home in a festive manner. It was a time of song and gladness because of the blessings of that solemn day. In this last verse of Zechariah 3 there is a picture of similar gladness and joy “when, on account of sin being pardoned, free access to God’s throne granted, and the Deliverer having come... each true Israelite would invite his friends as joyful guests to partake of festal cheer under his own vine and fig tree... ‘Paradise lost’ has become ‘Paradise regained’ “ (Wright 78).

CONCLUSION

Zechariah 3:1-10 wonderfully summarizes Redemption’s sweet story. It sets forth (1) ***Redemption’s Problem*** with Satan and his accusations, and sin and its condemnation, 2) ***Redemption’s Process*** through the Savior and His salvation which involves *choosing, cleansing, clothing, and crowning* the redeemed, (3) ***Redemption’s Purpose*** which ultimately is to provide free access to the throne of God, (4) ***Redemption’s Persons*** which include the Redeemer Who is the promised Servant, Shoot, and Stone, and the redeemed, (5) ***Redemption’s Performance*** at Golgotha, and (6) ***Redemption’s Peace*** brought by the Messiah.

If Satan had been successful prosecuting his case, redemption would have been refuted, and you and I would have been doomed to damnation in a devil’s hell. However, the Accuser has been answered! The Devil has been defeated!

Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God (Rom. 5:1-2).

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Charles C. Pugh III was born in Marietta, Ohio, and raised in the Parkersburg/Vienna, West Virginia, area

where he graduated from Parkersburg High School. He received his higher education from Ohio Valley College, Harding University, and Harding Graduate School of Religion with graduate studies concentrated in the fields of the Philosophy of Religion and Christian Apologetics under the teaching of the late Thomas B. Warren. He has been preaching for thirty-five years and has served as preacher for churches in Ohio, Mississippi, Tennessee, and West Virginia. For the past fifteen years he has worked with the Bridge Street Church of Christ in New Martinsville, WV, where he did the pulpit preaching for thirteen years. However, due to a voice disease, he resigned from this work in 2000 but continues to work with this congregation in the areas of teaching, hospital visitation, and writing. His articles appear in several journals and church bulletins. He presently spends considerable time in a writing ministry. He also preaches in several gospel meetings yearly and on a number of lectureships. Charles has served as an instructor at Ohio Valley College, and was a member of the original faculty of West

Virginia School of Preaching where he continues to teach three Christian Evidences courses as well as several other courses.

Charles and his wife, Sharon, have three children: Mrs. Ben Brewster (Mendy) whose husband is a minister with the church in Bossier City, Louisiana; Chip, who lives with his wife, Nicole, in Marietta, Ohio, where he works as a campus evangelist at Marietta College under the oversight of the elders of the 6th & Washington Streets Church of Christ; and Nicole who is a sophomore at Harding University. They have two grandchildren.

ERRORS OF PREMILLENNIAL DOCTRINE

W. Terry Varner

My subject assigned for this hour is “Errors of Premillennial Doctrine” as found in the book of Zechariah. Because of the complexity of the topic, the space allotted does not permit the topic to be developed in detail. As examples of this point, four of the leading premillennial scholars heavily depended on Zechariah in developing the premillennial doctrine: (1) J. Barton Payne refers to 78 verses 246 times (*Encyclopedia of Biblical Prophecy*, 717-718), (2) J. Dwight Pentecost refers to 191 verses 147 times (*Things To Come*, 622-623), (3) George N. H. Peters, in his three volume work titled *The Theocratic Kingdom of Our Lord Jesus, the Christ, as Covenanted in the Old Testament and Presented in the New Testament*, III:618, refers to 156 verses 185 times, and (4) John F. Walvoord refers to 100 verses 29 times (*The Millennial Kingdom*, 368).

A PREMILLENNIAL OVERVIEW

Before refuting some of the errors that premillennialism make, it would behoove us to give a brief synopsis or overview of the premillennial doctrine. In doing so, we will see the simplicity of the biblical doctrine of end-time matters and the foolish, questionable doctrine of premillennialism.

The word premillennial is developed from the Latin terms “*pre*” (before) and “millennial” from “*mille*” (1,000) and “*annus*” (years). The doctrine states that Christ will return in person to the earth to assume a personal, visible, and bodily reign in the city of Jerusalem on David’s throne prior to the 1,000 years millennium.

Most premillennialist hold to seven dispensations which, according to C. I. Scofield, *The Holy Bible*, 5, are as

follows: (1) Innocency (Gen. 1:27-3:24), (2) Conscience (Gen. 3:23-24), (3) Human Government (Gen. 8:20), (4) Promise (Gen. 12:1), (5) Law (Exod. 19:8), (6) Grace (John 1:17), and (7) Kingdom (Eph. 1:10).

The theory teaches that we are presently living in the sixth dispensation; i.e. grace and are awaiting the seventh dispensation; i.e. kingdom. It is this latter or seventh dispensation with which we are concerned in our study.

The premillennialist contend that the purpose of the first coming of Christ was to establish His kingdom as prophesied in various Old Testament books—Isaiah, Daniel, Joel, Zechariah, etc. Jesus came preaching “the kingdom of God is at hand” (Mark 1:5); but Christ failed to establish His kingdom when the Jews rejected the Christ His kingdom. He established the church in its place and the kingdom will be established in His third coming or in the second part of His second coming.

This entails the concept that *if* the Jews had allowed Christ to establish His kingdom and had accepted Christ as King then: (1) Christ would have set up His kingdom with the city of Jerusalem as its capital. (2) The Jews would have defeated the Romans and expelled them from their land (Palestine). (3) The Jews would have become exalted to first place among all nations of the earth. (4) The kingdom being rejected was postponed and the King was crucified. (5) The kingdom will be established at the second coming of Christ and it will be an earthly kingdom with the duration of 1,000 years.

The theory contains an elaborate teaching, and at times confusing, in reference the second coming of Christ. The premillennial theory divides the second coming of Christ into two parts separated by seven years thereby making three comings of Christ.

The first part of the second coming is a secret and invisible known as the *rapture*. This first part of the second

coming (really a second coming), the first (Rev. 20:5), involves the resurrection *of* the dead Old and New Testament saints and the changing of the living saints. The “*raptured*” saints will go to heaven for seven years to receive their reward and to be assigned their positions in the coming 1,000 year kingdom.

The seven years is known as the most severe *tribulation* to have ever occurred on earth. In the first three and a half years, or 42 months, many who remain on earth will be converted. At the end of the 42 months the “anti-christ” will come. In the second three and a half years, or 42 months, all converted during the first 42 months will either die or be murdered. These are known as the *tribulation saints*. During this seven year period *all* of fleshly Israel will be saved. At the end of second part of the second coming, known as the *revelation*, Christ will come *with* His resurrected saints and there will be a battle of the forces of the “anti-christ” and “the Christ” known as the Armageddon. Following this battle, the tribulation saints will be resurrected and the kingdom of Christ will be established with Christ reigning in Jerusalem for 1,000 years. The temple will be rebuilt and animal sacrifices resumed. At the end of this 1,000 year reign the Great White Throne judgment (Rev. 20:11-15) occurs. The righteous will be taken to heaven for eternity and the wicked will be raised and cast into hell.

SOME ERRORS OF PREMILLENNIALISM FROM THE BOOK OF ZECHARIAH

The errors of premillennialism are many and many are drawn from the great prophetic Book of Zechariah. The statement by George L. Robinson should be taken with great gravity:

Few books of the OT are as difficult of interpretation as the Book of

Zechariah....The scope of Zechariah's vision and the profundity of his thoughts are almost without parallel. In this present writer's judgment, his book is the most Messianic, the most truly apocalyptic and eschatological, of all writings of the OT (*The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 3136).

Since Zechariah is the longest prophetic book of all the Minor Prophets and is the most difficult of all of the Old Testament books to interpret; we urge, as Homer Hailey, that all "should approach an interpretation of it with prayer and humility, acknowledging his own limitations and knowing that he cannot afford to be dogmatic" (*A Commentary on the Minor Prophets*, 318).

ERROR #1: Faulty Hermeneutics. The Book of Zechariah is filled with apocalyptic and figurative language. The latter interpretative principle is almost totally ignored by the premillennialists!Apropos to interpreting, not only the Bible but any writing, is an understanding of the difference between literal and figurative language. Much of the Bible is written in language that is highly figurative. Bible students must acquaint themselves with the rules of interpretation, especially in dealing with this great book of prophecy. Otherwise, all sorts of fanciful interpretations occur or we will certainly miss the meaning. D. R. Dungan eight rules for identifying figurative language and ten rules for interpreting figurative language.

To help us recognize figurative language Dungan lists the following eight rules:

- (1) The sense of the context will indicate it.
- (2) A word or sentence is figurative when the literal meaning involves an impossibility.
- (3) The language of Scripture may be regarded as figurative, if the literal interpretation will cause one passage to contradict another.

ERRORS OF PREMILLENNIAL DOCTRINE

(4) When the Scriptures are made to demand actions that are wrong, or forbid those that are good, they are supposed to be figurative.

(5) When it is said to be figurative.

(6) When the definite is put for the indefinite.

(7) When said in mockery.

(8) Common sense—Figures of speech sometimes occur when we have to depend on the things we know, in order to decide if the language is figurative or literal (*Hermeneutics*, 195-202).

Dungan then follows these eight identifying principles with ten rules of interpreting figurative language. They are as follows:

(1) Let the author give his own interpretation.

(2) The interpretation should be according to the general and special scope.

(3) Compare the figurative with literal accounts or statements of the same things.

(4) By the resemblance of things compared.

(5) The facts of history and biography may be made to assist in the interpretation of figurative language.

(6) Any inspired interpretation, or use of the figure, in an argument, or teaching, will decide its meaning.

(7) We must be careful not to demand too many points of analogy.

(8) It must be remembered that figures are not always used with the same meaning.

(9) Parables may explain parables.

(10) The type and the antitype are frequently both in view at the same time (*Hermeneutics*, 203-225).

ERROR #2: The Second Coming of Christ. The theory uses various Scriptures (2:10-12; 14:1-11) to prove the second coming of Christ is a visible, bodily return. They emphasize particularly (14:4-5) as the physical return to the earth by Christ when He sets His feet on the mount Olives thus splitting the mount and forming a valley as an

escape for the saints (Walvoord, 270, 274). Pentecost continues the theory from this text that this refers to the judgment of the Jews and Gentiles after Christ's return, but before the 1,000 year reign (413). He suggests that since the name of Jehoshaphat means "Jehovah judges," that "the newly opened valley outside of Jerusalem will bear that name because of the momentous event to transpire there" (417). The "saints" who flee (14:5) involve: (1) the converted Jews from Jerusalem which had fallen to "all nations" (14:2) and (2) "the raptured church" (Payne, 467).

How are we to understand these verses? Do they teach a literal, visible, second coming of Christ planting His feet on the mount of Olives and the catastrophically splitting the mount? To what does the great prophet refer?

First, the text says "the day of the Lord Cometh" (14:1). We believe this terminology is a figurative description of the coming salvation of God's people under the new Covenant. We understand Zechariah 14 as referring "to the whole of the Messianic era from its commencement till its close" (E. W. Hengstenberg, *Christology of the Old Testament*, IV:107).

Second, the text of (14:1) speaks of the "Lord" (Hebrew *adonai* translated in ASV as "Jehovah" indicating "sovereign or ruler" (W. A. Dean, *The Names of God*, 61) and not a reference to Jesus as the premillennialist adduce in order to assist their literal interpretation of (14:4-5). This harmonizes with the phrase, "the Lord my God" (14:5).

Third, these Scriptures cannot refer to the second coming of Christ for the following reasons: (1) when Christ comes again He will not set His feet upon the earth, but rather mankind will be taken up from the earth "to meet the Lord in the air" (1 Thess. 4:17). (2) When Christ comes again, "then cometh the end" and Jesus will "deliver up the kingdom to God" (1 Cor. 15:23-25). He does not come the second time to establish the kingdom but to deliver it. (3)

Christ presently reigns on His throne as the “only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords” (1 Tim. 6:15). He is both King (John 18:33; 1 Tim. 6:15) and High Priest (Heb. 2:14; 5:5-6; Zech. 6:13). If these texts (Zech. 14:1-5) refer to Christ literally returning to earth, then He cannot be a priest on earth (Heb. 8:4).

Fourth, we understand Zechariah 14 figuratively in which “Jerusalem” represents the New Covenant—the church, heavenly Jerusalem (Rom. 2:28-29; Gal. 4:6; Heb. 12:22). The spiritual kingdom, the church, is assaulted by the world or sin. The assault upon the world (“nations,” 14:2) by God, describing His standing on and splitting the Mount of Olives, is understood figuratively as God’s providential care, concern, support, and security for the saints. The “feast of the Tabernacles” (14:18-19) describe the joy and thanksgiving of the saints.

ERROR #3: Rejects the Kingdom and Church Are One and the Same. The theory teaches that Jesus initially came to earth to establish an *earthly* kingdom with the nation of Israel (Gentiles not included). Clarence Larkin describes the ministry of John the Baptist as: “prepare the way of the Lord for what? Not for the cross but for the kingdom” (*Rightly Dividing The Word*, 51). M. R. Dehaan states: “the kingdom of heaven is the reign of heaven’s kingdom on earth. This Jesus offered to the nation of Israel when he came the first time, but they rejected it and he went to the cross” (*The Second Coming of Jesus*, 46). W. E. Blackstone writes: “He would have set up the kingdom but they rejected and crucified Him” (*Jesus Is Coming*, 46).

Where in the ministry of Jesus did He fail to establish His kingdom? *When* did He postpone the establishment of His kingdom?

Their argument is based from the Gospel of Matthew which is considered “a book of fulfillment” (Charles Feinberg, *Premillennialism or Amillennialism?*, 85). John’s

preaching, “Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt. 3:2) implies to the premillennialists “that the very kingdom that had been promised to Israel was now at hand in the Person of the King whose forerunner and herald he was” (87). Jesus began His ministry with the identical prophetic promise: “Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand” (Matt. 4:17).

The theory places great important on the events in (1) Matthew 10, “The Twelve Apostles Commissioned” to preach *only* to the house of Israel, (2) Matthew 11, “The Growing Opposition,” and (3) Matthew 12, “Jesus Rejected By The Pharisees” (Walvoord, *Matthew—Thy Kingdom Come*, 75-91) as the **time** when the Jews rejected Jesus and His Kingdom. Feinberg elaborates in this fashion:

From this point on Matthew begins to draw attention to the dark clouds appearing on the horizon. The forerunner of the King is cast into prison, and while there, is seized with questionings as to the genuineness of the claims of the King. The King most graciously sends the word of assurance and confirmation, and then turns to pour out His word wrath and of impending doom upon those cities which had not received His message and in which most of His mighty works had been performed. At this point He injects a new element into His message: He appeals to all those who are weary and heavy laden to come to Him for rest. This is certainly not preaching the gospel of the kingdom, for it is a personal invitation to fill individual need. The King is evidently turning from the purpose first outlined in His coming; undoubtedly God is revealing the introduction of a new element in the

mission of the King, that had not been inculcated into the prophecies of the Old Testament...He severs every earthly tie, announcing that whosoever did the will of His Father in heaven was His brother and sister and mother. The King has been rejected! (93).

Following the rejection of Jesus and His kingdom by the Jews, the theory makes Matthew 13, the seven kingdom parables, pivotal and “a new division in the gospel” (Walvoord, *Matthew*, 95). He reasons further:

The concept of a kingdom postponed must be understood as a postponement from the human side and not from the divine, as obviously God’s plans do not change....What is contingent from the human standpoint, however, is always planned from the divine standpoint. The rejection of Christ by His own people and His subsequent death and resurrection were absolutely essential to God’s program. Humanly speaking, the kingdom, instead of being brought in immediately, was postponed. From the divine viewpoint, the plan always included what actually happened....Matthew 13 introduces a different form of the kingdom, namely the present spiritual reign of the King during the period He is physically absent from the earth, prior to His second coming. The mysteries of the kingdom, accordingly, deal with the period between the first and second advent of Christ and not the millennial kingdom which follow the second coming (Walvoord, *Matthew*, 96-97).

What shall we say to the contention that the kingdom is not yet established but will be established in the millennium? Did God fail? Did Christ fail? Is the success of the divine purpose of God dependent upon Israel's obedience? Did God yield to man's disobedience? If so, Is man's sins of rebellion and rejection more powerful than divine power? Was the church unknown to the Old Testament prophets? Is there a difference between the church and the kingdom? How do the Scriptures address the matter?

Question #1: Do the Old Testament prophets speak of the church?

Consider: The Old Testament prophets, by divine revelation and inspiration, described the church with symbols or figures of speech within the boundary of their normal day to day experiences and activities. Eight of the Old Testament prophets wrote of the church in this manner. The following is taken from the lecture of Rex A. Turner Sr., "The Church As Seen By The Old Testament Prophets," *The Church—The Beautiful Bride of Christ*, 10-19.

Joel saw the church as having its beginning with a great outpouring of the Holy Spirit (2:29). It is fulfilled on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:16).

Amos described the church as the restored tabernacle of David (9:11-12). The fulfillment is found in Acts 15:13-18.

Isaiah and **Micah** wrote that the church is a house established on the top of the mountains and exalted above the hills (Isa. 2:2-3; Micah 4:1-2). Inspiration states that the "house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15).

Jeremiah affirmed the church as a new covenant written on the inward parts of men's hearts (31:31-33). The inspired message finds the fulfillment in Hebrews 8:6-10.

Daniel prophesied that the church was as a small stone cut out of the mountains without hand, and the stone grew and filled the whole earth (Dan. 2:31-35). The church was established on the day of Pentecost who within five centuries filled the Roman Empire and ultimately has spread throughout the entire earth.

Ezekiel proclaims the church as a sheep-fold with one shepherd, David, over them (Ezek. 34:11, 22-23). Jesus the Son of David is that good shepherd (John 10:14, 16) and thereby fulfills this Old Testament prophecy.

Zechariah describes the church as a temple and also an open fountain (6:12-13; 13:1). The church is indeed the temple (Eph. 2:19-22) and offers to lost and dying man a fountain of hope filled with blood. It is no wonder, Christians sing:

There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel's veins;
And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains.

Why would not we expect to read of the prophets prophesying the church when it is the case that the church is the “eternal purpose of God” (Eph. 3:1; cf. 8-12) and was in the eternal purpose of God “before the foundation of the world” (Eph. 1:3-14; Rom. 8:28-30; 2 Thess. 2:13; 2 Tim. 1:9)?

One of the prophecies of Christ found in Genesis 3:15, a text known as “the *protevangelium*.” This biblical prophecy and promise is to the human race, not to Israel *only*, that Christ would meet and defeat Satan of his own ground. This is a pre-runner to the Abrahamic promise in Genesis 12:1-3. *These are universal promises to the human race and not national promises to Israel only. These are salvation promises, not millennial promises!*

Question #2: Is Jesus a reigning King? If so, He must have a *territory* over which to reign.

Observe: The Bible teaches that Christ now reigns as the “only Potentate, the King of kings, and Lord of lords” (1 Tim. 6:15) and the kingdom was at hand in the ministry of John the Baptist (Matt. 3:2) and Jesus Christ (Matt. 4:17; 10:7).

Pilate asked of Christ, “art thou a king then?” (John 18:37). Pilate witnessed the good confession (1 Tim. 6:13-15). The penitent thief knew Jesus was to be King with a kingdom when he stated: “Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom” (Luke 23:42). Inspiration settles the question once and for all—“these shall make war with the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them [John the Baptist declared Jesus as the Lamb of God (John 1:29)]; for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings” (Rev. 17:14).

Question #3: Does the church and the kingdom exist at the *same time* and refer to the *same thing*?

Observe: Kings must have a *territory* over which to reign. Does King Jesus have a *territory* over which He now reigns? If so, what does the Bible teach is that *territory*?

Brother J. Harvey Dykes in *Ready Answers To Religious Errors* shows clearly and forcibly, from the Bible, that the church and kingdom are one and the same:

- a. They have the *same owner* (Matt. 16:18; John 18:36).
- b. They have the *same ruler* (Eph. 5:23; 1 Tim. 6:15; Heb. 1:3; Acts 2:34-36).
- c. They have the *same beginning place* (Isa. 2; Acts 2; Joel 2; Micah 4).
- d. They have the *same beginning date* (Isa. 2:1; Dan. 2:44; Acts 2:16-17).
- e. They have the *same law* (Isa. 2:3; Acts 2).
- f. They have the *same keys* (Matt. 16:18-19; Acts 2:47).
- g. They have the *same terms of admission* (John 3:5; Acts 3:28; Gal. 3:26-27).

- h. They have the *same members* (Col. 1:2, 13-14).
- i. They have the *same memorial* (1 Cor. 11:20-27; Matt. 26:29).
- j. They have the *same glory* (Isa. 2:1; Eph. 3:21).

The Bible teaches that the kingdom was at hand both in the ministry of John the Baptist (Matt. 3:2) and of Jesus (Matt. 4:17; 10:7). Christ came to establish His church (Matt. 16:18); i.e. the called out ones, which was prophesied by eight writing prophets of the Old Testament. He is the head of the church, which is His body (Eph. 1:22; Col. 1:18). The church was established on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2) at the preaching of the gospel by the apostle Peter (Acts 2:22-47). Peter had the *keys* of the gospel and preached Christ to the Jews (Acts 2) and to the Gentiles (Acts 10). The church is the “first dominion” of the kingdom (Micah 4:8). The second dominion is heaven or “the everlasting kingdom” (2 Peter 1:11).

Likewise, Peter had the *keys* to the kingdom (Matt. 16:19). Keys (*kleis*) “symbolize control of entry, power over anyone wanting entry” (Anne Del Corro, “To Put Or Not To Put A Footnote: Matthew 16:19,” *The Bible Translator*, 53:2, April 2002, 229). Peter’s preaching of the gospel, as well as the preaching of the other apostles and early Christians, enabled the alien sinner (Jew and Gentile) to enter the kingdom. Thus, Peter, and the other apostles (Matt. 18:18), bound upon the alien sinner what God had bound as entry requirements (faith, repentance, confession, and baptism) and loosed what God had permitted already in heaven, as well as whatever God bound and loosed. J. R. Mantey writes: “The sentence shows that God does not concur in man’s decisions; man is to ratify and obey God’s decrees” (“Distorted Translations in John 20.23, Matthew 16.19 and Matthew 18:18,” *Review and Expositor*, 78 [1981], 409-416). From these texts the premillennial theory is wanting when it claims that the Jews’ rejection of

Jesus caused Him to establish His church and postpone the kingdom.

Question #4: For a ruling King to have a kingdom, He must also have *subjects* in that kingdom. Does the kingdom, which now exists, have *subjects*?

Observe: The Bible teaches that His *subjects* are those in Him; therefore, they are in the kingdom over which He rules. The Bible teaches that “except a man be born again he cannot see the kingdom of God” (John 3:3) or “enter into the kingdom of God” (John 3:5).

We are told that the Colossians “had faith in Christ Jesus” (Col. 1:4) and were “buried with him in baptism” (Col. 2:12). All who are baptized into Christ are added to the church (Acts 2:47). In the Epistle to the Colossians, the Christians (saints) were members of the church (Col. 1:18, 24); i.e. they were called out of sin into Christ. However, the same Epistle makes it clear that those in the church were also in the kingdom as they had been delivered from darkness (conversion) and had been “translated...into the kingdom of his dear Son” (Col. 1:13). The word “**translated**” (*metestesen*) was a military term that often signified the “deportation of a body of men or the removal of them to form a colony” (John Eadie, *Commentary on the Epistle of Paul to the Colossians*, 36). The term is expressive showing that those called out of sin were called into a body, or “colony,” or as the Bible says “the kingdom.” Therefore, one cannot be in the church without, also at the same time, being in the kingdom. When Christ established His church He also established His kingdom. Those who are subject to the Lamb of God; i.e. Christ (John 1:29) are “called, chosen, and faithful” (Rev. 17:14).

Question #5: No King can reign in a kingdom without a *law*. Does the Bible teach that Jesus as King over His kingdom, and the head of the church His body, have a law by which and through which He rules? If so, then it is the

case that He now reigns as King, Lord and only Potentate (1 Tim. 6:15).

Observe: According to both the Old and New Testament, the *law*, that governs the church also governs the kingdom at the same time, is the “New Covenant” (Jer. 31:31ff.; Heb. 8:8-13) or New Testament. Jesus is the “mediator of the new testament” (Heb. 9:15).

While the New Covenant or New Testament is the covenant of grace (John 1:14, 16-17; Eph. 2:1-10), this covenant is also “*law*” for its adherents. It is referred to as the “law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus” (Rom. 8:2) and the “law of faith” (Rom. 3:27). While Jesus brought grace, He also is the giver of the new law which James says: “there is one law giver who is able to save and destroy” (James 4:12). We are mindful of Galatians 6:2, “bear ye one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.”

ERROR #4: A Millennial Temple and Sacrificial Rituals: The premillennialist teach that Zechariah 14:16-21, combined with other Old Testament passages; i.e. Ezekiel 40:1-46:24, describes a millennial “temple in detail as well as the ritual and priesthood connected with it” (Walvoord, *The Millennial Kingdom*, 309). While the premillennialists agree to a future millennial temple, a great diversity of interpretation exists concerning “the temple ritual and sacrifices” (310).

Walvoord states that the rituals and sacrifices are “a distinct system from the Mosaic, but that it involves animal sacrifices as well as other forms of worship similar to that provided in the Mosaic law” (311). A. C. Gaebelein explains that these sacrifices:

in the millennial temple have a retrospective meaning....The resumed sacrifices will be the memorial of the Cross and the whole wonderful story of the redemption for Israel and the nations of the earth, during the reign

of Christ....What meaning these sacrifices will have! They will bring to remembrance everything of the past. The retrospect will produce the greatest scene of worship, of praise and adoration this earth have even [sic] seen. All the Cross meant and the Cross has accomplished will be recalled and a mighty “Hallelujah Chorus” will fill the earth and the heavens (*The Prophet Ezekiel*, 312-313).

Question #1: Why a millennial temple and the reestablishment of its rituals? Why the reestablishment of the animal sacrifices, “though distinct from,” but “similar” to those under the Mosaic dispensation?

Observe: According to the theory, the temple is needed to create a focal point for worship during the 1,000 years. However, the church has been the focal point of worship for the saints on the earth since its establishment. Christianity has often been considered the singing religion. Revelation certainly exalts worship during the Christian dispensation (Rev. 5:8-14; 7:11-17; 19:1-9).

We quibble with the restoration of the Levitical sacrifices, which are called “weak and beggarly elements,” and inspiration encourages us not to return to them (Gal. 4:9). The entire Epistle to the Hebrews is the fulfillment of the Old Testament typical system of expiation in the high priestly atonement and mediation of the Lord Jesus Christ. The entirety of the teaching of the New Testament destroys the idea of a millennial temple and animal sacrifices. The Epistle to the Hebrews devastates the need and value of *any* temple and *any* future sacrifice beyond that of Christ. Christ’s sacrifice was “once” for all (Heb. 7:27). Jesus “appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself” (Heb. 9:26). “It is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins” (Heb. 10:4). The Old

Testament rituals have been fulfilled and taken out of the way (Col. 2:14). There is no text within the pages of the New Testament that suggests a future return to these rituals. To agree with Gaebelein's comments, as well as other premillennialists, is to completely disregard the entire Epistle to the Hebrews.

One wonders what hermeneutic the premillennialist use in order to reason as A. C. Gaebelein above and S. D. Gordon below:

It can be said at once that His dying was not God's own plan. It was a plan conceived somewhere else, and yielded to by God. God had a plan of atonement by which men who were willing could be saved from sin and its effects. That plan is given in the old Hebrew code....Clearly Jesus' dying does not in any way fit into the old Hebrew form of sacrifice....the horrible features of Jesus' dying, the hatred and cruelty, were not part of the plan of salvation, and not necessary to his plan. There is no cross in God's plan of atonement (*Quiet Talks About Jesus*, 114-155, 117-118).

Gaebelein's comments and Gordon's comments are highly contradictory, blasphemous and abhorrent! They reduce the cross and the Lord's Supper to meaningless events in the Christian age. The millennial theory is totally Jewish and materialistic and literalistic to the core.

The memorial of the cross is evidenced in the Lord's Supper of which saints observe, celebrate and rejoice in faithful partaking each Lord's Day. It is the Lord's Supper that enables the saints to recall *all* the cross means and accomplishes. It is not the reestablished sacrifices of the millennial theory. As we partake of the bread, we are reminded of the fleshy body of Jesus. His horrible death

serves as the propitiation for all mankind (1 John 2:2). As we partake of the cup which represents His blood, we do so in remembrance of it being shed “for the remission of sins” (Matt. 26:26-29) until He comes again (1 Cor. 11:24-25). This is the *only* memorial feast set forth in the Bible for believers. Why bring back again, through faulty hermeneutics, the shadow and the type when we have observed and rejoiced in this Christian age in the substance and the anti-type?

CONCLUSION

We have established that Christ now (1) is the King of kings, Lord of lords and the only Potentate (1 Tim. 6:15), (2) has a kingdom which is also called the church (Matt. 16:18-19, et al.), (3) has subjects in His kingdom or church known as obedient servants (John 3:5; Col. 1:13), and (4) has a law through which He rules His kingdom and church (Heb. 8:8-13; Rom. 8:2; 3:27; James 4:12). (5) We have shown the false hermeneutic of the millennial theory in reference to the reestablishing of the temple and animal sacrifices for 1,000 years. Consequently, He will not return in a millennium to establish His kingdom.

SUGGESTED READING

We have found the following works useful in both understanding and in refuting the premillennial theory. The theory is highly complex with many divergent positions among those who hold to premillennialism.

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

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QUESTIONS ON FASTING

Wesley Simons

(Zechariah 7:1-7; 8:18-19)

Introduction

The thrust of these verses is to establish the fact that a spiritual activity in which one involves himself must have Bible authority and one's being and heart placed into that function. Otherwise, the actions are without God's approval. God does not want us involved in the wrong avenues of worship. Neither does He want us involved in the right actions without us putting our heart into it. Jesus put it this way: "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:23-24 23).

There are at least four possibilities in which one can find himself in relationship to worship as taught in John 4:24. These are: (1) One can be engaged in the right act with the wrong attitude; (2) One can be engaged in the wrong activity with the right attitude; (3) One can be engaged in the wrong activity with the wrong attitude; (4) One can be engaged in the right act with the proper attitude. We must worship God in spirit and in truth.

After coming back from captivity, some of the Israelites wanted to know about the various fasts in which they had been involved in captivity. They did not know if these should be continued or eliminated.

If an act is truly authorized, one would not need to go to any man to find out if such acts ought to be continued. This says a lot about their understanding of Bible authority.

The Word Of God Comes To Zechariah

Zechariah 7:1 And it came to pass in the fourth year of king Darius, that the word of the LORD came unto Zechariah in the fourth day of the ninth month, even in Chisleu;

Time and time again in this book, it is made plain that Zechariah's message is from God. In this verse, we are told that "the word of the Lord came unto Zechariah." Zechariah starts the book by stating: "In the eighth month, in the second year of Darius, came the word of the LORD unto Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, the son of Iddo the prophet, saying, (Zechariah 1:1). Notice, the first revelation comes to Zechariah in the second year of Darius. The word comes unto him in this context in the fourth year. However, in each case it was the word of the Lord.

The Bible often gives check points such as a king's name or title. This affords us the opportunity to check on the accuracy of the Bible. The Bible can stand any fair test leveled against it.

Some have very little faith in inspiration: "Some scholars have seized upon the unusual placement of the words, "The word of Jehovah came to Zechariah," in such a manner as to split the elements of the date in two, as an excuse for rejecting the passage, or for screaming "interpolation." Such views are the result of the prejudice that the prophet should always have followed some prescribed formula in giving the date. There is no valid reason whatever for such a prejudice, as proved by this variation from it. As the passage stands, the date is perfectly clear, as is also the truth that Zechariah was delivering God's message, not his own." (Burton Coffman, *CD Commentary on The Book of Zechariah*).

Certain Men Are Sent

Zechariah 7:2-3 When they had sent unto the house of God Sherezzer and Regemmelech, and their men, to pray before the LORD, 3 And to speak unto the priests which were in the house of the LORD of hosts, and to the prophets, saying, Should I weep in the fifth month, separating myself, as I have done these so many years?

God had authorized only one fast day, that being on the day of atonement. Moses said, “And this shall be a statute for ever unto you: that in the seventh month, on the tenth day of the month, ye shall afflict your souls, and do no work at all, whether it be one of your own country, or a stranger that sojourneth among you” (Leviticus 16:29). He further stated, “It shall be a sabbath of rest unto you, and ye shall afflict your souls, by a statute for ever” (Leviticus 16:31). However, they were not pleased with the one fast. They had to add others.

All, who truly want to be pleasing to God, must appeal to God’s word for authority on all issues. These men had come to inquire about the fasts that they had been keeping while in captivity. They wanted to know if the fasts should continue. This points out a very interesting point. If the fasts were from God, why ask if such should be done? If they were from God, it had to be done. Therefore, the trip was not needed.

Coffman points out, “The situation had been brought about by the fact that great progress was being made in rebuilding the temple; property was increasing; and there appeared to be some doubt as to the keeping of a fast day on the anniversary of the destruction of the first temple. Indeed, times had changed; a new temple was rising; and it was obviously inappropriate to keep weeping and fasting for the old one.” (Burton Coffman, *CD Commentary on The Book of Zechariah*).

“These men were sent to speak to the priests and the prophets, seeking an answer to this question: "Should I weep in the fifth month, separating myself, as I have done these seventy years?" The weeping and separation had to do with a certain fast the Jews had initiated in memory of the disaster that befell Jerusalem and the temple at the hands of the Babylonians in 586 B.C. 2 Kings 25:8ff; Jeremiah 52:12. Through their exile in Babylon, the Jews had fasted and mourned on this day; at the time, they had been observing this practice for 70 years.” (Bob Winton, *Outlined Commentary on The Minor Prophets*, p. 202-203).

Did You Fast Unto The Lord?

Zechariah 7:4-5 Then came the word of the LORD of hosts unto me, saying, 5 Speak unto all the people of the land, and to the priests, saying, When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, even to me?

Here again, we see that the word of the Lord came unto Zechariah. The men wanted to know what the Divine view of fasting is. They were about to learn. It appears from the context that the people were more saddened about their situation than they were for violating the word of God. While in Babylon, they wept for their home land and all that they had lost. However, God said those tears were not shed for Him or because the people violated His law.

They were going through a religious act but their heart was not in it as far as God was concerned. So today, when we go through the right avenue of worship, but our heart is not in it, God is not pleased. This means when we sing, we are to meditate on the words and sing from the heart. When we partake of the Lord’s supper, our minds are to go back to the cross and we are to reflect upon the true meaning of the death of Jesus for each of us. When one leads us in

prayer, we are to follow the words of the one doing the praying so that the prayer becomes our prayer to God.

God wants to know if the people had fasted unto Him. We know it is possible to fast and do it for a show rather than unto God. Jesus said, “Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. 17 But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; 18 That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly” (Matthew 6:16-18). These people did not fast unto God. Some had rather have the accolades of men than the approval of God.

Some people are baptized to get their wife or the preacher off of their back. They have not rendered an act of obedience unto God. They have done this act unto themselves. It benefits them in that they no longer have to listen to various ones trying to get them to obey God. With all such actions, God is highly displeased.

Did Not You Eat And Drink Unto Yourselves

Zechariah 7:6 And when ye did eat, and when ye did drink, did not ye eat for yourselves, and drink for yourselves?

Mourning for their great loss was not the same as worshipping and adoring God. They were saddened that they had been driven from their home land, but were they saddened for the cause which brought about such?

Had they been faithful to God, they would not have been driven from their home land. They would not have seen the temple destroyed. Furthermore, there would not have been a need for the various fasts which they had invented.

The children of God had learned the hard way that the way of transgressors is hard (Proverbs 13:15). When punished, they wanted to institute unauthorized fasts and mourn and weep because of their great loss. However, God wanted them to mourn over their involvement in sin. Jesus put it this way, “Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted” (Matthew 5:4). If the children of Israel wanted comfort, then let them weep and mourn for the right reason.

You Should Have Listened Unto The Prophets

Zechariah 7:7 Should ye not hear the words which the LORD hath cried by the former prophets, when Jerusalem was inhabited and in prosperity, and the cities thereof round about her, when men inhabited the south and the plain?

Notice, Zechariah asked the question, “Should ye not hear the words which the LORD hath cried by the former prophets?” Notice, God did not inspire thoughts. He inspired the very words the prophets spoke. The correct view of inspiration is that every word is God given and God protected. Jesus said, “... It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God” (Matthew 4:4). If man must live by every word which proceeds from the mouth of God, then we must know what those words are. God told Moses, “Now therefore go, and I will be with thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say” (Exodus 4:12). God told Jeremiah, “Then the LORD put forth his hand, and touched my mouth. And the LORD said unto me, Behold, I have put my words in thy mouth” (Jeremiah 1:9). Jesus exalted the words of God, “For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee, and they have

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believed that thou didst send me” (John 17:8). Thus, we can see that God inspired the very words that the prophets and other inspired men spoke or wrote.

The adding or deleting of one word can change the entire meaning of a passage. Many have added the word **NOT** to Mark 16:16. They teach the passage like this: He that believeth and is “**NOT**” baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned. There are those who add the word **NOT** to Revelation 2:10. Because of the false doctrine of *once saved, always save* they teach the passage as saying: ... be thou “**NOT**” faithful unto death, and I will give thee a crown of life.

The Bible warns that one is not to add to or take from the inspired volume. Moses warned, “Now therefore hearken, O Israel, unto the statutes and unto the judgments, which I teach you, for to do them, that ye may live, and go in and possess the land which the LORD God of your fathers giveth you. 2 Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you” (Deuteronomy 4:1-2). He also stated, “What thing soever I command you, observe to do it: thou shalt not add thereto, nor diminish from it” (Deuteronomy 12:32). Solomon also warned, “Add thou not unto his words, lest he reprove thee, and thou be found a liar” (Proverbs 30:6). John gave the final warning relative to changing God’s word, “For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: 19 And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book” (Revelation 22:18-19). God means what He says when He says do not tamper with His word.

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In this verse, Zechariah asked a very important question, “Should ye not hear the words which the LORD hath cried by the former prophets, when Jerusalem was inhabited and in prosperity, and the cities thereof round about her, when men inhabited the south and the plain?” Zechariah is stating that if they would have heard the prophets when God was trying to call them to repentance, then there would have been no captivity and no need for those fasts which they have invented. Their attitude was they did not want to hear the prophets of God. They had rather hear the false prophets who were preaching peace, peace when there was no peace (Jer. 6:13-14).

At one point Israel was so corrupt, that God wanted her to quit wearing out His courts. “Hear the word of the LORD, ye rulers of Sodom; give ear unto the law of our God, ye people of Gomorrah. 11 To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. 12 When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? 13 Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting. 14 Your new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to bear them. 15 And when ye spread forth your hands, I will hide mine eyes from you: yea, when ye make many prayers, I will not hear: your hands are full of blood. 16 Wash you, make you clean; put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes; cease to do evil; 17 Learn to do well; seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. 18 Come now, and let us reason together, saith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall

be as wool. 19 If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land” (Isaiah 1:10-19).

They were going through the right acts but they were involved in idol worship and other sins. God wanted them to quit wearing out His courts. If they would have repented and offered these gives from the heart, He would have accepted them.

Furthermore consider this, “Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the LORD is contemptible. 8 And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the LORD of hosts. 9 And now, I pray you, beseech God that he will be gracious unto us: this hath been by your means: will he regard your persons? saith the LORD of hosts” (Malachi 1:7-9). They went through the right acts but their heart was not in it. They gave of the crumbs of their lives. God said give it to your governor and see if he will have respect for you.

“Should ye not hear the words -- rather, "Should ye not do the words," as their question naturally was as to what they should do (Zec 7:3); "hearing" is not mentioned till Zec 7:12. The sense is, It is not fasts that Jehovah requires of you, but that ye should keep His precepts given to you at the time when Jerusalem was in its integrity. Had ye done so then, ye would have had no occasion to institute fasts to commemorate its destruction, for it would never have been destroyed (Zec 7:9-14).” (*Jamieson, Fausset and Brown*, CD Commentary).

Additional Thoughts From Chapter Eight

Zechariah 8:18-19 And the word of the LORD of hosts came unto me, saying, **19** Thus saith the LORD of hosts; **The fast of the fourth month, and the fast of the**

fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth, shall be to the house of Judah joy and gladness, and cheerful feasts; therefore love the truth and peace.

Some seventeen times in this chapter thus saith the Lord of Host or its equivalent is found. Thus showing the importance of God's word. Zechariah wanted the children of God to know that his message was from God.

“Here at last came the direct answer to the inquiry that had precipitated this rather lengthy response from Zechariah with various direct revelations from Jehovah. Although they had at first inquired about only one of the four popular fasts, later mentioning another, Zechariah named all four of them and, in effect, cancelled them, all of them being illegal, human-initiated religious observances without any value whatever.” (Burton Coffman, *CD Commentary on The Book of Zechariah*).

“In view of what the Lord proposed to do in the future, by blessing Israel with prosperity and peace, and in the distant future, by bringing the Messiah into the world through the lineage of Abraham, the emphasis ought to be placed on rejoicing, not mourning.” (Bob Winton, *Outlined Commentary on The Minor Prophets*, p. 202-203).

The Jewish nation had many reasons to rejoice. However, once again in the future, she could mourn because of the rejecting of God and His Son (Zechariah 11:1-17). The bottom line being God will bless a people, if and only if, they will do His will.

Conclusion

These verses teach us that the performing of an act without truly obeying God from the heart is useless. We must learn that we have to obey God from the heart. “But God be thanked, that ye were the servants of sin, but ye have obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you” (Romans 6:17). “Keep thy heart with all

diligence; for out of it are the issues of life” (Proverbs 4:23). “Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God” (Matthew 5:8). Therefore, we see that obedience from the heart is a must. “Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; 9 And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him” (Hebrews 5:8-9).

May God help us to honor His word. We are not to add to it or take from it, so that we can always obey from the heart the things that He would have us do. If we do this, then heaven will be our home.

Biographical Sketch

Wesley Simons has preached for 32 years. He preachers and is one of the elders at the Stoney Creek Church of Christ. He is married to Elva (Cook) for 35 years. He has two daughters: Karen Blevins (33) and Candy Phillips (24). Both are faithful members of the church. He is a graduate of the Memphis School of Preaching; He has B.A. and M.A. degrees from Tennessee Bible College; He has done post-graduate work at Tennessee Bible College; Past instructor (Extension Classes) for Tennessee Bible College; Past director of Crandull School of Preaching; Founder and director of the Tri-Cities School of Preaching; Extensive TV work; Extensive experience hosting live radio call-in program (Between 70-100 converted as a result of program. Five of these are denominational preachers); He has Begun three Brotherhood Papers; He has been involved in numerous debates.

MESSIAH'S TRIUMPHAL ENTRY

Neal Pollard

Zechariah 9:9-10

Prophecy concerning the Messiah is one strong proof of the divinity of Jesus Christ. Furthermore, prophecies about the Messiah *had* to be fulfilled by Him. It is true “that if they have not been fulfilled in him, they can never be fulfilled at all.”¹ The internal attestation of the New Testament about the prophecies of the Old Testament claims the prophecies to have been fulfilled in Jesus. Peter preached, “To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins” (Acts 10:43). A few years earlier he had also said, “But those things, which God before had showed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled” (Acts 3:18). Between His resurrection and ascension, Jesus had said, “These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and in the prophets, and in the psalms, concerning me” (Luke 24:44).

The result of a study of messianic prophecies should be to build and reinforce one's faith in the validity of Christ's Messiahship. The book of Zechariah has at least six distinct messianic prophecies. The one under consideration in this study is Zechariah 9:9-10, which reads, “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass. And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off:

¹ J.M. Pendleton. *Christian Doctrines* (Philadelphia: American Baptist Pub. Soc., 1878), p. 189.

and he shall speak peace unto the heathen: and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth.” This passage refers to an event in the life of Christ commonly called “the triumphal entry.” It is thus considered, for He entered the city of Jerusalem—generally believed to be on Sunday—to the warm, worshipping reception of the multitude. All four gospels record this harbinger event for the last week of Christ’s life (cf. Matthew 21; Mark 11; Luke 19; John 12).

Upon a closer study of Zechariah 9:9-10, several significant traits surrounding this triumphal entry are discovered. All of them are significant to Jesus’ work as Redeemer and have implications for the subsequent body of the redeemed. Consider eight words that capture the essence of this triumphal entry.

Rejoicing (9:9)—“Rejoice greatly...shout”

This shows that Christ would be triumphant over sorrow. McGarvey notes, “The people were wild with delight and admiration. Only the most extravagant state of feeling could prompt them to make a carpet along the mountain path with their garments, and with the soft branches of the palm tree.”² They exclaimed words of praise about Him, seeing Him as One who had come by God’s authority (cf. Mark 11:9). They may have wrongly limited His work to being merely a prophet (Matthew 21:11), but they exulted over the greatness they perceived in Him.

Eight times in Philippians alone, Paul tells Christians to “rejoice” in or because of Jesus. According to Romans 5:2, He is the only reason sinful man could have to rejoice. If Jesus is not the Messiah of promise, His coming could deliver only temporary excitement rather than permanent

² JW McGarvey. *A Commentary on Matthew and Mark* (Delight, AR: Gospel Light Pub. Co., 1875), p. 179.

rejoicing. Though many of His adoring fans who carpeted His way on Sunday would scream out for His blood on Friday, they were right to rejoice over His entrance into Jerusalem. For He must enter Jerusalem to complete His atoning work (Matthew 16:21).

**Royalty (9:9)—“Behold,
thy King cometh unto thee”**

This shows that Christ would be triumphant over any potential rival. Hebrews is written to establish the superiority and unparalleled greatness of Jesus. Yet, the Bible in many places teaches of His resplendent regality. He is King of Kings (1 Timothy 6:15; Revelation 19:16). He is King of a kingdom not of this world, as He would instruct Pilate in John 18:36, but a King nonetheless. He reigns over His spiritual Kingdom, the church (cf. Matthew 16:18-19; Colossians 1:13). He is enthroned with the Father in heaven (Revelation 3:21). When He rode into Jerusalem, He was not yet a King in reality. However, as of the Pentecost Day that would come fifty-seven days later, He began reigning as King over the spiritual kingdom established that day (cf. Acts 2:47).

Right (9:9)—“He is just”

This shows that Christ would be triumphant over injustice. Under the Law of Moses it was forbidden to pervert justice (cf. Leviticus 19:15). Yet, in their many digressions, the Israelites egregiously did so (Isaiah 59:14ff; Ezekiel 45:9; Hosea 10:13). Their judges failed to protect and even afflicted the widows, orphans, poor, and needy among them (Isaiah 10:1-2). From heaven, God saw treacherous behavior from those appointed to uphold justice. Zephaniah wrote that unjust judges were like wolves at evening, leaving nothing for the morning (3:3). The princes of Israel oppressed the stranger, vexed the

widows and orphans, taken bribes, taken interest against their brethren, and extorted their neighbors (Ezekiel 22:12).

The legacy of corrupt leaders in the storied past of the Jews was firmly etched in the collective memory of this worshipping multitude in Jerusalem. Likewise, they had seen injustice practiced by the religious leaders among them in their lifetime. In fact, that very day they would see and hear Jesus denounce it from the moneychangers' tables in the temple (Matthew 21:12) to His "pulpit" where He preached to them about the hypocrisy of the Pharisees and scribes in Matthew 23.

That Jesus is just is important because God's holiness demanded a just payment for sin. For sinful man to receive justice, without the intervention of Christ, would mean eternal punishment in hell. That is what any sinner deserves. Interestingly, after teaching that every person has sinned (Romans 3:23), Paul teaches that God sent Jesus forth to demonstrate His justice. Romans 3:26 then says, "To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that He might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus."

Redemption (9:9)—"He is [One]...having salvation"

This shows that Christ would be triumphant over Satan. When Jesus mounted that colt, He knew He was coming into Jerusalem to die. He was beginning a journey that would finally lead up to Golgotha. He had the salvation in His person. He was specified, from Mary's womb, as the One who would "save his people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21). He had the salvation in His perfection (2 Corinthians 5:21). He had the salvation in His power (Hebrews 1:3). The salvation of man through Christ was promised to all, when God looked Satan in the eye and uttered the very initial messianic prophecy (Genesis 3:15). Thus, man can

rejoice, “Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Hebrews 2:14-15).

Reserved (9:9)—“Lowly...”

This shows that Christ would be triumphant over sinful pride. This is an incongruous picture, by human thinking. Here is a king, but how does He enter the city? “...Not on a richly caparisoned steed and surrounded by pomp and glory, but on the colt of an ass, the last animal which vanity would choose for a grand display....”³ Augustine once commented on Mark 11:7, focusing on Jesus’ act of humility. He wrote,

The master of humility is Christ who humbled himself and became obedient even to death, even the death of the cross. Thus he does not lose his divinity when he teaches us humility... What great thing was it to the king of the ages to become the king of humanity? For Christ was not the king of Israel so that he might exact a tax or equip an army with weaponry and visibly vanquish an enemy. He was the king of Israel in that he rules minds, in that he gives counsel for eternity, in that he leads into the kingdom of heaven for those who believe, hope, and love. It is a condescension, not an advancement for one who is the Son of God, equal to the Father, the Word through whom all things were made, to become king of

³ Ibid., p. 178.

Israel. It is an indication of pity, not an increase in power.⁴

Jesus professed that He is lowly, and as such approachable (Matthew 11:29). The great world empires of the ages have generally had their share of egomaniacal monarchs, whose conceit led to their downfall (cf. Proverbs 16:18). No wonder Jesus' Kingdom would never be destroyed (Daniel 2:44). Not only was its builder and maker Divine. He bore to perfection the trait of humility. His unassuming nature is one of the many attractive qualities that have drawn men to Him throughout the centuries of time.

Rest (9:10)—“He shall speak peace...”

This shows that Christ would be triumphant over problems. The world has always needed peace. Wherever it searches in this world, it comes up empty. There is no peace possible apart from the Lord. Thus, Jesus would teach, “Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid” (John 14:27). Man's biggest problem is sin. Yet, beside this, man is beset with general problems that are common to all—sickness, death, heartache, threat, pain, fear, guilt, and loss. In one way or another, Jesus offers peace to cope with all these problems. He does not promise that these things will completely vanish. Becoming a Christian, on the other hand, at times may increase some of them temporarily (like threats or loss). Ultimately, however, Jesus offers peace. It is a peace which girds and guides amidst the stoutest of storms (cf. Philippians 4:7). Therefore, Christ offers, “Come unto me and I will give you rest.”

⁴ Thomas C. Oden and Christopher A. Hall, Eds. *Ancient Christian Commentary on Scripture, Vol. 2* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 1998), pp. 155-156.

Reigning (9:10)—“His dominion...”

This shows that Christ would be triumphant over the world. As has already been seen, Christ is the head of the church and as such is the King of this spiritual kingdom. To Kings belong dominion. Dominion is simply “rule” or the quality of having power. Christ has been given all authority in heaven and on earth (Matthew 28:18). He is head over all things to the church (Ephesians 1:22-23). Any who do not submit to His reign in this life will bow in prostrate, abject humility at the Judgment (Philippians 2:10-11). Only then it will be too late. One must submit to the dominion of Christ in this life by becoming a Christian. After this life is the Judgment (Hebrews 9:27), at which time the disobedient will be consigned to eternal torment (cf. Ephesians 5:6).

Reconciliation (9:10)—“He shall speak peace unto the heathen: and his dominion shall be from sea even to sea, and from the river even to the ends of the earth”

This shows that Christ would be triumphant over division. What a marvelous truth, that the gospel is for all! Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem, though attended by and attested to by Jews, was a journey intended to break down the middle wall of partition between Jew and Gentile. Ephesians two speaks of reconciling both unto God in one body by the cross (verse 16). Galatians three expands one’s understanding of who the seed of Abraham is. Paul writes, “For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise” (27-29).

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Wherever Christians will take the gospel and sinners will obey it, there will be Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. Christ came to destroy racial division, national division, familial division, and religious division. All of these destructive works are destroyed when people unite in Christ (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:10-13). Jesus came into a divided world and offered reconciliation. Now, even in the present divided world, there can be unity to the extent that men and women will submit to Christ's rule and be obedient to the faith.

The triumphal entry into Jerusalem was glorious. It produced rejoicing. It signified royalty. It symbolized right. It heralded redemption. It depicted reservation. It promised rest. It foreshadowed His reign. It preceded reconciliation. Faith grows in the sunlight of biblical prophecy!

ZERUBBABEL: A TYPE OF CHRIST

Andy Robison

ZECHARIAH 4:1-14

The temple foundation mocked the apathy of God's people for fifteen years. That is a long time for a thing to remain unfinished. Many have stewed over seeming inability to complete a high-profile project. On the present site of a particular nursing home there stood for years nothing but an empty steel frame. The kids of the area used to play in and around it. The adults likely spoke of those who had not counted the cost of finishing before they started building. It is doubtful the corporate executives passed by daily, but had they done so, they might have known the feeling of the Jerusalem Jews who had some sort of unfinished footer just taking up space in the holy city. It mocked their indifference and discouraged leadership.

The key to completion in any task is leadership. Anyone can have an idea and bring it up at a business meeting. No skill is involved in complaining that a thing is not getting done. Only those, however, with leadership characteristics can see a job through and keep its workers encouraged to completion. Zerubbabel was the man who began the task on the temple a decade and a half earlier (4:9). God would employ his leadership to complete it. Like any of us, though, Zerubbabel would need some words of encouragement. Whatever discouragement and depression that hindered him had taken a long time to fester. It would not be something one would work out of overnight. Not, that is, without the Lord's help.

That is the message to the man. Through these visions in this night, he learns that he would never accomplish this on his own, but that the Lord would work through him to do so (4:6). God's Spirit would be the overruling factor that

would bring all else into submission. All obstacles would be overcome because the Lord was the initiator, sustainer, and finisher of the mission.

There is the point of the prophecy. The vision of Zechariah 4:1-14 is designed to strengthen the man through whom the Divine planned His deeds. Through it, we see a little of the character of the man, but a lot of how God planned to use him in the temporal role of the physical temple, and in the typological role of foreshadowing One who would raise a destroyed temple of another sort in three days.

The Scene

Any vision begs the simplest of questions at the first of its interpretative process: What is seen? What is the overall picture? Most such revelations have in mind the overall impression, and not a strict, item-by-item, allegorical approach. To illustrate, consider common dreams. Though not divinely inspired, they stake a parallel in this instance. Some have dreams where exaggerated circumstances highlight a feeling of the lack of preparation. Preachers wake up in cold sweats because they've stumbled into the pulpit late on Sunday morning, still wearing their bedclothes. That doesn't mean the pajama shirt stands for one thing, the pants for another, the pulpit for another, and the angry elders for still something else. It just, if you'll excuse amateur dream analysis, means the man is unprepared. The overall impression is the thing.

In examining the biblical vision at hand, the student ought to caution himself against pressing dogmatic interpretations on the particular items. Perhaps the candlestick represents light to the world. Perhaps the olive trees represent covenants, or people supplying strength to those who do the lighting. Nevertheless, the big picture must not be lost.

Here is what one has, then. First, there is a lamp stand. It is not quite the same as that of the tabernacle (Ex. 25:31-40; 37:17-24) or the temple (1 Kings 7:49; Jer. 52:19). Its features are amplified by the nature of the dream for the purpose of the point. The main difference is in the provision for a constant supply of oil. No re-fueling by the handiwork of some priest is needed. Each of the seven lamps on the menorah is adequately supplied with its own piping—whether a pipe to a lamp or seven to each, depending on the translator’s rendering of the original Hebrew. A step further back in the process of origins, two olive trees provide the precious, golden oil, and a golden pipe for each carries the provision to the lamp stand. The amplification and elaboration of that which was familiar to the Jews (the candlestick) carries the thrust of the message.

The Point

That thrust is that God provides. Hear the angel’s explanation of verses six and seven. Zerubbabel would not accomplish the work by his own power, but God would work through him and help him over every obstacle. Hear the meaning portrayed in verses nine and ten. He who started it would complete it under the watchful eyes of the Lord.

In these explanations is a description of the way Zerubbabel typifies Christ, and applications thereof.

The Typology

As many characters of the law, our tutor to bring us to Christ (Gal. 3:24,25), functioned in aspects which foreshadowed some characteristic of the Christ, so also did Zerubbabel. Within our assigned text, a few comparisons come to the fore.

Foundation

Zerubbabel laid the foundation of the temple. Christ is the foundation of the church (1 Cor. 3:11). Zerubbabel was not the foundation of the temple personally, but Christ is, of the church, personally. The physical type must of necessity of nature, fall short of the glory of the spiritual anti-type. Zerubbabel was God's work piece in leading the people to the reconstruction of the holy place after its destruction some fifty years before.

Homer Hailey points out in his commentary on *The Minor Prophets* (Baker Book House; Grand Rapids, Michigan; 1972), that two periods of seventy years' desolation are calculable from the predicted (Jer. 25:11-12; 29:10) and fulfilled seventy-year captivity of the Jews.

There were two periods of seventy years associated with Judah's captivity; the seventy years of bondage to Babylon, 606/605 B.C., the year Nebuchadnezzar had taken Judah into his empire, to 536 B.C. when Babylon fell to Cyrus; and the period from the destruction of the temple, 586 B.C., till its completion, 516 B.C. This latter period of seventy years was almost completed. (p. 326)

God would powerfully, by the motivating power of the prophetic word, bring Judah back to its status as a homeland nation. Zerubbabel led the way in this. When the foundation of the temple was laid, the most significant step to the time in the rebuilding effort, shouts of youthful joy mixed with the tears of old men reverberated throughout the city (Ezra 3:11-13). It was a joyous occasion, but it foreshadowed something much greater.

Jesus used the figure of the temple metaphorically to refer to His resurrected body (John 2:19-22). His foretold resurrection would make Him suitable to be the very

foundation of the spiritual temple of God, the church (1 Cor. 3). As Zerubbabel employed others in building, so would Christ. By the entrustment of His word to His apostles, they received status as participants in the foundation, but none with so significant a role as Jesus Himself. Eph. 2:19-22 depicts their roles and relationships in building the temple for the New Covenant's Israel of God (cf. Gal. 6:16):

Now therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God; And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone; In whom all the building fitly framed together groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord: In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.

As Zerubbabel laid the foundation, Christ IS the foundation. Wise men, therefore, build their houses on Him and His teachings (Matt. 7:24-27).

The Completion

Zerubbabel would finish the work he had begun. He would place the head stone, or capstone, the context indicating this to be the final stage and culminating glory of the work. As Zerubbabel places an important stone in this structure, one of significance beyond description regarding the actual and emotional state of Israel, Christ Himself is the most important stone in all the building of the church (Eph. 2:20). As Zerubbabel had trouble motivating the people to the work, God had predicted that His very chosen cornerstone would be rejected by men. Nevertheless, that stone, causing many to stumble, would be the rock which held the whole together (1 Peter 2:4-8; Psalm 118:22). He is the central piece that holds together a chosen generation

and royal priesthood fashioned after ancient, physical Israel (1 Peter 2:9,10).

King and Priest

If the menorah amply supplied is symbolic of God providing for His people through the leadership of Zerubbabel, we are led to a conclusion as to what the olive trees to the right and left, supplying golden oil, represent. Scholars generally assign these symbols to Joshua, the son of Jehozadak, the high priest of the time, and Zerubbabel (cf. Ezra 3:8-11; 4:3). Their reasoning involves an inclusion of the spiritual and civil leadership necessary to complete the task.

Burton Coffman, in his commentary on *The Minor Prophets* (ACU Press; Abilene, Texas; 1983, pp. 61ff.) disagrees, applying the figure to the Old and New Covenants. His reasons include an objection to the civil authority prefiguring Christ since the monarchy was against God's will in the first place (1 Sam. 8). If one were to follow this line of reasoning, however, he would be utterly confused by all the other references to Christ as a king in His kingdom and as King of Kings over all the earth (cf. John 18:36; Rev. 19:16).

In the overall picture, it seems rather reasonable that the high priest and the governor are representatives of the authority needed to accomplish God's will in the face of many obstacles. There was no separation of church and state imposed upon the Jewish kingdom. In it, accomplishment of religious goals was tied inseparably to religious faithfulness to God's way. This was a foretelling of what things would be like in God's kingdom—not in any particular nationality, but in the spiritual realm of the church. And in the church, there is one who is sufficient to accomplish the spiritual and civil, if one will, leadership. He is our High Priest (Heb. 5-7). He is our King. He is all sufficient and over all things in His church. All aspects of

leadership come together in Him (Col. 1-2). It is through His power that anything at all is accomplished in the world regarding the expansion of His kingdom, the enlargement of His church, the further growing of His temple—the building of the Lord and “habitation of God in the Spirit” (Eph. 2:19-22).

One Point of Application

All of this brings Christians—His followers—to an inherent, uplifting lesson. When Christ begins a work, He will finish it. The only question is whether or not men will allow His work to be done through them. In the exercise of free will, men can cut off the supply of the power that moves mountains. But God is faithful to work through the faithful. Paul displayed this confidence in encouraging his Philippian brethren (Phil. 1:6). Jesus indicated to His apostles that mountains would be moved by their faith (Matt. 17:20; 21:21). Whatever the original intent, we don’t expect today to move meaninglessly a pile of dirt. We do expect, though, the blessing of God in spiritual purposes. The prophet rhetorically asked and, in essence, mocked any obstruction or purposed enemy, “Who art thou, O great mountain? Before Zerubbabel thou shalt become a plain: and he shall bring forth the headstone thereof with shoutings, crying Grace, grace unto it.” (4:7). We might rhetorically, but humbly, ask, who can thwart the purposes of God? Indeed, who can stand against those whom God protects? (cf. Rom. 8:31-39). All obstacles that stand in the way of God’s purposes will be removed. The Christian’s task is to make sure his life is one of submission to those same purposes.

Biographical Sketch

Andy Robison was raised in Moundsville, WV, Andy is a graduate of Ohio Valley College, and Harding University, with a B.A. in Bible and Vocal Music. He has

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worked with congregations in Pennsboro, Farmington (Oakhurst), and Parkersburg (Camden Ave.), West Virginia. He taught Bible and directed the choruses at Jackson (Tennessee) Christian School. He presently is preaching for the Hopewell church of Christ south of Parkersburg. He married Marsha Giesler of Rolla, Missouri in 1988, and they have two children, Hannah, born in 1992, and Andrew, born in 1996.

THE SCHOOLS OF THE PROPHETS

Louis Rushmore

Fundamental to understanding *The Schools of the Prophets* is understanding the usual way in which the Bible employs the term *prophet*. Typically today, we first think of the word *prophet* meaning “3: one who foretells future events: PREDICTOR.”¹ While it is true that sometimes prophets foretold the future, *reception* of new revelation was **not** a daily occurrence, but an extraordinary event even during miraculous eras. Primarily, a biblical prophet was “one who **utters** divinely inspired revelations,”² irrespective of when and by whom those revelations were received. Outside of receiving new revelation, a prophet in the Bible was essentially comparable to what we know as a *preacher*. “Cry aloud, spare not, lift up thy voice like a trumpet, and shew my people their transgression, and the house of Jacob their sins” (Isaiah 58:1). “And the LORD hath sent unto you all his servants the prophets, rising early and sending *them*; but ye have not hearkened, nor inclined your ear to hear” (Jeremiah 25:4).

Ezra illustrated this facet of being a prophet in Nehemiah 8:1-8. (Ezra is described as being a “priest” and a “scribe” also.)

“And all the people gathered themselves together as one man into the street that was before the water gate; and they spake unto **Ezra** the scribe to bring **the book of the law of Moses**, which the LORD had commanded to Israel. And Ezra the priest brought the law before the congregation both of men and women, and all that could hear with

¹*Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary*, (Springfield, Massachusetts: Merriam-Webster, Incorporated) 1993.

²*Ibid.*

understanding, upon the first day of the seventh month. And **he read therein** before the street that was before the water gate from the morning until midday, before the men and the women, and those that could understand; and the ears of all the people were attentive unto the book of the law. And **Ezra the scribe stood upon a pulpit of wood, which they had made for the purpose ...** And **Ezra opened the book in the sight of all the people;** (for he was above all the people;) and when he opened it, all the people stood up ... **caused the people to understand the law:** and the people stood in their place. **So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading**” (emphasis added, ler).

Verse 8 summarizes the primary task of God’s preacher in every age irrespective of by what terms we call him. A prophet or a preacher resorts to Scripture for the text of his message and explains it so that his auditors can more easily understand divine revelation and how it applies to them. Consequently, the apostle Paul instructed Timothy the evangelist to “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine” (2 Timothy 4:2). The apostle also quoted Isaiah, applying the duty of a prophet to New Testament preachers.

“For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they

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hear without a **preacher**? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things! But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For **Esaias** saith, Lord, who hath believed our report? So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.” (Romans 10:13-17, emphasis added, *ler*; see also Isaiah 52:7; 61:1; Nahum 1:15).

The schools of the prophets, then, were ancient counterparts to what the world commonly calls seminaries or what we might also refer to as theological colleges or schools of preaching. This correlation is not lost on contemporary theologians. Several denominational schools either incorporate the phraseology *School of the Prophets*³ into their institutional names or make the comparison between their organizations and the schools of the prophets.⁴ Clearly and more aptly, our schools of preaching stand in place of the ancient schools of the prophets, with

³ School of the Prophets Prophetic Ministries Tabernacle (Ft. Worth, TX) <http://www.propheticministries.org/page10.html>; School of the Prophets, Zoe Ministries (NY, NY) <http://zoeministries.com/schoolop.htm>; School of the Prophets, Capital Christian Center (Boise, ID) <http://www.nocomp.org/Teaching.htm>; School of the Prophets, Foundation Ministries International (Richmond, VA) <http://www.fm-i.org/schofmin.htm>; School of the Prophets, Ministry of the Watchman <http://www.ministryofthewatchman.com/school.html>; School of the Prophets, Mormon Church <http://beardall2000.com/dc/ch23.html>; School of the Prophets, Liberty Church (Marietta, GA) <http://www.libertychurch.org/SpecialtyMinistries/P.Pres.htm>

⁴ Bethany Bible College and Seminary (Dothan, AL) <http://www.bethanybc.edu/seminarydegree.htm>; Vanderbilt Divinity School (Nashville, TN) http://www.witherspoonsociety.org/vanderbilt_divinity_school.htm

the exception that today we neither receive new revelation nor predict future events.

The schools of the prophets existed as early as the inauguration of the united kingdom of Israel. The first biblical intimation of the schools of the prophets occurs in relationship to Samuel's anointing of Saul to be King (1 Samuel 10:1-13). Though there had been prophets before Samuel (i.e., Enoch, Jude 14-15; Abraham, Genesis 20:7; Moses, Deuteronomy 34:10), the existence of schools of the prophets is associated with Samuel and noteworthy prophets who followed him. "Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days" (Acts 3:24). Further, Samuel (the last judge, a prophet and a priest) presided over the schools of the prophets in his day. "And Saul sent messengers to take David: and when they saw the **company of the prophets prophesying, and Samuel standing as appointed over them**, the Spirit of God was upon the messengers of Saul, and they also prophesied" (1 Samuel 19:20, emphasis added, 1er). Hence, circumstantial evidence attributes the beginning of the schools of the prophets to Samuel.

There is a void of biblical reference to a divine prescription for the establishment of schools of the prophets. The schools of the prophets apparently did not come into being as the result of divine mandate. Rather, the schools of the prophets were a divinely permitted expedient or bona fide means of accomplishing the God-ordained duty of instilling divine law in the people of God (Deuteronomy 4:1, 9; 1 Samuel 12:23). Further, it is evident from the lack of divine censure (at a time when God expressed displeasure about other matters, 1 Samuel 8:7) that the establishment of the schools of the prophets did not violate divine law. Similarly today, schools of preaching, though not stipulated in Scripture, are an

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expedient means of satisfying the responsibility to teach others who can teach others (2 Timothy 2:2).

The schools of the prophets were sorely needed when established to disseminate God's Word to the children of Israel overall and to their civil and religious leaders, too. Likewise, the counterpart to the schools of the prophets are sorely needed today for the masses as well as social, political and religious leaders. Anciently, neither the Aaronic priesthood nor the Jewish kings, but the prophets of God alone were those upon whom God could rely to represent him as well as his statutes to the Jews.

Occasion of forming such schools is to be found in the decline of the priesthood under Eli and his sons and the utter absence of the sanctuary in the times of Elijah and Elisha, thus furnishing the faithful with places and means of edification; and in the advantages that would naturally arise from association, in bringing the young men under the influence of their elders, who were under the powerful influence of the Holy Spirit, thus uniting them with their spiritual fathers in fighting for the honor of Jehovah.⁵

... [T]he schools of the prophets grew up out of a pressing need. They grew up in that part of Israel that later apostatized under Jeroboam I; they grew up where departures were more predominant; and they grew up when the nation of Israel was at a very low ebb spiritually, politically, and economically.⁶

⁵ *The New Unger's Bible Dictionary*, (Chicago, Illinois: Originally published by Moody Press) 1988.

⁶ Turner, Rex A., Sr., "Samuel: The Father of the Schools of the Prophets," *Sound Doctrine*, Summer, 1992, 17-19.

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There were schools of the prophets in **Gibeah** (1 Samuel 10:5), **Ramah** (1 Samuel 19:18-24), **Bethel** (2 Kings 2:3), **Jericho** (2 Kings 2:15) and **Gilgal** (2 Kings 4:38). *McClintock and Strong Encyclopedia* places this Gibeah in the tribe of Benjamin (1 Samuel 13:15).⁷ Gibeah was just north of Jerusalem, not far from Ramah and Bethel. The precise location of this Ramah is unknown though some maps place it halfway between Jerusalem and Bethel. “There are four sites proposed for Ramah today: Ramallah, 13 km N of Jerusalem; Beit Rama, 19 km NW of Bethel; Er-Ram, the Ramah of Benjamin; and Nebi Samwil. There still remains some uncertainty.⁸ Bethel was about 12 miles north of Jerusalem. The city of Jericho is 16 miles east of Jerusalem near the Jordan River and just northwest of the Dead Sea. *Easton’s* cites three Gilgals in Canaan with the Gilgal where was one of the schools of the prophets being in the hill country of Ephraim about eight miles north of Bethel.⁹ All of the schools of the prophets were located relatively close to each other on either side of a line dividing the northern kingdom of Israel from the southern kingdom of Judah. They were positioned, it seems, to provide equal accessibility to both Jewish kingdoms, both of which urgently needed the calls to repentance issued by the prophets of God.

Samuel was associated with the schools of the prophets in Gibeah and Ramah, the latter also being the hometown of Samuel (1 Samuel 7:17). Later, Elijah and Elisha were associated with schools at Bethel, Jericho and Gilgal. Samuel, Elijah and Elisha, at different times, served as

⁷ *McClintock and Strong Encyclopedia*, Electronic Database, (Seattle, WA: BibleSoft) 2000.

⁸ *The New Bible Dictionary*, (Wheaton, Illinois: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc.) 1962.

⁹ Easton, M. G., M. A. D. D., *Easton’s Bible Dictionary*, (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc.) 1996.

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headmaster over the schools of the prophets; *Unger's* places the passing of the “mantle” from Elijah to Elisha in 846 B.C. (2 Kings 2:1-15).¹⁰ Serving in that capacity, one was known as “father” (1 Samuel 10:12; 2 Kings 2:12) or “master” (2 Kings 2:3, 5; 6:1-7) to the schools of the prophets. These two terms portray the parental-like affection and devotion on one hand and the role of a revered teacher of younger men on the other hand. In the New Testament, the apostle Paul was both to his converts and especially to the young evangelists Timothy and Titus.

Hundreds of men attended these schools of the prophets, who were known as “sons of the prophets” (1 Kings 20:35; 2 Kings 2:3, 5, 7, 15; 4:1; 4:38; 5:22; 6:1), “children of the prophets” (2 Kings 9:1-10) or ‘servants’ of the prophets (2 Kings 4:12; 5:20; 6:3, 15; see also 1 Kings 19:21; 2 Kings 3:11; 4:1). Obadiah rescued 100 prophets from the murderous Queen Jezebel and hid them in caves (1 Kings 18:4). There were at least 50 “sons of the prophets” at Jericho (2 Kings 2:5-7) and 100 “sons of the prophets” at Gilgal (2 Kings 4:38, 43). Characteristically, these disciples of the prophets were *young men* (2 Kings 5:22; 6:17; 9:1-4), at least some of whom were married with children (2 Kings 4:1). Elisha and 100 men ate together dining hall style at Gilgal (2 Kings 4:38-43). Single students lived in dormitories, which on one occasion at Jericho they helped enlarge (2 Kings 6:1-7). The sons of the prophets derived their livelihood variously through agriculture (1 Kings 19:19) and freewill gifts (1 Samuel 9:7-8; 2 Kings 4:42); in addition, they were capable of lumbering and building construction, as they demonstrated in enlarging their school at Jericho (2 Kings 6:1-7).

The caliber of the sons of the prophets can be safely ascertained as they stood in stark contrast to the Jews at every level (commoner, priest and king), who by the

¹⁰ *Unger's*.

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ministry ascribed to the prophets they were intended to reform with the Word of God. In other words, the sons of the prophets were everything that their wicked countrymen were not. Evidently, they treasured God's Word and the old prophets who proclaimed it so that they: (1) practiced righteousness and were morally good themselves, (2) maintained a heartfelt earnestness with which they determined to serve God, (3) humbly submitted themselves to the older prophets to guide them, (4) wholly rejected idolatry and worshipped God faithfully, (5) exchanged material wealth as the goal of their lives for sometimes impoverished commitment to godly service (2 Kings 4:1-7), (6) were honest toward fellow men and reverent toward God, (7) moved with unfailing confidence in God and his Word, (8) were those most upon whom God could rely in their age, (9) acknowledged the importance of preparing themselves for greater service, and (10) recognized the urgent need for faithful and capable prophets of God to rescue God's people from apostasy. The sons of the prophets were eager to learn and pliable. Further, the sons of the prophets were *mature* enough to be family men, having wives and children (as already noted). They were responsible enough to be commissioned for important tasks of delivering a message of divine condemnation to kings (1 Kings 13:1-32; 20:35-42) or of anointing a king (2 Kings 9:1-10).

The curriculum of the schools of the prophets included the Law of Moses (Ezra 7:10) and music (1 Samuel 10:5) and equipped them to instruct the nation in godliness. Further, God ordinarily selected his vessels of prophetic revelation from among the sons of the prophets. Amos remarked with astonishment that he, not a son of the prophets, was drafted by God to be a prophet and the recipient of divine revelation. Elisha was elevated from among the sons of the prophets and anointed to be

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headmaster of the schools of the prophets in place of Elijah (1 Kings 19:16).

These young men were taught not only the rudiments of secular knowledge, but they were brought up to exercise the office of prophet, "to preach pure morality and the heart-felt worship of Jehovah, and to act along and co-coordinately with the priesthood and monarchy in guiding the state aright and checking all attempts at illegality and tyranny."¹¹

In these schools young men were educated under a proper master in the knowledge of religion and sacred music (1 Sam 10:5; 19:20), and were thereby qualified to be public preachers, which seems to have been part of the business of the prophets on the Sabbath-days and festivals (2 Kings 4:23). It would seem that God generally chose the prophets whom he inspired out of these schools. Amos, therefore, speaks of it as an extraordinary case that though he was not one of the sons of the prophets, but a herdsman, "yet the Lord took him as he followed the flock, and said unto him, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel" (Amos 7:14,15). That it was usual for some of these schools, or at least for their tutors, to be endued with a prophetic spirit, appears from the relation of the prophecies concerning the ascent of Elijah, delivered to Elisha by the

¹¹*Easton's.*

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sons of the prophets, both at Jericho and at Bethel (2 Kings 2:3,5).¹²

The work of the prophets exceeded the capacity of one, two or even a handful of God's prophets. The prophets, like Moses (Exodus 18:13-26), needed help to accomplish the mission to which God assigned them. Hence, the schools of the prophets addressed that incapacity. The very existence of the schools of the prophets also stood in opposition to competing schools that schooled throngs of false prophets in idolatry and faulty prophesying; King Ahab had 450 prophets of Baal, 400 other idolatrous prophets (1 Kings 18:19) and 400 lying prophets (1 Kings 22:6). Besides withstanding the counterfeit prophets, the prophets of God, including the sons of the prophets, served as spokesmen for God. Whereas the function of the priest through animal sacrifices, etc. represented the people to God, the prophet represented God to the people. Further, kings typically resorted to the counsel of the prophets, though sometimes kings preferred the counsel of lying prophets (1 Kings 22:5-8). These prophets were God's Old Testament preachers, who like their modern counterparts, preach the Word with urgency despite sometimes opposition and facing apostasy, yet anticipating a crown of reward at the end of time (2 Timothy 4:1-8). They and we preach in the cities, in the villages, in the country settings; they and we preach the Word of God in private from house to house and publicly.

Eventually, the schools of the prophets became part of the problem that initially they were established to counter. Idolatrous and false prophets plus a wicked citizenry put aside the laws of God with their idolatry, false ways and ungodliness. However, as time passed, the schools of the prophets essentially set aside the laws of God, too. They

¹² *McClintock and Strong Encyclopedia*, Electronic Database, (Seattle, WA: BibleSoft) 2000.

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generated interpretations and customs respecting the Law of Moses that they perceived were on par with or above divine revelation (Matthew 15:1-9). These schools persisted to the first century and are discernible in references to “sons” (Luke 11:19) and “children” (Matthew 12:24-26) of the Pharisees (Matthew 23:1-33) and referred to as “scribes” (Mark 3:22; 7:5) or “lawyers” (Luke 11:45-52).

More characteristic of Biblical usage is the employment of the word "son" to indicate membership in a class or guild, as in the common phrase "sons of the prophets," which implies nothing whatever as to the ancestry, but states that the individuals concerned are members of the prophetic guilds or schools. In the New Testament the word "sons" (huioi) in Luke 11:19, rendered "children" in Matt 12:27 the King James Version, means, not physical descendants, but members of the class or sect; according to Mt the Pharisees, who were attacking Christ.¹³

From Ezra onward notable scribes or lawyers are mentioned, who not only applied themselves to the faithful observing and handing down of the letter of the law and of the Scriptures but made the contents of Scripture their special study. They especially applied the law of Moses to the practical duties of life and also gave decisions in doubtful cases (Matt 2:4; Luke 2:46). Thus a complete system of casuistry,

¹³ *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, Electronic Database, (Seattle, WA: BibleSoft) 1996.

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founded on the law, was gradually formed for all the relations of life. This was orally transmitted by the scribes (which see) and their associates; and as the "tradition of the elders" (Mark 7:5) was ranked on an equality with, and eventually above, the written law of Moses.¹⁴

Coffman also makes a correlation between the adversaries to the Messiah in his New Testament ministry to the schools started by the prophet Samuel, which at that time and for many years afterward were prophetic advocates for the then future Messiah.

Regarding the school of the prophets which appears at Nairoth, which had been founded and organized by Samuel, we probably have in this the beginning of that class of persons known in later ages as "the scribes" of Israel. In fact, "The Chaldee Paraphrast calls these prophets 'scribes'; and doubtless these persons educated in Samuel's schools held an analogous position to that of the scribes in later days."¹⁵

In conclusion, a minority of souls in any era faithfully serves God (eight souls on Noah's ark, 1 Peter 3:20; narrow gate and way, Matthew 7:13-14). In Elijah's day, only 7,000 souls had not adopted idolatry in the northern kingdom of Israel (1 Kings 19:18). Not many people remained faithful and even fewer (hundreds) dedicated themselves to the tutelage of the headmasters in the schools of the prophets. In every age, then and now, God needs adequately prepared 'prophets' to represent him as well as his Word to the people. This requires persons who are

¹⁴ *Unger's.*

¹⁵ *James Burton Coffman Bible Study Library, (Abilene, TX: ACU Press) 1989.*

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especially dedicated and are prepared to mentor students who are equally dedicated to preparing themselves for lives of service before God. Teacher and student alike must have unflinching confidence in the divine **inerrancy** and **sufficiency** of the Word of God. Both must recognize the Bible as the **final, absolute standard of authority in religion**. “If any man speak, *let him speak* as the oracles of God ...” (1 Peter 4:11).

Anciently, the schools of the prophets were a good work -- as long as they remained true to the Word of God. Today, ‘the schools of the prophets’ (alias, schools of preaching, including West Virginia School of Preaching) are a good work -- as long as they continue to be true to the Word of God. There are great needs in our nation, the world and our brotherhood that schools of preaching can help address by educating young men in the Word of God and sending them forth. Send us dedicated men and their families; give them your moral and financial support. Please pray for them, for those who endeavor to increase their knowledge in God’s Word, and for the elders and congregations who make the ‘schools of the prophets’ possible today.

God “ordained” or ‘gave’ the prophets to his people the Jews; “Then the word of the LORD came unto me, saying, Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, **and I ordained** thee a prophet unto the nations” (Jeremiah 1:4-5, emphasis added, ler). Likewise, God has appointed or given his preachers to the house of Israel and to the world, today. I close with God’s call to Ezekiel:

“And he said unto me, Son of man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak unto thee. And the spirit entered into me when he spake unto me, and set me upon my feet, that I heard him that spake unto me. And he

said unto me, Son of man, I send thee to the children of Israel, to a rebellious nation that hath rebelled against me: they and their fathers have transgressed against me, *even* unto this very day. For *they are* impudent children and stiffhearted. I do send thee unto them; and **thou shalt say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD.** And they, whether they will hear, or whether they will forbear, (for they *are* a rebellious house,) yet **shall know that there hath been a prophet among them**” (Ezekiel 2:1-5, emphasis added, ler).

May we go “among them,” armed with the Word of God!

Biographical Sketch

Louis Rushmore has been preaching since 1973 and has served congregations in both the southern and northern United States. Recently, he and his wife, Bonnie, agreed to work with the Cameron, WV church of Christ; they are trying to raise funds to labor full-time with that congregation. Louis has taught several courses at WVSOP since 1995 through the present. He is the editor of the monthly Internet journal, *Gospel Gazette Online*. Further, brother Rushmore has authored several class books and tracts, and has written numerous religious articles for the Internet and various Gospel magazines. Bonnie and Louis’ three grown children are faithful and active Christians in their respective congregations; their two older children are a schoolteacher and a deputy sheriff, while the youngest is currently a student at WVSOP.

GOD'S PROVIDENCE OVER JERUSALEM

Denver Cooper, Sr.

Zechariah 9: 1 - 8

“The burden of the word of the Lord in the land of Hadach, and Damascus shall be the rest thereof; when the eyes of man, as of all the tribes of Israel, shall be toward the Lord. And Hamath also shall border thereby; Tyrus, and Zidon, though it be very wise. And Tyrus did build herself a strong hold, and heaped up silver as the dust, and fine gold as the mire of the streets. Behold, the Lord will cast her out, and he will smite her power in the sea; and she shall be devoured with fire. Ashkelon shall see it, and fear; Gaza also shall see it, and be very sorrowful, and Ekron; for her expectation shall be ashamed; and the king shall perish from Gaza, and Ashkelon shall not be inhabited. And a bastard shall dwell in Ashdod, and I will cut off the pride of the Philistines. And I will take away his blood out of his mouth, and his abominations from between his teeth; but he that remaineth, even he, shall be for our God, and he shall be as a governor in Judah, and Ekron as a Jebusite. And I will encamp about mine house because of the army, because of him that passeth by and because of him that returneth: and no oppressor shall pass through them anymore: for now have I seen with mine eyes.”

Zechariah and Haggai were contemporary prophets given the burden of getting those recently returned from the 70 years captivity to repent and to encourage them to get to work on the temple. They had received the support of Cyrus, doubtless providentially from God, safely returned to their homeland to do what they had longed to do and cried unto the Lord to help them do it. Zechariah begins his word with a warning, “The Lord hath been sore displeased

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with your fathers. Therefore say thou unto them, Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Turn ye unto me, saith the Lord of hosts, and I will turn unto you, saith the Lord of hosts. Be ye not as your fathers, unto whom the former prophets have cried, saying, Thus saith the Lord of hosts; Turn ye now from your evil ways, and from your evil doings: but they did not hear, nor hearken unto me, saith the Lord.” (Zech. 1:2 - 4.)

In the first eight chapters of Zechariah is found symbolism having to do with the rebuilding of the temple in Jerusalem. In the visions is found some of the lessons that are found in other parts of the book. We are able to see the omnipresence of God, as well as the great need for forgiveness of sins. In the past, God's people had thought to rely upon strength, power and riches and thus had courted many of the nations around them, thinking to accomplish success. Zechariah states, “Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.” (4:6). Though they have become discouraged because things have not come about as they thought they must, Zechariah reminds them that things are now peaceable and the time is right for God's will in them to be accomplished in rebuilding the temple and he promises them a king who will be crowned with a two tiered crown, symbolic of him being both priest and king; surely referring to the coming Messiah. Both Haggai and Zechariah command them to “get up and go to work”. Again the glory of Jerusalem and the purpose of God in his Scheme of Redemption is at stake.

Beginning in chapter nine we are acquainted with the promises of the destruction of certain nations, all of which at one time or another have been a thorn in the flesh of God's people. Most must have thought they were in a pretty good position and nothing could happen to them that would bring them sorrow. The burdens or oracles of the future now rest heavily upon the spirit of Zechariah who has, it is believed, reached advanced age. There are really

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two “burdens” in the second division. The first is the assurance to his people that they will be reunited and restored and the second is that all their enemies will be overthrown, with great blessings following.

Providence concerns itself with preservation, care and government of cities, nations, individuals and great groups of people. Providence does not eliminate the freedom of man to operate on his own as evidenced in Joshua's statement, “Choose you this day whom ye will serve, but as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord.”

God's care, love and continued concern is included in what man refers to as the Scheme of Redemption and must be recognized as eternal. (Eph. 3: 10).

Individuals, nations and cities have shared in God's providence from the very beginning of time. It is believe by some writers that Jerusalem stands at the top of the list of cities which have influenced and, even today, is influencing the course, hopes and, yes, even the destinies of mankind. We are sometimes made to wonder why God would choose such an area or city in which so many great events would occur which were to influence the lives of so many generations. It seems that in the very early days of Jerusalem, it was impregnable to the enemies by reason of the deep ravines on the east, south and west. Only the north side of the city was vulnerable to attack from their enemies. Jerusalem was not on the main road travelled by traders. It was not a commercial city. Nor was it known for being a great farming country. When Abram was called from the Ur of Chaldeas, we are alerted to God's plan to care especially for his people. God called Abram from Ur of Chaldeas “unto a land that I will show thee: and thou shalt be a blessing: and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curse thee: and in thee shall ALL families of the earth be blessed.” Following Abram we are made to wonder at times, “How will God ever be able to accomplish

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all of this?" Famine caused Abram to travel past Canaan into Egypt. God's providence is seen there even when Abram's faith seemed not as strong as it surely is later in his life. Could this be God's providence in allowing time for Abram's faith to become stronger for much greater events in his life? Plagues on Pharaoh prevented him taking Sarai for his wife. In Genesis 15:1 after victory over the kings, God said, "I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward." During the meeting with the king of Sodom after Abram met Melchizedek, King of Salem. It is noteworthy that Abram deals with him in a way that will not soon be forgotten. Salem is believed by many to be the early name for city of Jerusalem. In later life he must surely have been reminded of that meeting and the faith shown in the providence of God as he refused the gifts from the King of Sodom.

Although the protection and care of Abraham was material and spiritual, the fulfilling of God's covenant involved the entire Plan of Salvation. The Providence of God over Jerusalem cannot be ignored. Even in Egypt the relationship made it possible for Israel to develop into a great nation. The life of Joseph, Moses and others, manifest in so many ways the providence of God. Even the wilderness wanderings, when God could have taken them directly into the promised land should increase our faith in the care of God in preparing the people to be an even greater nation. Those first grateful and obedient then sinful and rebellious, yet their repentance made it possible for God to carry out his purpose for the salvation of all mankind.

As God prepares his people to cross Jordan into the "land that flowed with milk and honey" we must not forget that the promises had to do only with the physical descendants of Abraham. These promises had to do with this life and were conditional. (Deut. 4:25 - 27; Josh. 23:14

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- 16; Jer. 18: 7 - 11). The oft failure of Israel to meet the conditions of God resulted in cause for many terrible afflictions on the beautiful, glorious city. Syria was hit by terrible earthquakes, yet Jerusalem was comparatively spared. No fewer than twenty sieges were made against the city. Some involved the utter destruction of her walls and buildings. There were at least two occasions of almost, if not altogether, total desolation.

As time goes on we see Jerusalem becoming more and more prominent in the land of promise. It becomes a great and glorious city in the days of David and Solomon. Even so, it seems that the life of Solomon and others kings after him present a great threat to the future plans of God for his people. Again and again we are made to wonder, "How will God every be able to bless all nations as he has promised." In fact, the people become so terribly wicked that God sees to that they are delivered into captivity. Nebuchadnezzar on his third siege of Jerusalem deposed the young Jehoiachin after he had reigned on three months and carried him off to Babylon with a large portion of the population of Jerusalem. He then made Zedekiah king in his place. Nebuchadnezzar had begun his final siege of Jerusalem in the ninth year of Zedekiah and took it two years later. According to Jer.39:5 Zedekiah escaped from the city, but was captured at Riblah where his eyes were put out after having witnessed the murder of his sons. Jerusalem now lay in a state of desolation.

Why was Jerusalem so important? As I have before indicated, Jerusalem was in a rocky out-of-the-way area with very little to its advantage. Outside some gardens and the orchards there was no rich farmland hence, very little traffic for trade. What made her so great? The one true God had chosen the city. Even her enemies recognized this fact. She was the center of God's worship and laws and revelation. The great purpose of the Lord in bringing

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salvation to mankind through the Messiah represented the last hope for Israel to leave a world of darkness and enter a new world of light.

Nebuchadnezzar had become God's chosen to serve the spiritual welfare for God's people. According to Daniel 3:13 he was given to 'rage and fury' and losing his mind spent time with the animals of the field. Judah must have known that God had decided that "out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem." (Isa. 2:1 - 3) Judah must have viewed as a serious evil the deportation to Babylon. Seventy long years must have made it appear hopeless to the Jews so far as ever returning to their homeland. Yet, these were purging years for the population.

Babylon is overcome by the Medes and the Persians. In the later years the Jews found favor in the eyes of Cyrus and were able to return to the homeland. Although many of Jerusalem's problems are now solved, there remains the hostile people on the north and south. Zechariah foretells how those people will be removed and the providence of God is to be experienced by God's people and Jerusalem.

Alexander the Great now enters the picture in about 336 B.C. and without realizing the work he was really doing, as a great warrior he really was preparing the way for the coming of Christ, the Messiah. The time has now arrived which was interpreted by Daniel from the dream of the "terrible image" by Nebuchadnezzar in which Alexander would serve as the leader of the third world power.

Alexander, educated under Aristotle was an avid believer in Greek culture. He insisted on culture being a part of the life of all whom he conquered. His conquests were varied and cruel. According to Zechariah, Hadrach, meaning "sharp-soft" or "strong - tender" is used symbolically of the Medo-Persian Empire. Though a strong

nation at the beginning and able to build an empire, it became "soft" through its effeminate rulers. The burden of God's judgment was next on Damascus. "When the eyes of man, as of all the tribes of Israel, shall be toward the Lord:" according to the marginal reading (AVS) indicates that the "Lord has an eye upon men" and upon all the tribes of Israel. Such being the case, the meaning is simply emphasizing that God will fulfill his judgment upon the wicked and provide his blessings on the righteous.

Hamath bordered Damascus and had supplied the gate of entrance into Canaan by the nations from the north.

Tyre and Sidon were the pride of Phoenicia because of their strength, wisdom and wealth. Tyre was the more important, having become the capital of Phoenicia. She had increased her strength by building an island about one half mile from the mainland. She had "heaped up silver as the dust, and fine gold as the mire of the streets." However, all of these would not spare Tyre of God's judgment and Alexander built a "mole" to the island and though he was engaged in the struggle to overcome Tyre, he did so after seven months. Through Ezekiel God said of Tyre, "thou hast said, I am of perfect beauty. Thy borders are in the midst of the seas, thy builders have perfected thy beauty. They have made all thy ships of fir trees of Shinar; they have taken cedars from Lebanon to make the masts for thee."

Next come the four cities of Phoenicia. You can imagine what fear must have taken hold of these cities, knowing the fall of Tyre and Sidon. Alexander showed his cruelty to man by putting thongs through the feet of the king of Gaza, fastening him to his chariot and dragging him through the streets. Ekron will be humbled and therefore shamed. Ashdod will be inhabited by "illegitimate" children. No more pride for the Philistine cities.

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Idolatry is most surely represented by, “to take away his blood out of his mouth and his abominations from between his teeth”. The idolatrous worship would be eliminated. “And he shall be a remnant for our God” indicates a remnant would be unto Jehovah. “And he shall be as a governor in Judah” must indicate the acceptance of them by Judah. This was probably accomplished under the Messiah when the gospel was preached.

Verse 8 indicates the intended providence of God over Jerusalem. “Encamp about mine house” has reference to the family of God. Josephus related that after Alexander had defeated Gaza he hurried to Jerusalem. Jaddua the high priest on hearing it was in agony. Jaddua had previously disobeyed Alexander and feared the worst. He ordained that the people should join with him and offer sacrifice to God and sought His protection. God warned him in a dream that he should take courage, secure the gates. The rest of the people should appear in white garments, but he and the priests should meet the king in the habits proper to their order without any dread of ill consequences. Alexander’s approach to the city was different from that toward the other nations. It seems the Phoenicians and Chaldeans who followed the king had been promised the liberty to plunder the city and torment the high priests to death, but the reverse happened. Seeing the multitude in the distance all dressed in white garments and the priest in purple and scarlet clothing, a mitre on his head with a golden plate whereon the name of God was engraved, he approached, and adored that name, and first saluted the high priest. The Jews saluted the king. The kings of Syria were surprised and thought he had lost his mind. Parmenio approached Alexander and asked how it came to pass that when all others adored him, he should adore the high priest of the Jews? He replied, I did not adore him, but the God who honored him with his high priesthood; for I saw this very

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person in a dream, in this very habit, when I was at Dios in Macedonia, who, when I was considering with myself how I might obtain the dominion of him, exhorted me to make no delay, but boldly go over the sea thither, for that he would conduct my army, and would give me the dominion of the Persians. Whence it is that, having seen no other in that habit, and now seeing this person in it, and remembering that vision, and the exhortation which I had in my dream, I believe that I bring this army under the Divine conduct and shall therewith conquer Darius, and destroy the power of the Persians, and that all things will succeed according to what is in my mind” He then gave the priest his right hand, ran along by him and came to the city. On entering the temple he offered sacrifice to God as directed by the high priest. When the book of Daniel was shown him and he read that the Persians would be destroyed, he decided that the ruler spoken of was himself. The next day he decided to know what favors he might present to them. The priest desire that they might enjoy the laws of their forefathers, and might pay no tribute on the seventh year. Alexander granted all that they desired. He also granted their request to permit the Jews in Babylon to do; the same. He also indicated that any of them that would enlist themselves in his army that they should continue under the laws of their forefathers, he would take them with him. Many accompanied him.

Indeed, God had seen the oppression of many pagan nations over his people for a great many years and had promised them relief, security and prosperity. Though they must have thought it a long time coming, they must most certainly now learn that there is reason to “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion, shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation: lowly, and riding on an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass”. The MESSIAH IS COMING ! He brings SALVATION!

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Commentary on Zechariah Coffman

Biographical Sketch

Denver began preaching September 21, 1941. He attended Freed-Hardeman College. On March 25, 1945 he was married to Florence E. Smith, who was a resident of Sistersville, West Virginia. To them were born eight children; Eddie, (preacher) Denver, Jr.; Kelly; Timothy; Rebecca; Jesse; Prisca (deceased); Denise Conley, who is married to J. D. Conley, preacher at Elkins, WV and Martha Noland, married to Bob Noland, who is a part time preacher.

He has served churches in Ironton, Ohio, Chester, Philippi, Weirton (twice) Toronto, Ohio; Ravenswood, St Marys, Timberville, Va.; Moundsville, West Va. (18 years) and now is with the church in Valley Bend, West Va. In addition to the local work he has preached in hundreds of meetings, done radio work, written articles and has done and is doing TV work.

Six very happy years were spent teaching in the West Virginia School of Preaching and fellowshiping Emanuel Daugherty, the elders of the Hillview church and other great and faithful preachers there.

THE FLYING SCROLL

Zechariah 5:1-4

Richard D. Melson

Chapter 5 of Zechariah opens with the prophet seeing a new scene or vision. This section presents God's dealing with His unrepentant child, (Israel) -- God will not allow sin to go unpunished. Thus in this vision, in representational form, he pronounces His judgment on the sinners of the Israel.

“Then I turned and raised my eyes, and saw there a flying scroll” (Zech 5:1) When asked by the interpreting angel what he sees, the prophet describes a scroll in the air. The scroll's dimensions are 15 feet by 30 feet. Scrolls were the books of ancient peoples. They were made of leather or papyrus formed into a long sheet connected to wooden pins or poles that were used to role up the scroll. Many Bible dictionaries have pictures showing this construction. Zechariah's scroll was not sealed but was fully opened up revealing all of its contents.

Scroll imagery was oftentimes used in prophecy to symbolize God's divine message to the prophet (Ezk. 2:9-3:3 and Rev. 10:8-11). Here we have God's message to His people and it is open for all to see and know what God has to say. Some prophecies in the Old Testament were given but sealed. For example Daniel was given a prophecy in Daniel 8 but was told “shut thou up the vision for it shall be for many days” (Daniel 8:26 KJV). Revelation 5 opens with a sealed book and John wept for no one “was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon” (Revelation 5:4). The scroll Zechariah saw was open indicting the message was for the present generation and not something for some distant time. This does not exclude any application for the Christian age, but it does

show it had an application in the days of the prophet.

The size of the scroll was stated as 10 cubits (15 feet) by 20 cubits (30 feet). The exact significance of the scroll's size is unclear. We do know, however, that Solomon's porch and the holy place of the tabernacle constructed under Moses' supervision were both the same dimensions as the scroll. "Measured by sanctuary standards, which is synonymous with measured by the divinely sacred rule, a certain definite judgment of evildoers is at once implied"¹. Homer Hailey wrote that if the scroll's size represented "the holy place, then we may conclude that the roll indicates the demand of holiness upon all who draw nigh to God in His holy sanctuary. This is only a suggestion"². I am inclined to conclude that this is the meaning. There must be a standard by which the sinner is judged. The dimensions are given not just to provide a reference for the size of the scroll, but also to alert the reader to the standard by which God's judgment would be measured. The holy nature of Deity is represented in the Holy of Holies and revealed in the Scriptures.

The writing, which the prophet observed, read, "This is the curse that goes out over the face of the whole earth". The clause "that goes out over the face of the whole earth:" is an important point of discussion. It has been taken to mean the whole land of Judah, all the land where the Jews dwell³. But this is not without discussion, for in chapter

¹ H.C. Leupold, *Exposition of Zechariah* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House) p. 99

² Homer Hailey, *A Commentary on the Minor Prophets*, (Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, Michigan, 1972), p. 343.

³ See Theo. Laetach in the "Bible Commentary The Minor Prophets (Concordia Publishing House, Saint Louis, MO) page 431 also David Baron footnote #2 in "The Visions & Prophecies of Zechariah" (Kregel Publication: Grand Rapids, MI) page 146.

4:10, 14 and 6:5 the “whole earth” means just that, the “whole earth” and not just Judah. God’s word is not limited to Israel, but does not the context suggest that what God is speaking about here is limited initially to Israel?

There can be no question that the curse was directed to the people or nation of Israel. But of its Messianic inclusion, Keil said, "The vision certainly refers to the remote future of the kingdom of God; and therefore 'the whole land' cannot be restricted to the extent and boundaries of Judea or Palestine, but reaches as far as the spiritual Israel or church of Christ is spread over the earth ... The roll therefore symbolizes the curse which will fall upon sinners throughout the whole land, consuming them with their houses, and thus sweeping them out of the nation of God" (K-D, 11, 281, 2).⁴

The writing, which the prophet observed, spelled out two curses on the land, that is, the Jewish people, wherever they were found. The curse is upon the two classes of sinners that are identified: the thief and the perjurer.

These two classes are mentioned by way of illustration, not with the thought that all others would be allowed to continue in their sins. The reason for singling out these two classes appears to be that in a community such as that of the returned exiles these sins would be particularly in evidence on the part of all who oppressed Israel.⁵

One curse was against stealing, Then he said to me, "This *is* the curse that goes out over the face of the whole

⁴ Homer Hailey, “The Messiah of Prophecy to The Messiah on the Throne (Louisville, KY: Religious Supply, Inc.) p. 223

⁵ H.C. Leupold, page 101

earth: 'Every thief shall be expelled,' according to this side of *the scroll*;" The other curse involved swearing falsely in God's name, "and, 'Every perjurer shall be expelled,' according to that side of it." Cf. Exodus 20:15; Proverbs 29:24; 30:9. That swearing is false swearing in God's name is found in verse 4, "And the house of the one who swears falsely by My name." (cf. Exodus 20:7; Leviticus 19:12). The curse involved the "expelling" or "cutting off" of the guilty (verse 3). This involved the total destruction of the home where the guilty party lives. The purpose was for the cleaning of sin and its influence from among God's people. Hailey has correctly commented:

On one side was written the divine curse against thieves, and on the other side the curse against deceivers, those who swear falsely in the name of Jehovah (vv. 3-4). This curse reveals a basic characteristic of the God of truth. His curse is pronounced upon all false or deceitful conduct, whether it is behavior against man or God. The curse will consume the house of the individual, the state, or a false religion.⁶

A reading of the Ten Commandments reveals that the two curses are from the two tables of stone, one on each tablet. These emphasize the Lord's attitude toward all sin. He does not rank them as people often do. The false swearing in God's name is punished the same as stealing from one's neighbor. This reminds us of Jesus answer to the question concerning the greatest commandment in the Old Testament. Jesus responded the greatest was to love the Lord your God and the second was like it, love your neighbor as your self (Matthew 22:36-37).

⁶ Homer Hailey, "The Messiah of Prophecy to The Messiah on the Throne (Louisville, KY: Religious Supply, Inc.) p. 223

How does this apply today? What is the meaning for God's people today? What should God's people learn for today from the scroll's message? God while gracious is also just. He intends for the church, through which men worship and serve Him today, to be holy through repentance from sinful conduct. God's word is the standard by which we are measured (John 12:48; 2 Timothy 1:13). We are told to learn from the past (Rom. 15:4) and not repeat the mistakes that they did (1 Cor. 10:1-4). The Church, spiritual Israel, is to be holy unto God (1 Peter 1:16). God's people today, Christians, are to conduct themselves as a distinct people, not like the world "Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner *of persons* ought you to be in **holy conduct** (*emp. Rdm*) and godliness, ..." (2 Pet. 3:11). We are to love our fellow man and treat him as our Creator would treat him, because he is made in the image of God and our mission is to seek and save the lost (Luke 19:10). God's people are not conformed to the world but transformed by the renewing of our minds (Rom. 12:1-2). The people of God are to live above the world while living in the world. The expectations of God for His people are that they will be a "light" to the darkened world. The place where God's grace is realized is in the Church. The place where one can receive the tender mercies of God is in the church. The place where the God sums up all things is in Christ (Eph. 1:9).

God's word, His "scroll" has gone out into all the world (Titus 2:11) declaring the divine message that a just and loving God will not tolerate sin. God has declared that the unrepentant sinner will be punished (2 The. 1:7-9), but that His saving message is available for everyone who wants to be saved (2 Tim. 2:4; Matthew 11:28).

Smith summarizes this section of text well when he writes:

In the first person God dramatically declared

his intention to cause it (the curse) to go forth." Behind the written word is "Yahweh of hosts," Lord of all armies celestial and terrestrial. The sanctions, penalties and curses of his word are not idle threats or antiquated verbiage. In Scripture God's words are often personified and depicted as going forth on errands assigned by the deity (cf. Ps 147:15; Isa 55:11).

In that day of judgment none would be able to hide from God. His word of judgment would find its way where civil judicial machinery cannot go, namely, into the homes of sinners. Again those who steal-the Hebrew suggests a professional thief-and those who swear to a lie in God's name are named as representative of all sinners. The house of the evildoer would be consumed "with its timber and its stones," i.e., the house would be utterly destroyed. The language points to the day when sinners would be purged from the midst of God's people.

All acts of divine judgment against sinners in history point forward to that final day of retribution at the coming of Christ.⁷

Biographical Sketch

Richard D. Melson

PERSONAL DATA

Born - December, 1957
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Married to former Valerie

⁷ James E. Smith, *The Minor Prophets* (Joplin, MO: College Press Publishing Company, 1994), p. 549

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Four children: Three girls 18, 17, & 17 and one boy 10.

EXPERIENCE

- I HAVE BEEN BLESSED TO PARTICIPATE IN VARIOUS LECTURESHIP PROGRAMS: THE ANNUAL DENTON LECTURES, DENTON TEXAS; MID WEST LECTURES, INDEPENDENCE, MO; FORT WORTH LECTURES, BEDFORD, TX; FIRM FOUNDATION LECTURES (CHATTANOOGA, TN, POTTSTOWN, PA AND DAYTON, OH) ANNUAL SHENANDOAH LECTURES, SAN ANTONIO, TX AND OTHERS.
- I HAVE PARTICIPATED IN TWO PUBLIC DEBATES BOTH ON SALVATION.
- I HAVE PARTICIPATED IN NUMEROUS CAMPAIGNS FOR CHRIST BOTH IN THE USA AND ABROAD: (LOS ANGELS, CA; JAMAICA, W.I.; CAPE TOWN, RSA; AND PRAGUE, CZECH REPUBLIC).
- CONDUCTED GOSPEL MEETINGS IN SEVERAL STATES.
- I HAVE AUTHORED SEVERAL CHAPTERS IN VARIOUS COMMENTARIES ON THE BIBLE.
- AUTHORED TRACT **WHO IS ACCOUNTABLE TO GOD?** 1987.
- CO-AUTHORED, **A CHRISTIAN RESPONSE TO RACISM** 1992.
- I HAVE EDITED AND WRITTEN BIBLE CLASS MATERIAL FOR THE ADULT CLASS AND; PRODUCED NEW CONVERTS CLASS MATERIAL
- ADJUNCT INSTRUCTOR IN MID-WESTERN SCHOOL OF PREACHING SATELLITE PROGRAM AT THE WEBSTER STREET CHURCH OF CHRIST (1996–1998). CLASSES TAUGHT: APOLOGETICS, HERMENEUTICS, INTRODUCTION TO NEW TESTAMENT GREEK; HOMILETICS
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THE FLYING SCROLL

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MEMBERSHIP:

- ◆ Member Paideia Group, Inc.
- ◆ Co-Chair of Dayton Public School's Secondary Education Task Force
- ◆ Completed LEAD LAB II, Listening and Caring Skills (certified to Teach LAB I)
- ◆ Completed LEAD LAB I, Listening and Caring Skills
- ◆ Completed Lucent Technologies training courses in Definity® ECS Switch Administration; Definity® AUDIX System Administration; ACD; and Call Vectoring .
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- ◆ Member Dayton Board of Education Policy Committee
- ◆ Co-Chair Dayton Education Council

THE CALL TO GOD'S PEOPLE

Bruce Daugherty

ZECHARIAH 10

In contrast to the neglect of our day, the New Testament writers quoted frequently from the book of Zechariah.¹ This fact alone, ought to make Zechariah an object of our study. To better understand the New Testament message; to gain greater appreciation for the fulfillment of God's prophetic word; to live more in accord with the purposes of God, we need to study the book of Zechariah. Despite the many challenges in interpreting its message, Zechariah offers rich rewards for those willing to study and learn from its pages. This study will focus on the call to God's people of Zechariah 10:8.

Introductory Reminders

The author is Zechariah, whose name means "whom the Lord remembers." Zechariah was the son of Berekiah, son of Iddo. Zechariah was a contemporary of Haggai and his prophecy was given in the same period, 520-518 BC (Zech. 1:1,7; 7:1; see also Ezra 5:1).²

The book bears several resemblances to the New Testament book of Revelation. This type of literature is designated "apocalyptic." Apocalyptic literature served to encourage God's people during times when they were oppressed by foreign rulers. The message was conveyed in vivid word pictures and symbols which would made for

¹Thomas McComiskey, *The Minor Prophets*, vol. 3 (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998) ". . . the passion narratives of the Gospels quote from Zechariah 9-14 more than from any other portion of the Old Testament.", 1003.

²Jack Lewis, *The Minor Prophets* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1966), 74.

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easier recall. While Zechariah shares certain similarities with Jewish apocalyptic literature, it is still best to be considered as a prophetic book.³

By means of the prophecies of Zechariah, the people were encouraged to finish the reconstruction of the temple. This reconstruction was to be the first step in a realization of the glorious will of God, which would find its ultimate fulfillment in the coming of the Messiah.

The passage under consideration for our study comes from the messages given at an undetermined later period.⁴ It contains two oracles which begin with the phrase, "The burden of the word of Jehovah . . ." (Zech. 9:1; 12:1). These two oracles concern world powers and the people of God (chapters 9-11). They give emphasis to future physical and spiritual victories of Israel (chapters 12-14). While this is the broad understanding of the oracles, the details are less clear. The general theme is that the Lord will fulfill His will in the sending of the Messiah, the beginning of the gospel age, and the beginning of the Church. Due to the difficulties of interpreting this section of Zechariah, students would do well to heed the advice of Hailey:

. . . it seems wise to build one's interpretation of these chapters around the passages that are quoted by Jesus and the New Testament writers. In following this policy one will avoid the pitfalls of speculation and some of the quagmires of error into which many have fallen.⁵

³McComiskey, 1011.

⁴Ben C. Ollenburger, "Zechariah" in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 7 (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1996), 742.

⁵Homer Hailey, *A Commentary on the Minor Prophets* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1972), 366-367.

Overview of Chapters 9 and 10

Commentators of diverse backgrounds and approaches agree that chapter ten continues the oracle begun in chapter nine.⁶ The oracle poetically portrays God's activity in behalf of His people. No longer will God's people be at the mercy of the surrounding nations. God will come in judgement upon those nations which will result in protection for His people (Zech. 9:1-8). The next part of chapter nine prophesies of Israel's coming king. This would be cause for joy to Zion and Jerusalem. His demeanor is humble yet His accomplishments are great because not only will He bring protection to God's people, but He will bring peace to the nations in his universal rule (Zech. 9:9-10). Chapter nine concludes with the description of God's deliverance of His captive people and their blessings under His protection (Zech. 9:11-17).

Chapter ten opens with a directive to the people to petition God for blessings rather than trust in idols and diviners for their future. This spiritual defection on the part of the people is a result of the lack of leadership for the people (Zech. 10:1-2). Because of this lack of leadership or the wrong kind of leaders, God determines to fight for His people and strengthen them for battle with their enemies (Zech. 10:3-5). God announces His plan to restore Judah and Israel by virtue of His mercy towards them. This restoration will bring joy and gladness as God calls for His people like a shepherd whistling to his flock (Zech. 10:6-8).

⁶A survey of commentaries taking this position: Edgar W. Conrad, *Zechariah* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 155; David L. Petersen, *Zechariah 9-14 and Malachi* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1995), 24; Carol L. Meyers and Eric M. Myers, *Zechariah 9-14*, Anchor Bible 25C (Garden City, N.Y: Doubleday, 1993), 177; Charles L. Feinberg, *God Remembers: A Study of Zechariah* (Portland, OR: Multnomah Press, 1979), 117; Hailey, 366; Lewis, 78.

The chapter closes with a picture of the people being gathered from the nations where they have been scattered. Barriers to their return are removed. The nations which have held God's people captive are humbled while God's people fill the land (Zech.10:9-12).

God's Call - Zechariah 10:8

The term used for calling is the Hebrew verb sh_raq (sh_raq). It is variously translated to hiss, to whistle, to pipe (as a shepherd would use a pipe for calling his flock).⁷ Austel points out that the word is a clearly audible sound, used most often in the Hebrew Scriptures as a sign of derision. It was the reaction of those observing the destruction of once great cities (1 Ki. 9:8; Jer. 19:8; Lam. 2:13-16; Mica. 6:16).⁸ Feinberg says, "The verb *sharaq* is onomatopoeic and alludes to the ancient method of swarming bees (cf. Isa. 5:26; 7:18)."⁹ McComiskey adds that *sharaq* ". . . denotes making a sound with the mouth and may mean "to astonish" (1 Ki. 9:8; Jer. 19:8; 19:17; 50:13), summon (Isa. 5:26; 7:18), express scorn (Lam. 2:15), or frighten away (Job 27:23). Only to summon fits this context."¹⁰ In the song of Deborah, it refers to the sound a shepherd would make for calling his flock (Judg. 6:15). This is the usage of Zechariah 10:8.

Meyers and Meyers point out that the use of this word is unusual and dramatic. The shepherd imagery continues the imagery of God's people as a flock without a shepherd (10:2). "Using a verb that otherwise normally has such a strongly negative connotation helps to draw attention to

⁷H. W. F. Gesenius, *Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1979 printing of 1847 edition), 850.

⁸Herman J. Austel, "sh_raq" in *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*, vol. 2, R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., Bruce K. Waltke, eds. (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 957.

⁹Feinberg, 149.

¹⁰McComiskey, 1183.

God's actions and, in its allusions to the derisiveness that whistling (or hissing) can represent, gives an ironic coloration to the word."¹¹

In contrast to Isaiah 5:26 and 7:18 where God whistled for the nations to come to execute judgement on Israel, now it is a signal to His people, inviting them to return to enjoy His favor in the promised land. Petersen comments, "In this oracle, the prophet emphasizes the truly international scope of Yaweh's activity."¹² It also emphasizes God's power. Not only is He able to make His voice heard from afar but He is able to accomplish His purpose of gathering His people. Natural obstacles to that gathering are removed. God is portrayed as drying the sea and the River in the same fashion as the Red Sea was parted when the children of Israel left Egypt.

When Was the Prophecy Fulfilled?

The question to be answered at this point is when and how did God make His calling to His scattered people? Various suggested answers are the Maccabean period, the time of Christ and the Church age, and a time still in the future.

Pre-millennialists affirm that events occurring in Israel today are the fulfillment of the prophecy. Typical of this position are the comments of Gifford: "This has not happened yet, but that is where all of this is going." "Who can deny that we are watching this take shape in this century?" "The end of the age has begun. It ought to set us on edge."¹³ Unfortunately such an interpretation ignores the context of the passage.

¹¹Meyers and Meyers, 213-14.

¹²Petersen, 76.

¹³Ronald Gifford, *Zechariah*, (Camp Hill, PA: Christian Publications, Inc., 1998), 215-218.

THE CALL TO GOD'S PEOPLE

The interpretation of the oracle must be built around two historical indicators in chapter nine. Jesus' entry into Jerusalem is cited by Matthew (21:4-5) and John (12:14-15) as having fulfilled the Zechariah prophecy. This would indicate that the time under consideration must incorporate God's call as during the time of Christ and the Church age. But the other historical indicator points to an earlier period. The reference to victory of the sons of Zion over the sons of Greece appears to be a clear reference to the Maccabean period. McComiskey acknowledges that the best way of interpreting the passage might be a "this, as well as that" type of fulfillment. "History intersects with the prophet's vision in the struggle of the Jews against the Hellenists in 165 B.C., but that cannot be the event that brings this prophecy to total fruition. 'Zion' represents the people over whom the king rules (9:9), and these events must find their final resolution in the triumph of the kingdom he established."¹⁴ Viewed in this light we can see how the prophecy pertains to both periods. The victory of the Maccabees over the Hellenizing forces of Antiochus IV was necessary for the remnant to continue which would bring the Messiah into the world. But it is with the Messiah's arrival and the kingdom he established that the calling and gathering of God's people is finally accomplished. McComiskey comments:

Once again, the words of this book intersect future events, paralleling the history of the kingdom that the lowly Messiah established (9:9). By his death, he triumphed over the forces of evil (John 12:31) to establish a spiritual kingdom (John 8:36; 1 Pet. 2:5, 9-10) whose subjects reside among the nations. Throughout the ages, God calls those he has redeemed (Zech. 10:8; Rom.

¹⁴McComiskey, 1171-1172.

8:29-30). . . ¹⁵

How does God “whistle” for His people? Through the call of the gospel (1 Cor. 1:9; 2 Thess. 2:14; 1 Pet. 5:10). Those who answer that call become His people, whether Jew or Gentile (Rom. 1:16-17; Gal. 3:26-29). Preaching then is vital, for not only does it bring salvation to the believer (1 Cor. 1:21; Rom. 10:14-16), it fulfills God's purpose in calling to His people.

Applying the Lesson

How thrilling it is to read of God's mercy. How wonderful to be a recipient of God's gathering call. How encouraging to know that we can become partners with God in proclaiming His call to the world today (Rom. 11:33-36; 2 Cor. 5:20).

Dear reader, what about you? Do you listen to God? (John 8:37). Have you heard God's call through the gospel message? Have you believed the gospel message? Have you obeyed its commands (Acts 2:38; 8:12, 36; 22:16)?

Dear brother or sister in Christ, do you sound out God's call in your life? Have you prepared yourself for taking the call to all nations and peoples? Can you share the call of God with a friend or neighbor (Matt. 28:18-20)?

God is calling. How will you answer?

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¹⁵McComiskey, 1184.

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Associate minister - Reynoldsburg (OH) Church of Christ - 1981-1983

Missionary - Cervignano, Italy - 1983-1990

Preacher - Beville Rd. Church of Christ (Daytona Beach, FL) - 1990-2000

Preacher - Cambridge (OH) Church of Christ - 2000 to present.

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RETURN OF GLORY TO JERUSALEM

Steven P. Smithbauer

In modern times the book of Zechariah is not the most read, nor studied book of the Old Testament prophets, but the Jews of old certainly poured over its contents. Most of us today would confess that we have preached very little from this grand book, and yet it contains profound prophecy concerning the coming of the Messiah, and the church. Both Zechariah, and Haggai were contemporaries who prophesied some seventy years before the completion of the new temple, (around 520 B.C.), during the return from captivity in Babylon. Both they and Malachi make up the group known as the *post-exilic* prophets. Zechariah was a priest as well as a prophet, and he is mentioned by Ezra in Ezra 5:1 and 6:14. The book of Zechariah may be divided into two sections, the first dealing with eight specific visions describing the return from Babylon and the re-establishment of the temple worship. The second deals with then future events, such as the coming of Messiah, and the establishment of an everlasting kingdom. Zechariah chapter 12 contains such a prophecy that may have been misinterpreted by first century Jews, and gives readers today some insight perhaps as to why the religious leaders of Jesus' day were expecting a military leader. If this passage which describes the restoration and return of glory to Jerusalem were understood literally, the Jews would have believed themselves to be all but invincible, even against the Roman legions. Sadly, this interpretation has a fatal flaw.

In the preceding chapter, the Lord cut in two the symbolic staves, BEAUTY and BANDS. "And I took my staff, even Beauty, and cut it asunder, that I might break my covenant which I had made with all the people...Then I cut asunder mine other staff, even Bands, that I might break the

brotherhood between Judah and Israel.” (11:10, 14). This meant first that the covenant making fleshly Israel God’s chosen people would be done away. This was accomplished, of course, when the church was established around 30 A.D., some 550 years in the future from Zechariah’s prophecy. Then the Lord breaks the staff, Bands. Here is where the interpretation gets tricky. If this represents the dissolution of brotherhood between the literal Northern and Southern kingdoms, then such had already occurred hundreds of years before. When the church was established, there was most definitely no spirit of brotherhood between the Jews and the Northern kingdom. In fact, years before the Babylonian captivity took place, the Assyrians had already conquered, and all but destroyed the ten tribes. What remained in the time of Christ was the group known as the hybrid Samaritans, part Israelite, but also part Assyrian. As any Bible student knows, there was great animosity between the Jews and Samaritans, but no brotherhood. What then could the breaking of Bands mean? The most logical explanation is that figuratively, God would make a separation between the fleshly Jews, and the spiritual Israel, the church. Only for a brief time did there exist any brotherhood between Christians and Jews, for it quickly dissolved due to the incompatibility of the two religions.

Galatians 4:22-31 perhaps provides an apostolic key to the understanding of this. Paul here uses allegory to describe this same separation. Ishmael, the son of the bond woman Hagar represented gentiles, while Isaac represented the Jews. However, Paul describes Christians as being the children of promise, but the Jews, in bondage to the law, he names as “children of the bondwoman.” In contrast, the Christians were free. Note verse 26, “But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.”

If we establish that the second division of Zechariah is then Messianic prophecy, we must conclude that the Return of Glory to Jerusalem described in chapter 12 is to be taken figuratively, and not literally. Also key to understanding this passage is the phrase, “in that day” which is repeated six times in chapter 12 alone, and is in the context of the breaking of the staves. In other words, when God breaks his covenant with the Jews so that they are no longer his chosen people, and when the church becomes independent from them, no brotherhood between them, then IN THAT DAY, the events described in chapter 12 will come about.

**IN THAT DAY JERUSALEM BECOMES
A “CUP OF TREMBLING” AND JUDAH
PARTICIPATES IN THE SIEGE.**

(Verses 1-2)

The Cup of trembling, or reeling is that which contains intoxicating strong drink. The Living Bible paraphrase calls it a cup of “poison”. Jerusalem would be a cause of making those around her sick and dizzy. In Isaiah 51, the prophet speaks of the same situation in reverse:

Awake, awake, stand up, O Jerusalem,
which hast drunk at the hand of the LORD
the cup of his fury; thou hast drunken the
dregs of the cup of trembling, and wrung
them out... Therefore hear now this, thou
afflicted, and drunken, but not with wine:
Thus saith thy Lord the LORD, and thy God
that leadeth the cause of his people, Behold,
I have taken out of thine hand the cup of
trembling, even the dregs of the cup of my
fury; thou shalt no more drink it again:
(51:17, 21-22).

Here Jerusalem drank from a cup of fury that God has

placed before them. In Zechariah, Jerusalem *is* the cup that causes those around her to reel.

It is imperative that we recognize the identity of Jerusalem here. Since these events take place “in that day”, we must conclude the passage is dealing with the times of the Messiah. So it is not literal Jerusalem which is meant here but spiritual Jerusalem, the church. Under the Law of Moses, Jerusalem was the capitol city of the people of God. In the New Testament, the people of God figuratively, *are* the city of Jerusalem. “And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.” Revelation 21:2.

It also seems that Judah is involved in the siege against the city. The King James translators may have missed this. Young’s Literal Translation renders the verse, “Lo, I am making Jerusalem a cup of reeling to all the peoples round about, **and also against Judah it is**, in the siege against Jerusalem.” If the Jews were said to be on the side of the Christians in the persecution the meaning of this passage seems to make little sense. In fact numerous passages in the Gospel accounts, especially John, refer to “the Jews” as the antagonists of Jesus during his ministry. This seems odd to us since Jesus himself was a Jew, but nevertheless he refers to them this way to Pilate for example. “Jesus answered, My kingdom is not of this world: if my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to **the Jews**.” John 18:36.

That the church suffered intense persecution at the hands of the Jews is almost unnecessary to state. Saul of Tarsus was a ringleader in this even acquiring papers and permission to go into Damascus of Syria to drag Christians back to Jerusalem to stand trial, and possibly face death. The persecution was so intense that many had to leave Jerusalem. “And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were

all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles...Therefore they that were scattered abroad went every where preaching the word.” Acts 8:1,4.

IN THAT DAY JERUSALEM BECOMES A “BURDENSOME STONE” TO ALL AROUND HER

The picture here is of a large stone in the midst of a farmer’s field that defies dislodging due to its immense size and weight. Those who struggle to remove it will only wind up hurting themselves. The prophet Daniel prophesied of a stone cut without hands out of a mountain that would topple the kingdoms of the earth. He then explained the meaning in Daniel 2:44-45:

And in the days of these kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people, but it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand for ever. Forasmuch as thou sawest that the stone was cut out of the mountain without hands...

This passage is almost universally accepted by conservative scholars to be referring to the establishment of the church. In Matthew 21:42, after telling the parable of the wicked husbandmen, Jesus identifies himself as the “Stone which the builders rejected”. Since the church is founded upon Him, the rock, (Matthew 16:18), it too becomes solid as a rock. “And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.” Matthew 21:44. This seems to have Zechariah 12 in mind. All those who array themselves against the Lord and His church will find themselves sorely outmatched. Gamaliel had warned the Jewish Sanhedrin in

Acts 5:39 to let the apostles alone for “...if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God.”, Acts 5:39. Saul of Tarsus, if he was aware of his old teacher’s words here, did not take them to heart for shortly afterward he was to meet the Lord Jesus on the road to Damascus on his way to deliver death to the fleeing Christians. After identifying himself as the Lord Jesus whom Saul was persecuting, the Lord tells him, “It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.” Acts 26:14. The saying conjures up an image of an ox kicking back at the goad which is intended to advance him forward. It is both useless and unprofitable for the ox to do so. The same must be said for all those who oppose the will of God.

**IN THAT DAY JERUSALEM
WOULD “AGAIN BE INHABITED
IN HER OWN PLACE” ALTHOUGH
DESTRUCTION SURROUNDS HER**

In verse 5, the Jewish leaders would be forced to consider the possibility that the reason they can’t overcome this “sect” is because, just as Gamaliel predicted, God is with them. They then become the catalyst for destruction of the enemies of the city. Like a “hearth of fire among the wood, and like a torch of fire in a sheaf”, they would spread the destructive force of God’s wrath, (the fire), throughout the church’s enemies.

Yet, despite the turmoil all around her, Jerusalem remains intact, strong as ever. The first century Jews undoubtedly saw this prophecy in Zechariah 12:6 as meaning they would be victorious over Rome in the siege of 70 A.D. However, literal Jerusalem was far from being left untouched. The Romans sacked the city and destroyed the temple not leaving one stone on top of another, just as Jesus predicted in Matthew 24:2. Herein is one of the greatest reasons for taking a figurative interpretation of

Zechariah 12. If God had been referring to fleshly Jerusalem, and the Jews as his chosen people, why were the Romans not thwarted in their destruction of the city? God was not promising a military victory for the Jews but was instead assuring the survival of his church, even though the whole world was in an uproar round about it.

The “tents of Judah” are probably a reference to the poor among the Jewish people who came to hear the Lord. This contrasts with the affluence of the city dwellers. Remember it was the “common people” who gladly heard the words of the Lord, (Mark 12:37).

IN THAT DAY GOD WOULD “DEFEND THE INHABITANTS” OF THE CITY AGAINST HER ENEMIES

The Lord would literally “*cover over*”, or place a shield over the city. No matter what happens to the church externally, it will not result in the loss of the church. God will always preserve his people. Paul asked in Romans 8:35-37:

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.

The reference to “the house of David” being “as God” can only mean the Son of David himself--Jesus the Christ. The very first verse in the New Testament reads, “The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, **the son of David**, the son of Abraham.” Hailey correctly observed in his commentary, “This places the *angel of Jehovah* on the same level as Jehovah himself...only one member of

RETURN OF GLORY TO JERUSALEM

David's family was God. That one was Jesus Christ."

Verse 9 is a warning to all who array themselves against God's people. All those who oppose the will of God and persecute his church either have been, or will come to be destroyed. The entirety of Revelation is describing the survival of the church in this hostile world which would be otherwise an impossibility were it not for divine intervention on the part of Jehovah God!

The study of this passage yields a better understanding perhaps of why the Jews rejected God's Son. They were expecting a powerful military leader who would overthrow the Romans, and any others who stood in the Jews' way of becoming the next world power. Even the disciples misunderstood this. "When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel? And he said unto them, It is not for you to know the times or the seasons, which the Father hath put in his own power." (Acts 1:6-7) Jesus' answer was one of divine patience. Even after all they had seen and heard, the disciples were ignorant of the larger picture of the church, and eternal salvation. They were still concerned with the Jewish monarchy being established with them at top of the benevolent dictatorship. But Jesus taught, "My kingdom is not of this world." John 18:36.

The most intriguing aspect of His kingdom is that even though it is a spiritual, heavenly kingdom, each of us can be a part of it. The Jews rejected Jesus, but we do not have to do so. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not. But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.", John 1:11-12.

Peter exhorted in I Peter 2:9, "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who

hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.” It is far more marvelous to us that God became man in order to save the souls of all, rather than to simply set up one race of people to rule over all the others, thus making him a respecter of persons. (See Ephesians 6:9.)

Biographical Sketch

Steven P. Smithbauer was born in New Martinsville, WV and was raised in Rochester, PA. He was baptized March 5, 1969 at age 11 at the Zelenople Church of Christ, Zelenople, PA, and graduated from Freedom High School in 1976. Steve attended Ohio Valley College and Harding University from 1978 to 1982. He received his Bachelor's degree in Bible from Ohio Valley College in May of 1982 with a minor in New Testament Greek.

Steve began his located work May 16, 1982 at the Cameron Church of Christ, in Cameron, WV where he preached for nearly twelve years. He began working with the Weirton Heights Church of Christ, Weirton, WV, in April of 1994, where he presently continues to serve as the minister. On May 16, 2002 he completed his Twentieth year of full time Gospel preaching.

In addition to his located work, Steve has held Gospel meetings, and taught at Vacation Bible Schools, Church Camps, and various Lectures throughout Western Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Ohio. He has been a substitute teacher for the West Virginia School of Preaching. He is also the speaker for the weekly radio program, "*Give Me The Bible*", which airs 8:30 a.m. each Sunday morning on AM 1340 WSTV radio, in Steubenville, OH.

Steve married the former Teena Marie Fife of Ellwood City, PA, December 29, 1979 and they have three sons-- David, age 20; Matthew, age 17; and Lucas, age 14. They reside at 115 Ardmore Avenue, Weirton, WV 26062.

JESUS – THE SMITTEN SHEPHERD

Frank Higginbotham

The book of Zechariah contains some prophecies for the people of that time. They had just returned to Jerusalem from being in exile. They needed encouragement in facing the challenges of the day. Also there are some parts of this great book that point forward to the Messiah and His kingdom. The thirteenth chapter is clearly speaking of events in the life of Christ and the effect they have on His coming kingdom. Christ is spoken of as a shepherd. Jesus applies this term to himself. “I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep.” (John 10:11). The Apostle Peter also applies the term to Christ. “For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.” (1 Peter 2:25). Truly, the care that the Lord has for His people is seen when we consider the care given to the sheep by a good shepherd. Consider this very brief outline of chapter thirteen.

Identification and Rejection of false prophets. Vs. 1-6.

False prophets. Vs. 1-5.

Denial. V. 5.

Explanation of cuts. V.6.

Sword against the shepherd. V.7.

Result of smiting the shepherd. Vs. 8, 9.

The portion of the chapter that we have under consideration in this lesson is verse seven. “Awake, O sword, against my shepherd, and against the man that is my fellow, saith the LORD of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered: and I will turn mine hand upon the little ones.” First there is a cry for the sword to be used against the shepherd. Notice that the order to use the sword was given by the Lord of hosts. A sword is the instrument of death and signified that Christ was to be put to death. He would be rejected and suffer without mercy and then be put

to death in harmony with the plan of God. The closeness of God and His Son is expressed by the shepherd being spoken of as the Lord's 'fellow'. The end result of the smiting of the shepherd was that the sheep would be scattered. These statements plainly see their fulfillment in Christ and the church or kingdom. Christ was to die for the sins of fallen mankind. Jesus applied the statement in Zechariah thirteen and verse seven to Himself. "Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad. But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee. (Matthew 26:31-32). Also notice Mark 14:27. His suffering was according to God's plan. The kingdom which He established would also suffer persecution and this would cause a scattering of the saints with the message of redemption to all the world. Many would reject the message but some would listen and obtain the salvation provided. God would save His remnant. What a great message was made known by God's prophet!

There are some things about this passage that would be very helpful to us if we would remember them. The Bible makes it clear that all things that happened to Christ in His death and suffering happened in harmony with the Will of God. "Him, being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain:" (Acts 2:23). God planned in eternity a way for man to have redemption. Paul explains this in Ephesians 3:10, 11. "To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord:" Isaiah fifty three gives a very clear picture of the suffering and death of Christ. He died on the cross bearing the iniquities of us all. The rejection of Christ

was according to God's eternal purpose. When Jesus came into the world He was rejected even by His own people. "He came unto his own, and his own received him not." (John 1:11). What happened to Christ and His church was not by accident. It also should be noted that the events in the life of Christ were not forced upon Him but he voluntarily gave Himself. "Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father." (John 10:17, 18). Much to the dismay of His enemies, the wicked things that they did to Christ were turned to good and God used them to carry out His eternal purpose. "But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory." (1 Corinthians 2:7, 8). They intended evil but it did not work out as they intended. Gamaliel, a doctor of the law gave this advice to the council. "And now I say unto you, Refrain from these men, and let them alone: for if this counsel or this work be of men, it will come to nought: But if it be of God, ye cannot overthrow it; lest haply ye be found even to fight against God." (Acts 5:38, 39). Peter made it clear that the crucifixion of Christ was carried out through the ignorance of the Jewish leaders. (Acts 3:17). They wanted to do harm to the cause of Christ but they instead helped in the carrying out of God's plan

There are some facts about the smitten shepherd that need to be pointed out. Jesus is divine. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." (John 1:1). After affirming Jesus' divinity, John declares that He also became a man. "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory,

the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.” (John 1:14). The fact that He was deity did not exempt Him from going to the cross in fulfillment of God’s plan. As would be true of all men, Jesus had a time when his flesh had difficulty in facing death. This conflict is described by the writer of the Hebrew letter. “Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared; Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him;” (Hebrews 5:7-9). He did not call on His divinity to take Him down from the cross but had rather accepted that it was God’s will that had to be done. “Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done.” (Luke 22:42). He also accomplished for us what we could not do for ourselves. Since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, there would not be a person anywhere qualified to be the perfect sacrifice for sins. It took the sacrifice of the divine Son of God to save us. Paul makes it known that Jesus was raised from the dead according to God’s plan. He had been delivered for our offences. (Romans 4:24, 25). John the Baptist declared Jesus as the Son of God who took away the sin of the world. (John 1:29). He lived without sin (1 Peter 2:22) and His blood was shed for the remission of sins. (Matthew 26:28). Our redemption is not a work of our own doing but by grace we are saved. In Eph. 2:8-10 Paul makes clear that by works of our own merit no one is saved. This fact does not exclude obedience to the commands of God. The Calvinistic doctrine of grace only is not taught. After we have obeyed our God to the best of our ability we still must declare that we are unprofitable servants. We have not earned our

salvation. Christ did for us what we could not do for ourselves.

What did God accomplish in the smiting of the shepherd? What is it that the enemies of God did not want accomplished but to which they unwittingly contributed? First, they brought about the death of Christ which provided a perfect sacrifice for sin. The atonement for sins was made. “But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?” (Hebrews 9:11-14). It is later pointed out in the same chapter that Christ appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. (Hebrews 9:26). Second, in killing the Son of God His precious blood was shed. With that blood Jesus purchased the church. Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood.” (Acts 20:28). What a great price was payed for the church. We are greatly blessed in being given the right to become a part of that blood-bought body. Paul explained to the church at Corinth that they belonged to the Lord because He had purchased them. “What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God’s.” (1 Corinthians 6:19, 20). Glorifying God

in our bodies is the obligation of each member of the church. We need to diligently avoid any action that would reflect in a dishonorable way on the church which Christ purchased with His precious blood. Third, in smiting the shepherd God gave the hope of eternal redemption to mankind. There is one hope of our calling. (Ephesians 4:4). It is by this hope that we are saved. (Romans 8:24). Hope serves as a steady force in the life of a Christian. It is described as an anchor. “Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that within the veil;” (Hebrews 6:19). Without Christ we were without hope. “That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:” (Ephesians 2:12). We are not in that hopeless condition due to the smiting of the shepherd. Fourth, those who were no people became the people of God. “And I will bring the third part through the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will try them as gold is tried: they shall call on my name, and I will hear them: I will say, It is my people: and they shall say, The LORD is my God.” (Zechariah 13:9). Similar language is used by the Apostle Peter. “But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvelous light: Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy.

(1 Peter 2:9, 10). Some people are of their father, the devil but thanks to God who through the smiting of the shepherd gave us the privilege of being God’s own children.

Zechariah by inspiration looked down through time and gave the people of that day a look at what you and I have to

enjoy. The persecuting of the shepherd and the scattering of the sheep has made possible the blessings we now enjoy in Christ.

Biographical Sketch

Frank Higginbotham was born in New Martinsville, WV on February 21, 1933 to Mr. and Mrs. A. G. (Bus) Higginbotham. He was graduated from Magnolia High School in New Martinsville and from Florida Christian College in Tampa, Fl. His first sermon was preached on June 8, 1952. He has done located work with the church on Columbia Street in Fairmont, WV, Wellsburg, WV, West Street in Weirton, WV and is currently in his 38 year with the Virginia Avenue Church of Christ in Chester, WV. He has worked on television and radio. He has spoken Monday through Friday over the Bible Meditations program on WOHI in East Liverpool since 1964. He speaks in 8 to 10 gospel meetings per year and appears on several lectureships. He has been married to the former Rose King for 48 years. They are the parents of three children, Donna (deceased), Janie Gallagher (wife of Brent Gallagher, the preacher at Oakwood Road in Fairmont) and Steve Higginbotham (the preacher for the South Green Street Church of Christ in Glasgow, KY. The Higginbothams' have seven grandchildren.

PUTTING SIN WHERE IT BELONGS

Roger A. Rush

The assignment for this lecture is Zechariah 5:5-11. It's appropriate that we begin with a reading of the text.

Then the angel that talked with me went forth, and said unto me, Lift up now thine eyes, and see what is this that goeth forth. And I said, What is it? And he said, This is an ephah that goeth forth. He said moreover, This is their resemblance through all the earth. And, behold, there was lifted up a talent of lead: and this is a woman that sitteth in the midst of the ephah. And he said, This is wickedness. And he cast it into the midst of the ephah; and he cast the weight of lead upon the mouth thereof. Then lifted I up mine eyes, and looked, and, behold, there came out two women, and the wind was in their wings; for they had wings like the wings of a stork: and they lifted up the ephah between the earth and the heaven. Then said I to the angel that talked with me, Whither do these bear the ephah? And he said unto me, To build it an house in the land of Shinar: and it shall be established, and set there upon her own base (Zechariah 5:5-11 KJV).

Before we proceed, it may be helpful to look at a brief historical overview. Around 606 B.C. the army of Babylon entered Jerusalem for the first time. In two subsequent attacks the city was completely destroyed and the temple leveled. These events unfolded as follows.

- 1) 586 B.C. Jerusalem and the temple destroyed; Judah taken into exile (Jere. 25:12; 29:10)

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- 2) 559 B.C. Cyrus begins his reign (Jere. 51:20; Isa. 44:26-28)
- 3) 537 B.C. Edict of Cyrus for the return (2 Chron. 36:22, 23; Ezra 1:1)
- 4) 536 B.C. Rebuilding of the temple begins (Ezra 5:16)
- 5) 521 B.C. Darius becomes king
- 6) 520 B.C. Prophecies of Haggai and Zechariah (16 years after the foundation for the temple laid and initial work begun)
- 7) 485 B.C. Nehemiah returns to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem

The foundation for the new temple was laid in 536 B.C., but then the work ceased. In about 520 B.C. the prophets, Haggai and Zechariah, were called into service to motivate the people to complete the temple. For about sixteen years Israel had neglected this project while they focused on their own homes. As a result of their preaching, the work began afresh, and by 516 the job was done. Of the two, Zechariah had a more long range vision than Haggai. He looked far beyond the completion of the temple to the time when the kingdom would be restored. Many of his prophecies find their fullest fulfillment in Jesus Christ. One of many examples is:

“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass” (9:9; Luke 19:28-44).

Today our focus is on the seventh of the eight visions contained in the book. Before we look specifically at this vision, however, it may be helpful to provide an overview of all eight visions.

THE VISIONS OF ZECHARIAH - 1:7-6:8

As already stated, the purpose of Zechariah was, with Haggai, to motivate the people to finish the temple. It follows that these visions should convey concepts, ideas, and

messages which would properly motivate Israel to action!

Kyle Yates says: “These visions were definitely given to cheer the fainting workers and to make possible the completion of the temple” (**Preaching From the Prophets**, Kyle Yates, pg. 207). No doubt the people were impatient, tired, worn, and skeptical of success and the return of God’s blessings upon them. These visions provided “words of assurance and encouragement so that they may rise up and build” (Yates, pg. 208)

We now turn our attention to the eight visions of Zechariah.

The first vision is the horseman (1:7-17). These patrollers of the earth (1:11) report that the earth is at rest; now after 70 years (1:12) God, displeased with the heathen (1:15), will restore His mercies upon Jerusalem (1:16, 17). The meaning is that the Lord’s pity is stirred and that Jerusalem will be rebuilt, while the heathen will be chastised (**The Minor Prophets**, Jack Lewis, pg. 76).

The second vision is that of the four horns and four smiths (1:18-21). The four horns and four carpenters (smiths) are seen. The four horns represent the nations which scattered Israel (1:19), and the smiths symbolize the power that will be used to destroy those who had destroyed Jerusalem. There is no longer any opposition to the building of the Lord’s house (Lewis, pg. 76).

The third vision is of the man with the measuring line (2:1-13). The young man about to lay out the walls of Jerusalem is restrained because Jerusalem will be inhabited as a city without walls (2:4), with a population too great to

be contained. Here the message is that God will repeople, protect, and dwell in Jerusalem. They do not need walls of stone because God will be a wall in their midst (Yates, pg. 208).

The fourth vision depicts Joshua being accused by the adversary (3:1-10). Joshua, the grandson of the last high priest before the temple was destroyed (Seraiah), is accused by Satan. He is depicted in filthy garments, a “brand plucked out of the fire” (3:2) meaning out of the priesthood, to be re clothed and set to restore worship in the temple (3:4, 5).

The priesthood was to be cleansed and made acceptable for service. When the temple was completed there would be a priesthood to serve!

The fifth vision is that of the golden lamp stand and the two olive trees (4:1-14). Two anointed ones (probably Zerubbabel and Joshua), the civil and religious heads of the community, are given assurance that the temple will be completed. The candlestick (oil lamp) or light of the temple will not go out. Zerubbabel, who had laid the foundation, would complete the capstone among applause (4:9). One should not despise the day of small things (4:10). This would be accomplished, not by might and power, but by the Lord (4:6).

The sixth vision is of a flying roll or scroll (5:1-4). This vision answers the question, “How can crime be removed from the land?” (Lewis, pg. 77). The flying scroll crosses the land exposing sinners and purging them from the land. Yates says that this means that “spiritual reformation must precede temporal prosperity. Sinners and their sins must be purged from the land” (pg. 209).

The seventh vision is of the woman and the ephah (5:5-11). Some commentators see this as a continuation of the previous vision. Here sin or wickedness, personified as a woman, sits in an ephah (a seven gallon measure) covered

with a lead lid. It is carried off to Shinar where it finds its natural home. With the temple rebuilt, evil is to be removed from the land.

The eighth and final vision is of the four chariots (6:1-8). Four chariots come from between the cooper mountains to patrol the earth. They are identified as the four spirits (winds) of the heavens which went forth from standing before the Lord (6:5). They seem to symbolize God's protective providence. Every promise God has made will be kept. Complete the temple and the earth will be at peace under God's control.

Now we turn our attention to the seventh vision - **THE WOMAN IN THE EPHAH - 5:5-11**. First, we need to define some terms:

- 1) The ephah was a unit of measure about the equivalent of our bushel and here denoting the container or basket.
- 2) The talent of lead was a round leaden lid placed on the ephah
- 3) The woman sitting in the midst of the ephah represents wickedness; a woman being selected as the symbol because of the alluring, captivating, deceptive power of sin (**Minor Prophets**, Theodore Laetsch, pg. 434).
- 4) Two winged women were no doubt used because the ephah contained a woman. They possessed strong wings that they might bear the ephah out of Jerusalem and the land of Israel signifying the removal of sin from the land.
- 5) The land of Shinar (Gen. 10:10; 11:2; 14:1, 9) represents a land of open rebellion against God (see Gen. 11:1-9 and the connection with the tower of Babel); sin is carried off to its natural home.

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Most Bible scholars are in agreement as to the meaning of the vision.

Yates writes: “When the temple is built, evil must be removed from the land” (pg. 209). The two visions of chapter 5 fulfill the promise of 3:9, “I will remove the iniquity of the land in one day.”

Lewis says: “With the temple rebuilt evil is to be removed from the land” (pg. 77).

Laetsch says: “Such a warning against wickedness was not out of place or ill-timed in the days of Zechariah. Wickedness had again attempted to raise its head in God’s Holy Land. Judah’s lack of enthusiasm in building the Temple, the actual stoppage of work for fifteen years, was disobedience, rebellions, refusal to do God’s will, was an attempt of wickedness to regain possession and rule over the nation. The Holy Land is for holy people” (pg. 434, 435). It might be worth also noting that this is the only use of the designation “holy land” in the Bible (Zech. 2:12).

What should the church learn from this particular vision?

First, sin is always an impediment to doing the will of God! Sin caused Adam and Eve to be cast out of the Garden. Sin caused God to destroy Noah’s world. Sin caused God to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah. Sin caused God to send down fire to consume Nadab and Abihu. Sin caused Saul to lose the throne. Sin led to turmoil in David’s family. Sin brought about the fall of Israel, and later Judah. Sin required Christ to leave heaven and come to earth. It was sin which took Him to the cross.

Second, God still calls for holiness in the Holy Land (the church)! Christians are to be holy people. We cannot embrace the ways of the world and remain the people of God. The Scriptures are clear regarding the distinctive life a Christian must live. We are to be holy even as our God is holy (1 Peter 1:15, 16). We are to live soberly, righteously,

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and godly lives (Titus 2:11, 12). And, we must follow after holiness (Hebrews 12:14).

Third, discipleship demands that sin be removed to its home (in the world, not the

church)! There must be a difference in how Christians live. We expect to find sin tolerated and embraced in the world, but not in the church. The Scriptures are very clear regarding this matter (2 Cor. 6:17; Rom. 12:1, 2; 1 John 2:15-17).

This does not mean that God's people are perfect, but we do seek to conform to a higher standard than the world. Sin cannot be embraced!

Fourth, God's blessings and our righteousness are inseparably linked (Prov. 13:15;

14:34; Rom. 11:22). His blessings would not return to Israel until she had completed the temple, restored worship, and rededicated themselves to being the holy people of God (Haggai 1:4-11). God's blessings will not come upon the church unless she is faithful to His word. Compromise and conformity will inevitably lead to disaster and death!

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Roger Rush is a native of Fairmont, West Virginia. He has served as minister of the Sixth and Washington Streets church of Christ in Marietta, Ohio since October of 1985. He is married to the former Diane Bond of Senecaville, Ohio and they have two children, Angela and Adam. Before coming to Marietta, he served the following congregations:

Hundred church of Christ, Hundred, WV; Little Hocking church of Christ, Little Hocking, OH; and the Lower Paw Paw church of Christ, Lower Salem, OH.

TRUE AND FALSE PROPHETS

Clarence McDowell

In having this lesson assigned to me, and after preparing it, I was reminded of the infamous statement credited to Yogi Berra “This is dejavu all over again.” Once again I was assigned a topic when I would have preferred to deal with a text, and after preparing the lesson I was thankful for the topic assigned, rather than a text. I hope that as we examine true and false prophets, we might not only come to a greater understanding of them, but also develop a greater appreciation for the verbally inspired scriptures.

It seems to me that a good place to begin this study is by defining what a prophet is and what a false prophet is. Peter warned: “*But there were false prophets among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you...*” (II Peter 2:1, KJV). The word translated “*false prophets*” is “*pseudoprophets*”, and Thayer gives the meaning as “*one who, acting the part of a divinely inspired prophet, utters falsehoods under the name of divine prophecies.*” We recognize the prefix “*pseudo*” in the word, and Webster defines it as: “*being apparently rather than actually as stated.*” A prophet then, is one who reveals divinely inspired messages, while a false prophet only appears to do so.

Zechariah chapter nine begins a section where the prophet looks into the future and foretells the fulfillment of the covenant promise made to David in II Samuel 7:12ff. Matthew quoted Zechariah 9:9 in recording the account of what has come to be called “The Triumphant Entry” in Matthew 21. Then in his Pentecost sermon in Acts, 2, Peter labored to show that the miracles and signs of that day pointed to the truth that Christ was seated on David’s throne, and, for the first time, preached remission of sins in

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the name of Jesus Christ. That was exactly what Zechariah had in mind when he penned Zechariah 13:1-4: *“In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness. And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the Lord of hosts, that I will cut off the names of the idols out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered; and also I will cause the prophets and the unclean spirit to pass out of the land. And it shall come to pass, that, when any shall yet prophesy, then his father and his mother that begat him shall say unto him, Thou shalt not live; for thou speakest lies in the name of the Lord: and his father and his mother that begat him shall thrust him through when he prophesieth. And it shall come to pass in that day, that the prophets shall be ashamed every one of his vision, when he hath prophesied: neither shall they wear a rough garment to deceive:”* This is a passage that causes me to stand in awe of the harmony and therefore, the inspiration of the Bible.

Unfortunately, The Pulpit Commentary argues that the prophets that are foreseen as passing out of the land are false prophets, because they are listed in the same context as idols and unclean spirits. They also say that the Septuagint and the Vulgate render the passage *“false prophets.”* That view obliterates evidence of inspiration that is really faith-building. Zechariah 13:2 has the end of the miraculous age in view, when revelation will be complete. The prophet will pass out of the land, because the entire will of God will have been revealed and the prophet would no longer be needed. Since there would no longer be any inspired men, anyone claiming to deliver an inspired message would immediately be recognized as a liar, and the threat of death at the hands of his own parents was designed to make would-be deceivers from wearing the garment of a prophet.

Consider how this harmonizes with what we read in the New Testament. When Jesus set forth the principles of the kingdom in the Sermon on the Mount, He said: *“Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves”* (Matthew 7:16). The apostle John warned: *“Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits, whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world”* (I John 4:1). Obviously, John’s own writing by inspiration demonstrated that the miraculous age had not ended. Now contrast that with what Peter wrote in II Peter 2:1: *“But as there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you...”* Peter is warning Christians about a danger they will face after revelation is complete and the prophet has passed from the scene. Franklin Camp affirmed that the term *“false prophet”* in the above context is senseless apart from the existence of true prophets. (There can be no such thing as a counterfeit three dollar bill). In view of that, Peter does not warn of false prophets, but false teachers. (Franklin Camp, Tape Series, Zechariah, Adamsville church of Christ, Adamsville, Alabama. 1984). Of course, one might be termed a false prophet in the sense of false religions like the emperor worship of Revelation 16, or of the Joseph Smith and Ellen G. White variety.

The credentials of a prophet

God told Abimilech, king of Gerar, that Abraham was a prophet in Genesis 20:7. Then in Exodus, we are told that both Moses and Aaron were prophets, for God promised: *“I will be with thy mouth, and with his mouth...And thou shalt take this rod in thine hand, wherewith thou shalt do signs”* Exodus 4:15, 17). Prophets were empowered to work miracles and signs in order to authenticate their message. Paul often opposed the claims of false prophets by urging

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those they were trying to deceive to look at whose teaching was confirmed by miracles. He asked the Galatians: “*He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?*” In effect asking, “*Who imparted miraculous gifts to you, me, or the Judaizing teachers?*” Some contend that false prophets could work miracles, but if that were true, by what rule of reason could miracles confirm the word spoken by the apostles and prophets? False prophets deceived by means of “*lying wonders,*” but there never has been a bona-fide miracle wrought by a false prophet.

Moses addressed the possibility of coincidence in the book of Deuteronomy when he wrote: “If there arise among you a prophet, or a dreamer of dreams, and giveth thee a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder come to pass, whereof he spake unto thee, saying, Let us go after other gods, which thou hast not known, and let us serve them; Thou shalt not hearken unto the words of that prophet, or that dreamer of dreams: for the Lord your God proveth you, to know whether ye love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul” (Deuteronomy 13:1-3). What is in view are predictions of the Jeane Dixon variety, which, if enough are made, one may prove to be correct. Moses is not saying that God gives false prophets power to work miracles to test people, but rather, he permits things to happen that are of the nature of coincidences. We need to be careful not to miss the other aspect of the true prophet as evidenced by Deuteronomy 13. What he speaks will harmonize in all points with everything else God has revealed through inspired men. Therefore, even if the predicted event were to happen, the one who tried to use that fortuitous accident to authenticate a call to follow false gods should be rejected. This text alone should stand as proof to all that those who search for contradictions in the

Bible search in vain. The true prophet possessed miracle-working power, but also spoke and wrote in perfect harmony with everything God had earlier revealed.

The challenge to be true

One might wonder what could possibly motivate someone to be a false prophet. The answer to that question is not at all difficult, but is readily apparent when we examine what inspired history records of them. When the false prophets were in the majority, those with the courage to be true were inevitably driven into the crucible of suffering.

During the reign of Ahab, king of Israel, a hero arose who may have been influenced by the courageous example of Elijah. The record of this man's valor is found in II Chronicles chapter 18. Jehoshaphat was king of Judah, and Ahab wanted him to align his forces with those of Israel in a fight against Syria. Jehoshaphat asked Ahab to inquire of the Lord, and Ahab gathered four hundred prophets together, and they all advised them to go up against the Syrians. The king of Judah was all too familiar with Ahab's prophets and asked in II Chronicles 18:6: *Is there not here a prophet of the Lord besides, that we might inquire of him?*" Ahab responded: *There is yet one man, by whom we may inquire of the Lord: but I hate him: for he never prophesied good to me, but always evil: the same is Micaiah the son of Imla...*" (II Chronicles 18:7). A messenger was dispatched to bring Micaiah to the kings, and the messenger gave the prophet some friendly advice: *"Behold, the words of the prophets declare good to the king with one assent; let thy word therefore, I pray thee, be like one of theirs, and speak thou good. And Micaiah said, As the Lord liveth, even what my God saith, that will I speak"* (II Chronicles 18:12-13). Micaiah revealed that God permitted a lying spirit to control the mouths of the

prophets, and that Ahab would be enticed to go to Ramoth-gilead where he would be killed. Zedekiah the son of Chenaanah struck Micaiah on the cheek asking: “*Which way went the spirit of the Lord from me to speak unto thee?*” (II Chronicles 18:23). Ahab ordered Micaiah to be put in prison on bread and water, but while speaking the truth cost Micaiah his freedom, believing a lie cost Ahab his life. Surely you can see that the challenge to be true to God arose from the pressure to speak what people wanted to hear, and that is still the greatest temptation faced by those by whom God is made known to lost men and women.

Almost three centuries down the stream of sacred history, another situation arose that screamed for a hero of faith to arise, and the call was answered by a man named Jeremiah. His sad commentary was: “*A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land; The prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their means: and my people love to have it so: and what will ye do in the end thereof?*” (Jeremiah 5:30-31). In chapter 27 of Jeremiah, God instructed him to put a yoke upon his neck and send yokes and bonds to the kings of all the nations round about Judah, telling them that the Lord had given their lands into the hand of Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon. In chapter 28, Hananiah, a false prophet, took the yoke off Jeremiah’s neck and broke it, saying that within two years the yoke of Nebuchadnezzar would be broken. Jeremiah responded with a true prophecy that the false prophet would not live to see fulfilled, for Jeremiah told him: “*Therefore thus saith the Lord; Behold, I will cast thee from off the face of the earth: this year thou shalt die, because thou hast taught rebellion against the Lord. So Hananiah the prophet died the same year in the seventh month.*” (Jeremiah 28:16-17). In Jeremiah 32, king Zedekiah imprisoned Jeremiah for daring to preach the truth about Jerusalem falling to the

Babylonians. In chapter 36, Jeremiah dictated a message that Baruch wrote on a scroll, detailing the punishment God was going to visit upon Judah if they failed to turn from their sin. During a fast that was proclaimed the next year, Baruch read the scroll to the sons of Shaphan the scribe, one of them told the princes of Judah, and they called for Baruch to read it to them. Upon hearing the reading of the scroll, the princes advised that both Baruch and Jeremiah hide. They told Jehoiakim, king of Judah, of the scroll, and Jehudi read the scroll to him - but he cut it up with his pen knife and burned it in the fire on the hearth. Again in Jeremiah, the challenge to be true is really the task of resisting the pressure to tell people what they want to hear.

Cultural challenges to conform

In every age, the winds of that period's culture have blown on all people, gathering up many of them and depositing them together, as it did with Ahab's four hundred prophets. Only a few, like Elijah, Micaiah, and Jeremiah stood rooted and grounded in the face of tremendous pressure to conform to viewpoints popular and politically correct.

Those who are preaching the gospel today must meet the challenge of preaching the truth while winds of culture approach hurricane force. Mainstream America might claim to be oriented toward Christianity, but in reality the prevailing religion of America is secular humanism, sometimes masquerading as a form of Christianity. Recognizing no standard of objective truth, the result is a pervasive liberalism that permeates much of society.

CBS News Emmy Award-winner Bernard Goldberg fell from favor with CBS and news anchor Dan Rather when he wrote the book Bias, an expose of how the media distorts the news. Goldberg gave examples of how reporters purposely choose words to misconstrue the

message. For instance, he noted how Washington correspondent Eric Engberg had reported on the presidential campaign of Steve Forbes: “*Steve Forbes pitches his flat-tax scheme as an economic elixir, good for everything that ails us*” (Bias, Bernard Goldberg; Regency Publishing, Washington DC, 2002. p16). No doubt if the plan had been advanced by some darling of the liberals, he would have used “plan” instead of “scheme”, and rather than “elixir” he might have said “obvious solution.” The most frightening aspect of Goldberg’s observations about bias in the media is that it does not arise from a conscious effort to distort, but from a prevailing mindset that tends to cause people who work in that medium to adopt the party line if they want to be accepted by the elitists at the top. He writes: “*If you hooked network news reporters and producers to polygraph machines and asked them, ‘Do you think you are guilty of liberal bias?’ most would almost certainly answer, ‘No,’ And they would pass the polygraph test because they’re not lying. They honestly believe what they’re saying. And that’s the biggest problem of all*” (Goldberg, p62).

The arena where liberalism’s influence can be most readily recognized as similar to the issues the Lord’s church faces in the present culture is in our judicial system. At this present time, a host of judicial nominees has been bottled up in the United States Senate, because they are perceived as being too conservative. In his book The Tempting of America, Judge Robert H. Bork describes a pervasive revisionist attitude that ignores the original meaning of the U.S. Constitution in favor of re-interpreting it to find ways to codify what they regard as politically correct. Liberal jurists have their own “new hermeneutic.” Listen to what Bork says in his introduction: “*The orthodoxy of original understanding, and the political neutrality of judging it requires, are anathema to a liberal*

culture that for fifty years has won a succession of political victories from the courts and that hopes for more political victories in the future. The representatives of that culture hate the American orthodoxy because they have moral and political agendas of their own that cannot be found in the Constitution ...”(The Tempting of America; Robert H. Bork; Simon and Shuster, New York, New York, 1990. p. 7).

The same reasoning applies to those who contend that we need a new method of Biblical interpretation. Whether they realize it or not, they have an agenda, and it is not an interpretation that most want - it is a misinterpretation.

If we face the truth that culture exerts pressure on the church, just as it does with all the institutions of society, we will see the amount of courage it takes to avoid becoming a false teacher. This is especially true of the one who earns advanced academic degrees in order to teach in our colleges and universities. Whether one can know his heart well enough to admit it or not, these institutions each have corporate personalities. Some, for good reason, have the reputation of being liberal. Anyone more conservative than the corporate norm who chooses to work for that institution faces the same kind of pressure faced by a conservative reporter who would join CBS. The inevitable result finds the individual gradually accommodating his thinking to whatever constitutes the general view of the institution - or finds him “outside the loop.” Those who make the transition would then have no pangs of conscience, thinking that they had finally seen the error of their former persuasion. Shakespeare put the following words on the lips of Brutus as he reflected on the alleged threat posed by a too-powerful Julius Caesar: *“For tis a common proof that lowliness is young ambition’s ladder. But when he once attains the upmost round, he then unto the ladder turns his back, looks into the sky, scorning the base degrees by*

which he did ascend.” That is the path traveled by good men who fall victim to the songs of the sweet sirens of liberalism. The church is passing through a time that calls for men of faith like Micaiah - who will speak the truth when outnumbered four hundred to one. She needs men like Jeremiah - willing to die in a dungeon for preaching what people hate rather than to live in a palace for preaching what they like. She needs men like Zechariah, who will speak in the name of God to arouse His people when they grow content and become complacent (Ezra 5:1).

Biographical Sketch

Clarence has preached for the congregation that meets in Berkeley Springs, WV since January of 1999. Prior to that, he lived in Pennsylvania, where he and his wife established the first work in Venango County in 1970. They moved to Kittanning PA in 1977, where they planted the church in Armstrong County, and remained there for 22 years. Clarence worked in the steel industry for twenty years, and studied Metallurgical Engineering at Carnegie-Mellon University. After moving to Kittanning, he completed a degree in Bible at OVC.

The McDowells have five children and twelve grandchildren. Their son is a gospel preacher, as are two sons-in-law. Another son-in-law serves as an elder, and the fourth as a deacon.

THE FLOCK OF SLAUGHTER

Wesley Simons

(Zechariah 11:1-17)

Introduction

This chapter has been the object of many interpretations. It has been applied in more than forty different ways. Nation after nation has been the object of its aim according to commentators. The only way one can approach this chapter is to allow inspiration to aid him. Otherwise, one might make the wrong application.

The key seems to be the Messianic passage and its fulfillment which is found in this great chapter. The prophet declared, “And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver. 13 And the LORD said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prised at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the LORD” (Zechariah 11:12-13). The fulfillment of this passage is found in the denial of the Lord. Matthew states, “Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests, 15 And said unto them, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver. 16 And from that time he sought opportunity to betray him” (Matthew 26:14-16). Matthew also recorded, “And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood. 7 And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in. 8 Wherefore that field was called, The field of blood, unto this day. 9 Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children

of Israel did value; 10 And gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me” (Matthew 27:6-10).

Therefore, this chapter must be viewed as God’s response to His children rejecting the Messiah. Judah had just returned from Babylonian captivity, but she had not learned her lesson for rejecting God and His plan. God shows what Judah’s attitude toward His Son would be about 540-550 years in the future. This would be the final act of disobedience for the Jewish nation. This would spell their doom. It is this despicable act that Zechariah reveals in this chapter. We need to learn there is a great price to be paid for rejecting God.

God’s People To Fall

Zechariah 11:1-2 Open thy doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour thy cedars. 2 Howl, fir tree; for the cedar is fallen; because the mighty are spoiled: howl, O ye oaks of Bashan; for the forest of the vintage is come down.

The judgment is certain. They might as well open the door for the punishment that God has chosen for His people. The small and great alike shall fall. If the cedars fall, then one knows that the fir and oak trees shall fall as well. The Jewish leaders are going to pay a price for the rejection and crucifixion of God’s son. The Messiah proved who He was by the miracles that He worked (John 3:1-5; Acts 2:22). However, the Bible says, He came unto His own and they received Him not (John 1:11).

God spoke of the destroying of other nations in language similar to that being employed here. Consider what He said about the Amorites: “Yet destroyed I the Amorite before them, whose height was like the height of the cedars, and he was strong as the oaks; yet I destroyed his fruit from above, and his roots from beneath” (Amos 2:9).

“An invading enemy army would fit the picture Zechariah describes prophetically. The destruction the Roman army visited upon Palestine in general, and on Jerusalem in particular, certainly fits the portrait the prophet sketches, especially when verses ten through thirteen define the time factor as the first century” (Bob Winton, *Outline Commentary on The Minor Prophets*, p. 221).

Voice Of The Shepherds

Zechariah 11:3 There is a voice of the howling of the shepherds; for their glory is spoiled: a voice of the roaring of young lions; for the pride of Jordan is spoiled.

The glory of the leaders shall be spoiled. They can howl all they want to but the judgment of God is real and permanent. The evil leadership had brought this destruction upon the Jewish nation. The blind has led the blind. Think of the way these individuals treated our Lord. The howling is too late. The howling is because of the death of a nation, not because of the mistreatment and death of our Lord.

Even the Lord’s disciples spoke of the glory of the temple (Mark 13:1; Luke 21:5). However, the Lord showed them that this glory would be short lived as He stated one stone would not be left upon another (Mark 13:2). So, we can see why all the howling is taking place.

The Feeding Of The Flock Of Slaughter

Zechariah 11:4 Thus saith the LORD my God; Feed the flock of the slaughter.

God has always tried to lead His people. However, many times they would not follow. The problem was not the diet, but the heart. Stephen knew this when he replied, “Ye stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears, ye do always resist the Holy Ghost: as your fathers did, so do ye.

52 Which of the prophets have not your fathers persecuted? and they have slain them which shewed before of the coming of the Just One; of whom ye have been now the betrayers and murderers” (Acts 7:51-52).

Though they were fed, their destiny was to be one of destruction. Why? Because they would not allow the word to produce faith in their hearts. They could not say that they had not been fed.

Slain By The Possessors

Zechariah 11:5 Whose possessors slay them, and hold themselves not guilty: and they that sell them say, Blessed be the LORD; for I am rich: and their own shepherds pity them not.

It appears that the possessors here are the shepherds who had the charge of stewardship and misused it. They had failed to lead God’s people in a righteous way. However, they declared themselves innocent of any wrong doing. They viewed themselves rich for they deemed themselves to be Abraham’s seed. The shepherds did not pity them because they had led them in the very direction in which they wanted them to go. Many religious leaders are shepherds of destruction. They show no pity toward the flock. Many lead for the sake of filthy lucre.

Bob Winton makes these observations: “Those who exert control over the flock of slaughter are depicted by three titles: those who possess them, those who sell them, and their own shepherds. These three groups most likely refer to the rulers of the nation during the time of Christ: the scribes, Pharisees, and Sadducees; or perhaps the division could be listed as the scribes, elders, and chief priests. The Good Shepherd was in continual conflict with them throughout his ministry” (John 8,10; Matt. 22,23). (Bob Winton, *Outline Commentary on The Minor Prophets*, p. 222).

With what are we being fed (Acts 20:28)? What kind of shepherds do we have (1 Peter 5:1-4)? One will have to give an account for his stewardship (1 Cor. 4:2).

The Time For Mercy Runs Out

Zechariah 11:6 For I will no more pity the inhabitants of the land, saith the LORD: but, lo, I will deliver the men every one into his neighbour's hand, and into the hand of his king: and they shall smite the land, and out of their hand I will not deliver them.

God's grace will not always abide with man. Moses put it this way, "And the LORD said, My spirit shall not always strive with man, for that he also is flesh: yet his days shall be an hundred and twenty years" (Genesis 6:3). The Jewish nation was always one of rebellion. This time they had gone too far. The end of the nation would be the penalty levied by God. God would not hold back the enemies of His people. Why save a nation that would not honor their maker? "The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God" (Psalm 9:17).

God had foreseen the destruction of the Jewish nation and told of a coming spiritual kingdom (Isaiah 2:1-4; Daniel 2:44). God says that the natural branches were cut off because of unbelief. However, they could be grafted in again if they believed (Romans 11:19-23).

Beauty And Bands

Zechariah 11:7 And I will feed the flock of slaughter, even you, O poor of the flock. And I took unto me two staves; the one I called Beauty, and the other I called Bands; and I fed the flock.

The Lord is going to feed the flock of slaughter. Notice, He is also going to feed the poor of the flock. In verse five, those who had bought into the error of the blind

shepherds deemed themselves to be rich. However, they were wrong in the sight of God.

Here the poor of the flock are those who comprise the remnant who waited on the Lord. Verse eleven shows that the poor waited on the Lord. “And it was broken in that day: and so the poor of the flock that waited upon me knew that it was the word of the LORD.” The poor of the flock will accept the destruction of the Jewish nation. They deemed it to be from God. On the day of Pentecost, about three thousand accepted the new kingdom over the Jewish nation. It took Saul of Tarsus and others a while to see this. The final blow for the Jewish nation would come in 70 A.D.

The Three Shepherds

Zechariah 11:8 Three shepherds also I cut off in one month; and my soul lothed them, and their soul also abhorred me.

The Jewish leaders lothed God. Can one imagine the loathing or hating of God and this by His own so-called leaders. God also despised that for which they stood. The cutting off of the three shepherds is the authority of the Jewish nation. This being brought about by God. The offices of prophet, priest and king were gone. Jesus would be prophet, priest and king. The new kingdom replaced the Jewish nation: “ For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law” (Hebrews 7:12).

Let It Die!

Zechariah 11:9 Then said I, I will not feed you: that that dieth, let it die; and that that is to be cut off, let it be cut off; and let the rest eat every one the flesh of another.

The Lord was not going to feed them in a way that would preserve a disobedient nation. His diet for them was going to harden their hearts. Why? Because Jesus Christ was a stumbling block. “Unto you therefore which believe he is precious: but unto them which be disobedient, the stone which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head of the corner, 8 And a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offence, even to them which stumble at the word, being disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed” (1 Peter 2:7-8). “But we preach Christ crucified, unto the Jews a stumblingblock, and unto the Greeks foolishness” (1 Corinthians 1:23).

Therefore, God said concerning the Jewish nation, “Let it die! Let it be cut off!” The Jewish nation had been saved time and time again by God, but not this time. God further stated, that they could feed upon each other. This is all a nation can do who has forgotten its God.

The Staff Called Beauty is Broken

Zechariah 11:10-11 And I took my staff, even Beauty, and cut it asunder, that I might break my covenant which I had made with all the people. 11 And it was broken in that day: and so the poor of the flock that waited upon me knew that it was the word of the LORD.

God has never broken any covenant with any man or group of men until first man breaks his covenant with God. Since Israel would not honor their agreement with God to be obedient to Him, then God had no choice but to break His covenant with them. He would no longer view them as His children. One would have to be born again to become part of His family. The poor of the flock (remnant) knew that it was of the Lord.

Sold For Thirty Pieces Of Silver

Zechariah 11:12-13 And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver. 13 And the LORD said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prised at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the LORD.

“The spokesman here is the Messiah. He asks the nation of Israel to give him his hire (his wages; to pay him according to his worth to them). Christ had served his people in his public ministry for three and a half years. His request is for them to place a value on their estimate of his services. What he wanted from them was their loving obedience, which was in their own best interest, but they defrauded him of this appropriate reward. In this respect, Israel treated the Messiah as Laban treated Jacob (Gen. 30:28-33; 31:42f). The estimate of the religious and civil leaders of Christ was expressed in their utter rejection of him and their demand that he be crucified.” (Bob Winton, *Outline Commentary on The Minor Prophets*, p. 224).

“So ... thirty pieces of silver -- thirty shekels. They not only refused Him His due, but added insult to injury by giving for Him the price of a gored bond-servant (Ex 21:32; Mt 26:15). A freeman was rated at twice that sum.” (JFB, *CD Commentary on Zechariah*).

Did Matthew make a mistake when he attributed this prophecy to Jeremiah? We know that God by inspiration cannot make a mistake. Therefore, there has to be a logical reason for Matthew's statement. There is never a contradiction until all possibilities have been exhausted. Albert Barnes gives the following as a possibility: "Anciently, according to the Jewish writers, *Jeremiah* was reckoned the first of the prophets, and was placed first in the Book of the Prophets, thus: Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Isaiah,

and the twelve minor prophets. Some have thought that Matthew, quoting this place, quoted the *Book of the Prophets* under the name of that which had the *first* place in the book, that is, Jeremiah: and though the words are those of Zechariah, yet they are quoted correctly as the words of the Book of the Prophets, the first of which was Jeremiah" (Albert Barnes, *Barnes Notes on Matthew - Mark*, p.302).

There are other good possibilities. However, the aforementioned one will stand until all the atheists and infidels prove that such cannot be the case. For those of us who believe in flawless inspiration, there is no problem.

Bands Cut Asunder

Zechariah 11:14 Then I cut asunder mine other staff, even Bands, that I might break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel.

"These acts of the prophet as a shepherd teach symbolically that Jehovah had led, fed, and cared for Israel, the sheep of His pasture, only to be rejected and insulted. He had been forced to take away from them His favor and to give them up to dissolution and destruction as a brotherhood; this was fulfilled through the years that followed. But equally as great was the prophetic instruction in these acts. When God sent His Son to the people, as "the good shepherd," bestowing the bountiful favor of God on them, they likewise rejected Him, placing on Him an equal value of thirty pieces of silver, the price of a gored slave. With this money, which Judas in remorse and grief cast at the feet of the priest, they bought a potter's field in which to bury strangers. Israel's contempt for Jehovah was repeated in the contempt of their children for His Son." (Homer Hailey, *A Commentary on The Minor Prophets*, p.384).

This is the breaking of the physical nation that the spiritual nation can be exalted. God no longer views

physical Israel as His children. One must be born again to be a child of God (John 3:3-5). Paul put it this way: “For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: 29 But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God” (Romans 2:28-29). Again Paul reveals, “And as many as walk according to this rule, peace be on them, and mercy, and upon the Israel of God” (Galatians 6:16).

The question is how does one become Abraham’s seed and thus claim the promise of Genesis 12:1-3? The answer is given by inspiration: “ For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Galatians 3:27-29).

The Instruments Of A Foolish Shepherd

Zechariah 11:15 And the LORD said unto me, Take unto thee yet the instruments of a foolish shepherd.

The instruments of a foolish shepherd would be the same as a wise shepherd. The bottom line is what is done with the instruments. Bad shepherds have a Bible or God’s word, but they will not follow the pattern. The instruments are not the problem but the heart and lack of concern for the flock.

Bob Winton points out the thrust of the passage: “Zechariah is instructed to take upon himself the instruments of a foolish shepherd. The purpose in this is to make a change from discussing the Good Shepherd (the Messiah) to give a picture of Israel under a foolish leader. The reference to a *foolish shepherd* is not to identify any particular person, but any ruler who would lead the people

astray. The leaders of Judah cried out their refusal to accept Jesus, and affirmed their allegiance to Caesar (John 19:14f).” (Bob Winton, *Outline Commentary on The Minor Prophets*, p. 225).

A Shepherd Raised Up

Zechariah 11:16 For, lo, I will raise up a shepherd in the land, which shall not visit those that be cut off, neither shall seek the young one, nor heal that that is broken, nor feed that that standeth still: but he shall eat the flesh of the fat, and tear their claws in pieces.

God is going to raise up bad shepherds because the people will not demand and accept the good one, namely the Christ. God will allow one to destroy himself. Notice, the bad shepherds do not care for the little ones. They do not heal the broken. They do not feed those that stand still. The bad shepherds feed upon the people and sink their claws into them. Compare this description with that of the good shepherd, Christ, as found in the New Testament. Read and study John chapter 10.

Matthew Henry states: “God, having showed the misery of this people in their being justly left by the Good Shepherd, shows their further misery in being abused by foolish shepherds. The description suits the character Christ gives of the scribes and Pharisees. They never do any thing to support the weak, or comfort the feeble-minded; but seek their own ease, while they are barbarous to the flock.” (Matthew Henry, *CD Commentary on Zechariah*)

Woe Unto The Idol Shepherd

Zechariah 11:17 Woe to the idol shepherd that leaveth the flock! the sword shall be upon his arm, and upon his right eye: his arm shall be clean dried up, and his right eye shall be utterly darkened.

“The idol shepherd has the garb and appearance of a shepherd, receives submission, and is supported at much expense; but he leaves the flock to perish through neglect, or leads them to ruin by his example. This suits many in different churches and nations, but the warning had an awful fulfillment in the Jewish teachers” (Matthew Henry).

“The sword would be against the shepherd's arm, the arm that should have been used in feeding, guiding, and leading the flock, but was not thus employed. The sword would also fall upon the shepherd's right eye, that it should be blinded. The eye that did not oversee the flock would lose its sight; the arm that was not applied to tending to the flock, would be withered” (Bob Winton).

There is a price that all will pay for failing in the area of stewardship (1 Cor. 4:2). The Hebrew writer states: “Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you” (Hebrews 13:17)

Conclusion

Zechariah 11 is a wonderful chapter which shows the high cost of rejecting the Christ. The Jewish nation paid the ultimate price for rejecting Jesus. We will pay the ultimate price by being lost forever if we make the same choice. The following verses illustrates the proper place that Christ must have in your life and mine: John 8:24 I said therefore unto you, that ye shall die in your sins: for if ye believe not that I am he, ye shall die in your sins; John 12:48 He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day; John 14:6 Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me; Acts 4:12 Neither is there salvation in

any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved.

May God help us to love Christ with all of our hearts.

Biographical Sketch

Wesley Simons has preached for 32 years. He preachers and is one of the elders at the Stoney Creek Church of Christ. He is married to Elva (Cook) for 35 years. He has two daughters: Karen Blevins (33) and Candy Phillips (24). Both are faithful members of the church. He is a graduate of the Memphis School of Preaching; He has B.A. and M.A. degrees from Tennessee Bible College; He has done post-graduate work at Tennessee Bible College; Past instructor (Extension Classes) for Tennessee Bible College; Past director of Crandall School of Preaching; Founder and director of the Tri-Cities School of Preaching; Extensive TV work; Extensive experience hosting live radio call-in program (Between 70-100 converted as a result of program. Five of these are denominational preachers); He has begun three Brotherhood Papers; He has been involved in numerous debates.

VALUE OF FULFILLED PROPHECY

Trevor Major

INTRODUCTION

When people talk about divine prophecy, sometimes we hear them speaking of God's "predicting" this or that to happen. But we should exercise some caution here. If we take "prediction" to mean simply "foretelling," then we can say quite rightly that the prophecies of the Bible tell of events that would happen in the future. There is nothing wrong, for instance, in saying that the prophet Micah predicted or foretold of a Ruler who would come from Bethlehem (Micah 5:2; Matthew 2:5-6). Unfortunately, we must also recognize that the word "predict" has an air of uncertainty these days. When a sports fan *predicts* that his team will do well next season, or when a climatologist *predicts* a busy hurricane season, we tend to think that these claims are little more than estimates or guesses. Yes, some guesses are better than others, but they fall short of absolute certainty. An omniscient, eternal God does not trade on estimates or guesses. So from here on, when I use the word "prediction" in the context of prophecy, I mean it in the first sense (i.e., simply as a statement of what will happen in the future).

Also, we should note that prediction is only one aspect of divine prophecy. It is for good reason that Bible scholars have taken pains to point out that the 'pro-' in "prophecy" is not all about time. If we break the word down it means literally *forth-* or *for-* or *before-telling*. The picture we are supposed to get is more of a spatial relationship than a temporal relationship. A prophet is someone who stands on behalf of or for God, setting forth His truth to or before anyone who will listen.

Still, my emphasis here will be on the predictive character of biblical prophecy. It would be a mistake to settle on the narrow, etymological definition of prophecy and insist that prophecy is always and only *forth*-telling, and never *fore*telling. This would miss the point that prophetic utterances concern future events as well as events of the past and present. The function of a prophet was, at least in part, to set the will of God in a broader historical context. When we come, for instance, to the opening verses of Zechariah, we notice that he does exactly this. He refers both to the proclamation or forth-telling of previous prophets who called Judah to repentance, and to the prediction or foretelling of punishment should it fail to heed their call. Sadly, of course, Zechariah lives in a time when this prophecy has been fulfilled. The Jews have experienced exile, and some have returned to Jerusalem, but they continue to feel the effects of foreign domination (first by Babylon and then by Persia). Zechariah's role as *forth*-teller is to encourage the Jews in their efforts toward repentance, rebuilding the temple, and re-establishing a Jewish community in Jerusalem. His role as *fore*teller is to infuse his audience with a sense of purpose by showing that their renewed efforts will culminate in a Messiah Who will rule over a new, eternal kingdom.

So, when we ask about the value of *fulfilled* prophecy, I take it that we are asking about the value of predictions that have come to pass, that have been realized to some extent or another. What good, what use, what purpose did it serve Zechariah to remind his readers that the old prophecies had come to pass? To answer these questions I would like to begin, not in Zechariah, but in the Book of Isaiah and in passages elsewhere in Scripture. In so doing, I hope we gain an appreciation, not only of the value of fulfilled prophecy as it relates to Zechariah in particular, but also of its value to biblical faith in general.

WHAT USE IS FULFILLED PROPHECY?

1. Confirms God's Word

Paganism was at a crisis point in the days of Isaiah. At times, it seems, the people of Judah abandoned Yahweh (the LORD) completely. At other times they insisted on worshipping the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob along with various Canaanite deities. As far as they were concerned, Yahweh was just another god.

In the first part of Isaiah, God issues prophecy after prophecy of what will come to pass if the nation of Judah refuses to repent of its wicked ways. In the second part of the book God issues challenge after challenge to those who would follow after these false gods. Yahweh admonishes His people to compare His activity, His real participation in their lives and the lives of their fathers, with the silence and inactivity of the pagan gods. Not only does God remind them of His past works (His creative work and the miracles He performed to bring them out of bondage in Egypt), He reminds them of the things He has told them about the future, and how those things have come true. Here are just two sample passages:

I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images. Behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them (Isaiah 42:8-9).

Remember the former things of old: for I am God, and there is none else; I am God, and there is none like me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times the things that are not yet done, saying, 'My counsel shall stand, and I will do all my pleasure' (Isaiah 46:9-10).

VALUE OF FULFILLED PROPHECY

The point, of course, is that the prophets of Baal and other pagan deities offered nothing like fulfilled predictions. In fact, they ventured no predictions at all. In contrast to the God of Judah the idols on the “high places” were, literally, dumb when it came to future events. At least Yahweh could offer a point of comparison: people could His predictions with what actually happened. Look especially at Isaiah 41, verses 21-24.

“Produce your cause,” saith the LORD;
“bring forth your strong reasons,” saith the
King of Jacob. “Let them bring them forth,
and shew us what shall happen: let them
shew the former things, what they be, that
we may consider them, and know the latter
end of them; or declare us things for to
come. Shew the things that are to come
hereafter, that we may know that ye are
gods: yea, do good, or do evil, that we may
be dismayed, and behold it together. Behold,
ye are of nothing, and your work of nought:
an abomination is he that chooseth you.”

In this passage, God addresses the pagan gods. He asks them to do something, to do anything, to show that they really exist. But of course, God does not expect them to meet His challenge because there is nothing there to answer back. It is the idolators who must give an account. They must explain why they worship these false gods. A follower of Yahweh can list the miracles performed in Egypt and the Wilderness. A follower of Yahweh can cite the promises that He made and kept. A follower of Yahweh can cite the truth of creation and provide a list of predictions that came to fruition. The followers of the pagan gods can provide no evidence whatsoever.

Incidentally, we can see in this passage that God expects us to give reasons for our faith (1 Peter 3:15). This

is what separates biblical faith from vain faith (1 Corinthians 15:14). When someone rejects the evidential and rational side of Christianity, when he disparages giving arguments, when he implores us to “just believe,” or when he tells us that faith is believing in something for no good reason, then his faith is empty, it is vain, it is hollow—it is no better than the faith of those who worshipped Baal during the days of Isaiah.

2. Confirms God’s Prophets

As I have mentioned already, it appears that the prophets of Baal stayed out of the prediction business, and so there was no way they could compete with the prophets of Jahweh when it came to genuine miracles and wisdom. But at least the pagan religion of Canaan had this going in its favor: it was *obvious* to any reasonable person that the prophets of Baal could not compete with the likes of Elijah, Isaiah, and the other prophets of the one true God.

A more insidious threat comes from those people who represent themselves as prophets of God, but who are really false prophets. The awful truth is that we might follow such a person into doing sin, thinking all the while that we were doing God’s will. The Israelites were warned about this danger as they prepared to enter the Promised Land:

“But the prophet, which shall presume to speak a word in my name, which I have not commanded him to speak, or that shall speak in the name of other gods, even that prophet shall die. And if thou say in thine heart, ‘How shall we know the word which the LORD hath not spoken?’ When a prophet speaketh in the name of the LORD, if the thing follow not, nor come to pass, that is the thing which the LORD hath not spoken, but the prophet hath spoken it

presumptuously: thou shalt not be afraid of him” (Deuteronomy 18:20-22).

So not only will a genuine prophet make predictions, he will make predictions that come to pass. Moses told the people not only of their origins and of what God wanted them to do in the here and now, but also of what God had in store for them in the future. For instance, just prior to the passage just mentioned, Moses predicted that a Prophet like him would arise from among the Israelites (Deuteronomy 18:15-19). That prediction came true with the arrival of Jesus Christ (Acts 3:22). This assures us that Moses was, indeed, a genuine prophet.

Pretend prophets of the last century, such as Charles T. Russell, Joseph F. Rutherford, and Fred W. Franz—all officials of Watch Tower Society—failed to pass the test of Deuteronomy 18 because they repeatedly made predictions about the end of the world that failed to come to pass. Of course, anybody can predict the end of the world. Scientists have estimated that our Sun will expand into a Red Giant and engulf our planet in a few billion years. For many years radical environmentalists have been warning us about the end of “life as we know it.” We can take such guesses and speculation with a grain of salt, although surely they have implications for our faith. The real danger lurks with those people who claim to foretell in God’s name, and yet are not authorized to do so. Truly, we shall know them by their fruits (Matthew 7:16).

3. Confirms Unfulfilled Prophecy

Knowing that certain prophecies have come true gives us confidence that all the unfilled prophecies will come true as well. Zechariah’s prophecies looked forward to the immediate future, and the restoration of God’s favor toward Jerusalem and the other cities of Judah (1:16-17). They look forward to God’s judgment of the nations that acted wrongly against Judah (2:9; 9:1-8)). And, most importantly,

they look forward to the coming of a Messiah (3:8; 6:12; 9:9-10, etc.). All of these, of course, were fulfilled over a period of several hundred years.

In our time, we also face unfilled prophecies. The apostle Peter foretold of the Final Judgment: "...the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (2 Peter 3:10). Why should we believe this prophecy? Because, among other reasons, his other prophecies have come true. For instance, he foretold of troubles that would face Christians in Asia Minor (1 Peter 4:12-16). From later history we know that the church suffered intensely in his part of the world. Hence we can be confident that the Earth will come to an end in precisely the way Peter described. Amazingly, he also predicted that people would deny this very prophecy and believe that the world would continue on in much the same way as it always has (2 Peter 3:4). Today this kind of thinking dominates evolutionary biology and geology.

No wonder Peter gave us this lovely summary of divine prophecy, immediately after reminding us of events in Christ's life that fulfilled prophecies of earlier times:

We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts: Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost (2 Peter 1:19-21).

CONCLUSION

As we have seen, fulfilled prophecy is valuable because it serves three main functions. First, fulfilled prophecy enables us to trust in the Bible as God's inspired Word. That all the relevant predictions have come true thus far shows that they were not lucky guesses, but were revealed to us by God. This God knows the entire breadth of human history, loves mankind, and has communicated this love to us in dreams, visions, and other forms of special revelation (e.g., Numbers 12:6; 2 Timothy 2:16), culminating in the sending of His Son to dwell among us in the form of a man (Philippians 2:5-11).

Second, fulfilled prophecy enables us to test the integrity of those who claim to be prophets of God. If the time for the fulfillment of their prophecies arrives, and the prediction does not come to pass, then we have every right to call such people false prophets (there are many other ways to identify false prophets; see, for example, Jeremiah 10:10-14,17; 14:14; Deuteronomy 13:2, 1 Corinthians 14:29-32, etc.).

And third, fulfilled prophecy encourages us to trust in unfulfilled prophecy. This was especially important to Zechariah. Not only did Zechariah have some prophecies of his own, but he used fulfilled prophecy to show that God has kept, and would continue to keep, His promises. The people rebuilding Jerusalem could look forward to an eternal kingdom ruled by a heavenly Prophet, Priest, and King. Today, the kingdom of heaven has come in the form of the Lord's church. We, today, look forward to the Final Day. We can have confidence that such a day will come, because God's predictions always come true.

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Trevor Major was born in Nigeria to British parents and emigrated to New Zealand where he received his

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education in science. He has worked for many years in the field of Christian apologetics and received further degrees in religion and philosophy. Mr. Major is currently pursuing his doctorate and is working part-time with the Alkire Road church of Christ in Grove City, Ohio. He is married and has two boys aged 12 and 10.

JERUSALEM'S END AND NEW BEGINNING

D. Gene West

Zechariah 14

Introduction

The magnificent and marvelous Book of Zechariah, like the Book of Ezekiel, has been greatly neglected by many modern students of the Bible among churches of Christ. We wish that were not the case because the messianic prophecies and kingdom prophecies that are found in this book are nothing short of amazing. One wonders whether or not a person gets any kind of a sufficient grasp on the value of the church, the kingdom of God, if he does not have a working knowledge of the Book of Zechariah.

In our study today, we wish to look at some truly amazing things found in the 14th chapter of the work of this great prophet and see how the prophetic promises found in this chapter were fulfilled in the coming of the church that Jesus promised in Matthew 16:13-20. In order to understand the coming of the church and the granting of salvation through the blood of Christ, one must appreciate the parts that the abolition of the law of Moses and the final destruction of Jerusalem played in the scheme of redemption which our Lord made possible by his death on the cross. In order for men to see that the law of Moses is no longer the law under which we live and by which we are saved, that law had to be nailed to the cross of Jesus, and it was! (See: 2 Corinthians 3:12-18; Galatians 4:1-7; Ephesians 2:11-18; Colossians 2:13-18.) However, the fact that the law was abolished spiritually by our Lord on the day of his death and replaced with the glorious Gospel fifty

days after his resurrection on the Day of Pentecost, did not keep the Jews, even Christian Jews, from attempting to keep it long after they should have given it up.

The Judaizers clung tenaciously to the law, claiming that in order for the Gentile Christians to be saved, they had to be circumcised and keep the law of Moses (Acts 15:5). This first heresy in the church caused the people of God no end of trouble. Many Jewish Christians, who may not have been Judaizers, could not see that the law was to be abandoned in favor of the Faith of Christ only (Acts 21:17-25). Notice, in this reading, there were myriads (tens of thousands) of Jewish Christians who were all zealous for the law. God had to let these people know once and for all that every vestige of the law was to pass away. What better way finally and completely to separate Judaism and Christianity than to destroy the fountainhead of Judaism, Jerusalem, the Temple, and the books of genealogy? God's decision to do this was not an afterthought, but a part of the plan he had made before the foundation of the world. However, God did not leave his people without a "Jerusalem" in which to worship, but gave them a heavenly one which is the mother of us all (Galatians 4:21-31). He gave us new heavens and a new earth just as he promised in Isaiah 65:17-19. New Jerusalem is spiritual and originated in heaven. She is God's new world order for salvation. We call her the church! In order for her to stand in her full glory and to do her work of salvation completely unfettered, old Jerusalem had to go. In the beginning of the prophecy under discussion the prophet spoke of that coming to pass. Before going into the prophecy we must emphasize that the language of the chapter is symbolic, just as is the language of Daniel, Ezekiel, Isaiah (in some places) and the Book of Revelation. Therefore, we do not expect literal mountains to split any more than the apostles expected to cast literal mountains into the sea, etc.

Fourteen hundred years before the birth of Christ, Moses, in Deuteronomy 28 plainly told about the fate of Israel over the centuries. He pointed out that Israel would be set high above the nations and would be highly blessed (vv. 1-14). This would be the fate of Israel if she refused to “harken diligently unto the voice of Yahweh thy God.” In the balance of the chapter, Moses fully described the fearful consequences of disobedience. He pointed out that God would invoke his covenant curses after each of Israel’s apostasies, including the degeneration of Judah before AD 70. If the people of God persisted in their rebellion against God’s holy ordinances, curses would come upon them (vv. 15-16), in the city and in the field (see also: Ezekiel 7:15; Matthew 24:17-18 to compare). Disease would ravage them (vv. 22, 27-28), the sword would strike them, various foreign powers, which included the Assyrians in 721 BC, the Babylonians in 586 BC and, finally, the Romans in 70 AD would descend upon the Jewish people and execute the vengeance of the covenant (Leviticus 26:25). While we do not have time to give all the details of the prophecies of Deuteronomy 28, we would like to point out that one would do well to study this entire chapter, looking at the fall of the nation of Israel beginning with the Assyrians and ending with the Romans. The exactness with which this chapter is an outline of the entire history of Israel is uncanny. Moses, by inspiration, anticipated that the people of God would become corrupt after his death (Deuteronomy 31:29), and in Deuteronomy 32:5 & 20 he described them as “a perverse and crooked generation.” This is what Peter called them in Acts 2:40, and very near to what the Lord called them in Matthew 17:17. Moses closed his Deuteronomy 28 prophecy by saying that Israel would be taken back to Egypt in ships where they would be sold into bondage. Josephus tells of that happening after the fall of Jerusalem in AD 70.

Catastrophic Fall of Jerusalem - Zechariah 14:1-2

The prophet began by announcing a coming “day of the Lord.” This expression is always used to designate a time of judgment coming from God. Sometimes that judgment is temporal as in the case of the judgment pronounced upon Judah in 586 BC, which judgment was carried out by God’s servant Nebuchadnezzar. It must be remembered that the Jewish economy had become completely apostate in the time of the New Testament. The Jews showed this by rejecting the Son of God and cruelly crucifying him, and by relentlessly persecuting the church of God for forty years. Due to the fact that the Jewish nation, except for the remnant, had rejected the Son of God and his salvation, and continued to long for a mere temporal kingdom in which they could compete with world powers, God rejected them from being his own special people forever and replaced Judaism with Christianity (2 Peter 2:9). The nations were gathered together to do battle against Jerusalem, and she was going to fall with all the attendant horrors of the falling of an ancient metropolis (vv. 1-2). However, Zechariah predicted that a remnant of the people of God would survive the fall of the city. This, no doubt, refers to the Christians who were able to escape the city before the Roman armies fell upon her like hungry wolves upon a defenseless sheep. In Luke 21:20-22, Jesus warned his disciples that when they saw Jerusalem surrounded by armies they would know that the desolation was near, and that they should flee to the mountains, departing from Jerusalem because these would be the days of vengeance when all the things written about this matter would be fulfilled. At Jerusalem the final punishment is inflicted upon Israel, and at Jerusalem Israel is finally saved. Those who rejected Christ were to be utterly

destroyed, and those who accepted him were to be utterly blessed.

Christ's Protection of His People - Zechariah 14:3-5

Verses three through five tell how the Lord acted as protector of his people during the period of time in which it was necessary for them to escape. In verse three the prophet spoke of the Lord's fighting against "the nations," referring to the fact that he would not allow the empire of Rome to destroy his people when she came to destroy the apostate nation of the Jews. In verse four the prophet spoke of "His feet" standing on the Mount of Olives. The antecedent of the pronoun "His" is, no doubt, "Lord," or Yahweh found in verse three. As Yahweh fought for fleshly Israel in the days of Joshua (10:14), so in the day of Jacob's trouble, the Lord would fight (protect) his people by providing a way of escape from Jerusalem. This is the only time the Mount of Olives is mentioned by name in the Old Testament. There are references made to it, but not by name. For example, it was the Mountain over which Ezekiel saw the glory of God depart from the ancient Temple of Solomon before the destruction of Jerusalem by Nebuchadnezzar (Ezekiel 10:18-19). Jesus sat upon the Mount of Olives when he predicted the fall of Jerusalem (Matthew 24:3). It was from the Mount of Olives that Jesus made his ascension back to the Father in Heaven (Acts 1:12). This mountain figured prominently in the life of our Lord. In addition, it was probably on the Mount of Olives that Jesus shed tears over the city of Jerusalem (Matthew 23:37-39; Luke 13:34-35), and upon the slopes of this mountain Jesus suffered his agony and sweat as it were great drops of blood (Luke 22:39-46). In the passage at hand it is said that he split the Mount of Olives in two from east to west, and between these peaks upon which the Lord

stood, there was a very large valley. This great mountain moved, part to the north and part to the south. This signifies that God used his awesome power to preserve the saints from the destruction that was to come upon ancient Jerusalem. As Yahweh had divided the Red Sea to bring his people safely away from the encroaching, hostile Egyptians, so Christ “divided” the Mount of Olives, which is to say, he provided a way of escape for his people at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem.

In verse five, the Lord, as he stood on the divided peaks of Olives, commanded his people to flee through **his** mountain valley. They were to escape at the proper time, by taking the means God providentially supplied. They were to flee by way of his valley, which is to say, by the way of escape provided by the Lord, to the mountains. The Lord said that the mountain valley, produced by the splitting of Mount Olive, reached to Azal, or Azel. Most commentators look upon Azal as a place to which the Lord would lead his people. (There was a place by that name. The Hebrews spell it “Atzel.”) However, the Hebrew word also carries as one of its root meanings “to separate.” Hence, the possibility exists that the prophet was saying that Yahweh would lead his people to the place of separation, because after the fall of Jerusalem Christianity was never tied to her again. In Matthew 21:43, Jesus told the Jews that the kingdom would be taken from them and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it. Consequently, it seems to this student that Jesus was saying that his divine protection of the Christians who would escape from Jerusalem was leading them to the place of separation, and that forever, from the physical city of Jerusalem. God had supplanted physical Jerusalem with Jerusalem from above, which is free and the mother of all Christians, which is to say, the church.

Zechariah continued to quote, or perhaps respond to Yahweh by saying, *Yes, you shall flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah.* This earthquake is mentioned in only one other place in the Old Testament—in Amos 1:1. We know nothing of the quake except what we read in these two passages, but as many commentators emphasize, it must have been a very bad one to have been remembered almost two centuries after it happened. An earthquake is a terrible thing, and in such a time one flees from whatever may be falling with no thought of gathering anything. The only thought is the saving of one's life. Hence, when the time came for the Lord to rescue his true followers from the ancient city of Jerusalem they were to flee like people fleeing from the toppling buildings in the time of an earthquake. This part of verse five corresponds to Matthew 24:15-18, when prophesying of the fall of Jerusalem Jesus said, *Therefore when you see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (whoever reads, let him understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let him who is on the housetop not go down to take anything out of his house. And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes.* (Compare Luke 21:20-22.) Zechariah closed this verse by saying, *Thus* (in this manner - Par. mine, DGW) *the Lord my God will come and all the saints with You.* (Here, it appears from the use of the pronoun "you," that Zechariah is speaking to the Lord. However, many commentators argue, and perhaps rightly so, that the pronoun should be changed to "him.") The sense of the verse is that this is the manner in which the Lord would deliver his people from destruction at the time the Roman armies fell upon the city of Jerusalem

A Day of Gloom and Despair - Zechariah 14:6-7

Let us quickly summarize verses six and seven by pointing out that the time in which the Christians would flee from the city would not be a happy time, or a light time, it would be a time of gloom and despair for them. Though the persecution of forty years was coming to an end, the enemies of the Lord were about to be destroyed by the Roman armies, and the Christians would be providentially protected from all the death and destruction coming upon the city, yet they would take no pleasure in what was happening. It would be a day of sadness, gloom, and despair for them. However, the joy of serving the Lord would return to them at a time when it seemed to be the darkest. Spiritual joy would eventually result from the gloom they would experience when they knew that their beloved city was to be reduced to rubble, and many of the friends and loved ones would die during the siege and battle of Jerusalem. This reminds us of the agony of Lot's wife as they fled Sodom (Genesis 19:23-26).

Some commentators also suggest the idea that the day of darkness is for the city of Jerusalem when the "glorious ones," that is, the ones belonging to Christ would depart from the city leaving it in spiritual darkness. The word "lights," in the clause *the lights will diminish* can also be translated "glorious ones." Hence, when the "glorious ones," saints of God, left the city it stood in spiritual darkness awaiting its destruction at the hands of the Romans. Either way, it certainly became a day of gloom and despair for the once noble city in which the *Shekinah* of God had dwelt.

The Day of Living Water - Zechariah 14:8-9

In verses eight and nine Zechariah pointed out that at

the time of the escape of the saints of God from physical Jerusalem, “living waters” would flow from spiritual Jerusalem. These living waters are mentioned in Ezekiel 47:1-12 as flowing from under the threshold of the magnificent Temple of God, and dividing to the east and to the west as they emanated from the Temple. This water is also mentioned in Joel 3:18 as well as Revelation 22:1-2. These speak of the message of salvation by which men are fitted to live eternally with God that would flow from New Jerusalem, totally unhampered by Jewish resistance, to the whole earth. You see, the nation of Israel was to assist in removing any spiritual barrier that would stand in the way of the Messiah and his work. She failed in keeping this obligation and rather than flattening the mountains and filling the ravines to make a proper messianic highway, the various Jewish religious parties joined together in setting up roadblocks for the King and his Kingdom. They did not remove the moral obstacles and they did not repent as both John the Baptist and Jesus commanded them to do. They failed to repent at the preaching of John and they crucified Jesus. They also persecuted his church from which the living water was to flow. Their rebellious efforts failed and the water flowed all the same! It has flowed in all directions and at all times since. We partake of the fountains of living waters in the church of our Lord Jesus Christ. We enjoy salvation.

The New Jerusalem a Glorious Dwelling Place - Zechariah 14:10-11

These verses are based upon the prophecy of Jeremiah 30:18-22. In both passages the prophets spoke of the glorious spiritual beauty, ease, and safety that would be found in the new Jerusalem. Here is found a salvation unlike anything the world had ever seen before. Furthermore, a superior one would never be brought to the

earth. The saints of Christ would enjoy, and do enjoy, reconciliation to God through Christ and we dwell in a perfectly blissful Jerusalem for which there is no utter destruction as there was for physical Jerusalem in the days of vengeance (Luke 21:22). After the forty years of rigor, pain, tribulation, and persecution that the saints of God had endured (mentioned 33 times in the New Testament outside the Book of Revelation), once they escaped from Jerusalem, previous to the city's being destroyed, and once Judaism became extinct due to the destruction of the Temple and the books of genealogy, there would be peace and prosperity for the Kingdom of God so far as the Jews were concerned.

The Plague of the Lord - Zechariah 14:12-15

The language of the Book of Zechariah is symbolic very much like the language of Ezekiel, Daniel and the Revelation. In some areas of the book the symbolism is more pronounced than it is in others, and the passage under discussion is one of those areas. A host of suggestions are made by commentators as to the meaning of the language. However, it seems to this student that the language must refer to one of three interpretations. (1) If this chapter of Zechariah is not in chronological order, it appears that the author has returned to a discussion of the destruction of Jerusalem introduced in verses one and two. (2) If the chapter is written in a chronological order, and if we accept the word "Jerusalem," in verse 12 as being the literal and physical city of Jerusalem, then it would appear that the prophet has turned to a discussion of what would happen at some future date to the Roman Empire. He would be saying that it would die on its feet. (3) If the chapter is written in chronological order and the word "Jerusalem" is figurative, referring to the New Jerusalem of Jesus Christ which had

escaped from the old physical city before her destruction, then it would seem that we have a highly symbolized statement of what the Gospel would do, in this instance its being likened to a plague from God, to the very world that had gathered together to destroy the ancient physical city of Jerusalem. Of these possibilities number three appeals most to this student. Our tendency is to agree with E. B. Pusey who wrote that the prophet spoke of the effect that the church would have on the evil nations that made up the Roman Empire. They would be renewed spiritually, which is to say, converted, while their fleshly nature died in surrender to Christ and his Gospel. In the day of the plague, that is, in the time of the preaching of the Gospel, there would be great turbulence among both the Jew and the Gentile so far as their resistance to the truth is concerned. They would experience the same kind of confusion as did the armies of the Midianites who in their disarray and excitement fell upon one another in the night they were so badly frightened by Gideon and his noble three hundred (Joshua 7:22); or, like the pandemonium that came upon the armies of the Ammonites and Moabites as a result of the prayer of Jehoshaphat (2 Chronicles 20:32).

The prophet said that Judah would fight against Jerusalem. This has reference to the fact that Jews who survived the overthrow of physical Jerusalem would join in the chaos which would come about as a result of the Gospel appealing to souls and consciences of men, and they would reject it. The wealth of the surrounding nations being gathered together has reference to the great, the elite, the highly refined people who would submit to the Gospel. The plague of the Gospel would be so devastating to the Roman world that it would seem that it had come even upon the animals of the empire. This could also refer to the hordes of the uneducated masses of the Roman Empire who would joyfully submit to the will of the Father and serve Christ in

the beauty of holiness. The Gospel would spread, without interruption, like a supercharged conflagration in a dry forest! That is what it did, and after only three hundred years Christianity became the “official” religion of the empire. That was the beginning of the downward spiral into denominationalism and fragmentation that has not ceased to this day.

The Nations Worship the King - Zechariah 14:16-21

Again, we must agree with E. B. Pusey who wrote that this passage must be connected to Romans 11:25-26 and has reference to all Israel, that is, God’s spiritual Israel. It speaks of Christians joining in the celebratory worship to the King of kings and Lord of lords because of the redemption provided in Christ Jesus. Zechariah said that the citizens of new Jerusalem would go up from year to year to keep the feast of Tabernacles. This was a feast expressing gratitude because God had delivered the Jews from the bondage of Egypt and had cared for them while they dwelt in temporary housing (tents) between the crossing of the Red Sea and the crossing over the Jordan into the Promised Land. Christians unceasingly keep the feast of Tabernacles since we are strangers and pilgrims in the land (1 Peter 2:11). We incessantly express our deepest gratitude to God for delivering us from the bondage of sin and reconciling us to himself. Like Abraham our spiritual father, we are strangers on the earth, but citizens of heaven (Philippians 3:20-21). Like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Sarah, and others we seek a homeland, a city that has foundations whose builder and maker is God (Hebrews 11:13-16). Since Christians have committed themselves into the keeping of God, he is not ashamed to be called our God and has prepared for us that city. Those who refuse the Gospel of Christ, like ancient Egypt who refused to accept the

leadership of God, will be left in the destitute condition of being in a rainless desert. This means they will receive no spiritual blessings from God as Israel received no physical blessings in the days of Elijah when it did not rain upon the earth for a period of 3 ½ years (1 Kings 17:1; 18:1; James 5:17-18).

Even secular things in the hands of Christians would be dedicated to the Lord, because upon them would be written the same inscription that was worn by the ancient High Priest, *Holiness unto the Lord* (Exodus 28:36-38). Everything surrounding the Christian would be dedicated and clean like the sanctified vessels in the magnificent Temple of Solomon. Every pot in the new Jerusalem, God's spiritual Israel, would be engraved with *Holiness to the Lord of Hosts*. Everyone who sacrifices, which is to say, every Christian who gives his body a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to the Lord (Romans 12:1-2) would be able to use the sacred pots as the ancient priests used the pots of the Temple because Christians are a nation of priests (1 Peter 2:9-10). Among the people who worship the King and keep the feast of Tabernacles there would be no Canaanites. Canaanite is synonymous with heathen in the Bible. Consequently, there would be no heathens among the people of God for they shall all know him from the least of them to the greatest of them (Jeremiah 31:31-34). For more thoughts on this concept see: Isaiah 35:8; Ezekiel 44:9; Joel 3:17; Revelation 21:27; 22:15. All in the new Jerusalem will no longer be heathen, stranger, or foreigner (Ephesians 2:19-22).

Conclusion

What a book! What concepts it sets forth! It should make every Christian heart want to sing "How Great Thou Art!"

Biographical Sketch

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Education:

Hancock County, WV Public Schools
Freed-Hardeman (College) University, Henderson,
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West Liberty State College, West Liberty, West Virginia -
A.B. (Liberal Arts) Philosophy, Religion, Spanish, Speech.
Fairmont State College, Fairmont, West Virginia - B.S.
Community Psychology.

Work History:

2001 - Hillview Terrace church of Christ, Moundsville,
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1990 - 2001 - Steelton church of Christ, 69 East Thistle
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1977 - 1990 - Oakwood Road church of Christ, Fairmont,
West Virginia.
1973 - 1977 - Grand Central Avenue church of Christ,
Vienna, West Virginia.
1966 - 1973 - Hillview Terrace church of Christ,
Moundsville, West Virginia.
1961 - 1966 - Church of Christ, Kissimmee, Florida.
1959 - 1961 - Church of Christ, Martins Ferry, Ohio.
1956 - 1959 - Church of Christ, Hundred, West Virginia.

Personal:

Born: Chester, West Virginia May 27, 1936.
Baptized into Christ by brother Jess W. Nutter, Chester,
West Virginia, April 11, 1950.

Married Shirley Ann Bissett West, August 5, 1957. We are the parents of three children, Kandi (Ken) Davis of Canal Winchester, Ohio, Mary Amy (Dan) Kessinger of St. Marys, West Virginia, and Todd C. (Donna) West of Morgantown, West Virginia. We have six grandchildren, Nathan, Jacob, Rebekah, and Aaron Davis, and Daniel James (D.J.) and Thomas Kessinger.

Other Work Experience:

Taught five years at Ohio Valley College, Parkersburg, West Virginia, and presently teach and have taught for eight years at the West Virginia School of Preaching, Moundsville, West Virginia. Former owner and editor of *BIBLE HERALD* a gospel journal in West Virginia.

JESUS, THE FOUNTAIN OF CLEANSING

John M. Brown

Zechariah 13:1-6

Because of idolatry, unfaithfulness, and immorality, God will punish the divided kingdom of His people: the northern kingdom of Israel will go into captivity by the nation of Assyria, and the southern kingdom of Judah will go into captivity by the nation of Babylon. But a remnant of the people will eventually return from the captivity, cleansed of idolatry, and will rebuild the destroyed and desecrated homeland of Israel.

Zechariah prophesies during the time in the history of Israel when the remnant of Jews who had been exiled in Babylonian captivity was returning to their homeland. In 538 BC more than 50,000 Jews returned to Palestine, under the reign of the Persian king, Cyrus. Much work is needed to rebuild the nation, the city of Jerusalem and the previously destroyed Temple.

Some who returned from Babylon were zealous to complete the necessary work; to these, Haggai writes. Others were lacking in the commitment needed to complete these tasks; to these, Zechariah writes. The book, then, is a plea for nationwide repentance, an exhortation for strengthened resolved and commitment, and also an expression of future hope. Not only does Zechariah write to motive the people for the task at hand, he also writes to tell them of the coming Messiah, the true hope for all Israel and all mankind.

After a series of visions which culminate in the Messiah, the BRANCH who shall build the true Temple of God as Israel's true priest and king (chapter 6), Zechariah presents the prospect and promise of the Messianic

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kingdom and covenant. His expression “in that day” refers to the period under Christ (12:3, 4, 6, 8, 9, 11; 13:1, 2, 4; 14:1, 6, 8, 9, 13, 20, 21) and in this setting, and against this background, Zechariah will foretell the means of Judah’s ultimate and complete sanctification and reconciliation to God through the Messiah.

Note the text: “In that day there shall be a fountain opened to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem for sin and for uncleanness” (Zechariah 13:1).

“In that day” refers to the Messianic period, the kingdom under Christ. It is the time after Judah had been judged, after the nations had been judged, after idolatry had been put away, and when the Messiah had come, bringing in His new covenant. Christ came in the first century; He brought His new covenant as Jeremiah had predicted (Jeremiah 31:31-34), having “obtained a more excellent ministry” and having become “the mediator of a better covenant” (see Hebrews 8:6-13). The priesthood was changed, the previous commandment disannulled (Hebrews 7:12, 18), and Jesus, through His own blood, established His covenant and brought remission of sins (Hebrews 9:15-22).

“In that day,” says Zechariah, “there shall be a fountain opened...” God is called the “fountain of living waters” (Jeremiah 2:13; 17:13), for with God one has access to “the fountain of life” (Psalm 36:9). When we think of a fountain, we think of a “source or beginning of a stream of water,” a “container or reservoir” from which water abundantly flows. God Himself is the source of all spiritual blessings; from Him, goodness and mercy pour forth to the benefit of all humankind. The reign of Messiah will be a time of God’s abundant blessing flowing forth unfettered (Joel 3:18; Revelation 7:17) to all peoples!

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But specifically, the prophecy is of a “fountain opened...for sin and for uncleanness.” Through the Messiah, God would usher in a time of complete, full purification from sin – cleansing flowing forth as water bursting from the bowels of a fountain. Jesus, the Christ, came to bring remission of sins! His sacrifice was for sin! His death was for uncleanness! His blood was for cleansing!

That’s what the prophets, including Zechariah, predicted. Isaiah spoke of the Messiah in these words: “But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed” (Isaiah 53:5). Each person needed washing, cleansing, and purging from sin (Psalm 51:2, 7; Isaiah 1:16-18; Ezekiel 36:24-26), and the Messiah’s sacrificial death would pour forth and make available this cleansing!

The angel predicted this when he said to Joseph concerning Mary, “And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins” (Matthew 1:21).

John recognized this when he said, “Behold the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world” (John 1:29).

Jesus Himself affirmed this mission of giving Himself as a sacrifice for sin, of His death being to wash uncleanness. He said, “For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins” (Matthew 26:28). He said He came “to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10), and to “give his life a ransom for many” (Matthew 20:28). He spoke of Himself as like unto a “corn of wheat” that would fall into the ground and die, and yet come forth, bring much fruit; by His crucifixion, He would draw all men unto Himself

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(see John 12:24-33). He said He would “lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:13-14).

The apostles taught and preached this message: cleansing from sin through the sacrificial death of Jesus!

Paul spoke of Jesus as the One “In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace” (Ephesians 1:7). It is in Christ – in His death - that our “old man is crucified” and “the body of sin” destroyed, that freedom from sin is found (Romans 6:3-7, 16-18). It is in Christ that washing, sanctification, and justification is had (1 Corinthians 6:11). It is Jesus who gave Himself – His life, His blood – for the sins of all mankind (Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 5:25-26; Philippians 2:8; Colossians 1:14; 1 Thessalonians 5:10; 1 Timothy 2:6; Titus 2:14).

The writer of the book of Hebrews affirmed the sacrifice of Jesus for the sins of the world (2:9, 17; 5:8-9; 9:11-28; 10:10-14; 12:2; 13:12, 20).

Peter declared, “Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot” (1 Peter 1:18-19). Jesus, Peter proclaims, “bare our sins in his body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness” (1 Peter 2:24), for “Christ also hath once suffered for sins” (1 Peter 3:18).

John urged his readers to godly living by reminding them of their washing, stating, “But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin” (1 John 1:7). Jesus is the offering, satisfaction, and payment for our sins (1 John 2:1-2), having come to “destroy the works of the devil,” having “laid down his life for us” (1 John 3:8, 16). Jesus came “by water and blood”

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(1 John 5:6) to wash us from our sins in his own blood (Revelation 1:5), the Lamb who was slain for our sins to redeem us to God (Revelation 5:6, 9, 12; 7:13-14).

Thus this theme of cleansing by the blood of Christ is a theme running through the entirety of the New Testament! The “fountain opened...for sin and for uncleanness” of which Zechariah wrote was indeed opened at the cross of Calvary. When Jesus gave His back to the lash, His head to the crown of thorns, His hands and feet to the nails, and His side to the spear, He gave His life for the world – the fountain that would flow forth to wash men and women of sin was opened!

“There is a fountain filled with blood,
Drawn from Immanuel’s veins;
And sinners, plunged beneath that flood,
Lose all their guilty stains.”

Why is this prophecy significant?

Because man’s greatest problem is not economic, social, racial, intellectual, environmental, or political – man’s greatest problem is SIN! Sin separates man from God (Isaiah 59:1-2) and causes man to be lost, spiritually dead (Romans 6:23; Ephesians 2:1-2; cf. Ezekiel 18:20). Thus man’s greatest need in this age – in any age – is for forgiveness. Jesus didn’t come into the world as a political reformer, social advisor, nor even simply a religious teacher: he came to give Himself as a sacrifice for sin! God’s holiness and justice demanded a payment for transgression of His law. To think that man could casually disregard God’s will and way without consequence is to impugn God’s justice. So to satisfy the demands of holiness, and to demonstrate unequalled love and mercy, God provided His own Son as the ransom payment for our sins.

Paul wrote, “Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: Whom God hath set

forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God; To declare, I say, at this time his righteousness: that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus” (Romans 3:24-26). God justifies man, and He does so upon the basis of His Son’s sacrifice; Jesus’ death appeased God’s wrath against sin, satisfied God’s justice for transgression, and manifested God’s patience, mercy, and love toward man.

What a wonderful plan of salvation God devised for our benefit!

So, have YOU been to the fountain opened for sin and for uncleanness? Are you washed in the blood of the Lamb?

BIOGRAPHICAL Sketch

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