



Study of Zechariah

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ZECHARIAH

Introduction

Zechariah in Hebrew means, “Jehovah Remembers.” Zechariah was a Levite priest whose grandfather, Iddo, was one of the first to return from the captivity. Zechariah was probably born in Babylon and returned to Judah with Zerubbabel in 536 B.C. (See Ezra 5:1; 6:14; Neh. 12:1-17). Although a priest by birth, Zechariah’s primary mission from God was to be a prophet and reveal visions of God’s ultimate victory for the “remnant.” He is, according to his book (1:1) the same person as “Zechariah, son of Berechiah” who was slain in the house of Jehovah (Matt. 23:35). The name Zechariah was a popular name among the Hebrews—there are 27 or 28 different “Zechariahs” in the OT. This Zechariah was a contemporary of Haggai the prophet and began his ministry just two months after Haggai in the years 520-518 B.C. The first section of his book was concerned with times in the days of Darius I, and the latter section dealt with times future. The prophecy of Zechariah has several outstanding characteristics that make it unique among writings of the prophets: (a) it is the longest and most obscure of all the Minor Prophets; (b) it is the most Messianic, the most truly apocalyptic and eschatological, of all the writings of the OT (even more so than Daniel and Ezekiel); (c) he gives emphasis to visions as a means of divine communication—angelic mediation occupies an important place in his message—apocalyptic symbolism enter into the visions is another outstanding characteristic of Zechariah; (d) the Messiah is presented as “the Branch,” or “Sprout” of David, a servant of Jehovah—the Messiah comes as a “King,” lowly in spirit, providing salvation for the people—he comes as a shepherd rejected, sold for the price of a wounded slave, and finally pierced for the sheep who would then be scattered—but the Messiah redeems a remnant, and through him the divine sovereignty of Jehovah is restored—the kingdom will be one of glory, with everything pertaining to it consecrated to the Lord—the heathen forces who oppose Jehovah’s work will be ingloriously defeated; (e) the prophet sees and emphasizes the truth that ultimate triumph is dependent on divine cooperation and on the submission of the people to God’s divine will.

Now a word about apocalyptic, symbolic, and eschatological language needs to be said here. Apocalyptic is from the same word we get the English translation, “Revelation.” It means, literally, “an uncovering.” “Apocalyptic” has come to have the connotation of “doom, foreboding.” But it is not always “foreboding”—it is often glorious and uplifting and exciting and joyful. It was a literary style used by the OT prophets (especially Daniel, Ezekiel and Zechariah) to “get the attention” of their readers about very crucial issues—it is “crisis-literature.” To have predicted what these prophets did about the future Messianic age in prosaic terminology would not have “excited” and “motivated” the people to faith and holiness as apocalyptic terminology did. The book of Revelation in the NT is written in apocalyptic style for the terrible crisis facing the church in the days of the ancient Roman empire (A.D. 100-500). Symbolic is from two Greek words, sum (“with” or “together”) and bole (“thrown, cast, put”)—thus a symbol is a “token or image of identity verified by

comparing its other half.” It is a word of comparison. The “symbol” stands for something else—usually it includes the characteristics of that for which it “stands.” Basically, a “symbol” is a metaphor. Eschatological is also from two Greek words, eschatos meaning “end, last” and logos, meaning, “words-about, or study-of.” Eschatology is a “study about end-things.” It is not necessarily about the ultimate end of time—it often is used to predict the “end of an era.” All the OT prophets have some eschatology in them—and without exception their eschatology is predicting the “end of the Mosaic era.”—not the end of time! In 45 years of now of studying the OT prophets, and the Book of Revelation, teaching them in the classroom, and constantly researching and writing books and Sunday School lessons on them, I am emphatically convinced of that underlined statement above!

Another characteristic of the style of Zechariah is known as “Shortened Perspective.” This means that occasionally (and in Zechariah’s case, quite occasionally) the prophet will be speaking of times contemporary with himself and his days—then suddenly, without warning, he will skip to the Messianic age (the first coming of Christ). He will do this from one verse to the very next verse—without offering to fill in any details whatsoever of history between his time and the time of Christ. You see, the prophets always saw the situation of their own time in the light of, having bearing upon, the distant future (in some cases as many as 800 years distant) when God would climax the promise (covenant) he made to Abraham in the Messiah, “the Anointed of God” and his kingdom—the NT church. Their message was that God was going to make a New Covenant, not like the Old—one based on grace through faith—not law! This is not a strange phenomenon, this “Shortened Perspective”—Jesus used it in Matthew 24 and parallels in Mk. 13 and Lk. 21, and the book of Revelation uses it quite often. Two classic OT examples are Joel 2:27 and 2:28 where Joel is talking about the locust plague in his own time in 2:27 and in 2:28 he begins to talk about the Day of Pentecost which Peter affirms in Acts 2:17-21—and Amos 9:10 and 9:11 where Amos is talking in 9:10 about sending Israel into captivity and in 9:11 he skips over to the Messianic age of the apostles and their missionary work among the Gentiles (see Acts 15:16-17). In your study of Zechariah you will find numerous occasions of “Shortened Perspective.”

We must remember the spiritual immaturity of the Jews and how their OT law always associated physical chastisement and physical blessings as a consequence of their relationship toward God. And we must remember how spiritually apathetic they were. Here they had been back in their land, delivered from exile, for 16 years, and the temple and the city is not rebuilt. They have been too busy fretting about their own physical condition (see the book of Haggai) to even think about putting God and his wishes first in their lives. **THE POST-EXILIC PROPHETS HAD TO FIND SOME WAY TO STIR THEM UP TO THINK OF THE GLORIOUS FUTURE OF THE COMING MESSIAH AND HIS KINGDOM.** These prophets (Haggai and Zechariah) had to think of some kind of language or communication that would register on such dull-minded, secular-minded, “just-for-the-moment-minded” people! God gave Zechariah “visions” in wild, exaggerated, symbolic, eschatological and apocalyptic images which he relayed to his people. It worked! They began to rebuild the temple and the city and make God’s wishes the priority of their lives.

Do not be confounded by all the figurative (symbolic, metaphorical, apocalyptic) language in the Bible. Take my word for it, you will not be a “liberal” if you interpret Zechariah with the reality in mind that large portions of the Scriptures (especially that which is prophetic) is in figures of speech. Most of the great conservative exegetical scholars have so interpreted his book. Most of the Church of Christ (non-instrumental) scholars interpret Zechariah thus—as do the “Reformed” scholars. It is only a few dispensational and premillennial exegetes who want to make Zechariah’s message into a literal one about the second coming of Christ and an alleged “rapture” and “millennium.” They try to do the same with Daniel and Ezekiel and the Book of Revelation. **BUT THEY ARE WRONG!** The use of figurative language does not dilute the truth of what is being said—it simply “colors” it. We use figures of speech almost every time we open our mouths and speak—even in the 21st century. You can find “figures” of speech being used in so-called “factual” newspapers and newscasts on TV and radio. Human language is absolutely filled with metaphors. There would never have been a poet or poetry, a musician or music, without the use of figurative language. Take simply the Battle Hymn of The Republic—“Mine eyes have seen the glory of the coming of the Lord, he is tramping out the vintage where the grapes of wrath are stored—that’s metaphorical! Much of advertisement (esp. on TV) consists in the use of images, symbols, metaphors, figures of speech, innuendo, satire, etc. etc.

With that said, be prepared then for this Book of Zechariah to be saturated with symbolic, apocalyptic language. Great communicators (and the Holy Spirit is the best) use symbolic, apocalyptic language—even philosophers like Plato and Aristotle (the logician) were fond of using metaphors to help their audiences understand the essence of what they were saying.

ZECHARIAH 1:1—4:14

The Hebrew word *nasag*, translated “overtake” means, “over-run, go beyond.” Zechariah was preaching (prophesying) to a people half of whom were dedicated to the Lord and working on rebuilding the temple and the city. But the commitment of the other half was almost non-existent. He had to come up with some message that would spur and prod these recalcitrant ones into action. It was imperative that the job of getting God’s house and the city of Jerusalem rebuilt so the word of God could be taught and the people could once again observe the law of Moses about sacrifices for atonement and expressions of giving, and they could have protection from their enemies. So Zechariah begins his call to repentance by point back to the “fathers” who lived before the exile. He reminds them that God was very displeased with them and sent them into captivity in Babylon. These people were to be warned, therefore, by their “father’s” experiences. HE APPEALED TO HISTORY—IMMEDIATE HISTORY! History should be one of the greatest teachers—but sadly, it seems, each new generation must learn for itself the “hard way.” This principle has been sadly repeated even in Christendom! Succeeding generations of Christians cannot seem to learn from past church-history that allowing the church’s doctrine and practice to be gradually compromised with falsehood and worldliness leads to ungodly behavior and fuel for the blasphemy of God’s name by the unbelievers. Zechariah asks, “Your fathers, where are they? And the prophets, do they live forever?” The answer is, “They are gone!” However, the Lord says, “But my words and my statutes, which I commanded my servants the prophets, did they not go beyond, (outlast) your fathers?” The answer is, “Yes, the word of the Lord abides forever.” Whatever the Lord says comes to pass, and so it will forever be!” Heaven and earth may pass away, but the word of the Lord will never pass away! HISTORY PROVES IT!

There seems to be no significance to the color of the horses. There is one in front of the other three and the rider on this one is the “chief” or the “angel” who is giving commands to the others. Essentially, the chief angel answers our question as to the identity of the horses. They are the Lord’s servants of messengers whom he has sent to keep watch over the earth, especially the Gentile nations of the earth. The number four usually had symbolic significance in apocalyptic style as representing “the four corners directions of the earth” (i.e., north, south, east and west—the whole known earth at that time). These horsemen report to the chief angel that they had walked to and fro in the earth, and the earth was still and at rest. There had been many uprisings against Darius (the Persian ruler) when he assumed rule over Persia and this would worry and trouble the Jews about getting their temple and city rebuilt. But these uprisings had been put down and Darius’s throne had been assured—therefore, “all the earth remains at rest.” (1:11). The nations opposed to the Lord’s redemptive program and people were smugly “at rest”—satisfied that the Jews now in Palestine would never amount to much on the world scene. The answer from the Lord was one of comfort and assurance of ultimate victory. The Lord has not forgotten his people. In fact, the Lord is very angry with the nations “at ease” in their self-sufficiency and proud self-security (1:13-15). These “at-ease” nations had afflicted his people and attempted to completely destroy them (Haman and the attempted Jewish genocide in

the book of Esther). But the Lord has, himself, returned to Jerusalem (he had abandoned it at the captivity, Ezek. 8:18-19) and his house will be rebuilt because he will protect his people by keeping those antagonistic Gentiles “at ease.” And the rebuilding of this physical temple and city does not exhaust the purpose of the Lord in restoring and protecting his Messianic people. These promises find a partial fulfillment in the physical temple and the city, and were conditioned upon the Jews being faithful to God (Deut. 30:8-10; Jer. 18:7-10; Ezek. 33:13). The Jews did not fulfill their part of the covenant as indicated by the book of Malachi and the history after that up to the birth of Jesus. God could not bless them as he wished until the Messiah came. So, his blessings (put in metaphorical terminology 1:16-17) would ultimately be fulfilled some 500 years later in the first coming of the Messiah and his kingdom, the church! Through the bloody sacrifices of the citizens of many nations (America, England, etc.) our world today is relatively “at rest” so that the Gospel may be preached in the “four corners of the earth.” LET US BE THANKFUL AND SUPPORTIVE OF THOSE WHO WOULD SACRIFICE SO MUCH TO MAINTAIN “ORDER” IN THE WORLD!

Horns symbolize power or strength (Amos 6:13; Dan. 7:7,8,24). Four is the complete world number (Isa. 11:12; Jer. 49:36; Dan. 11:4; Ezek. 14:21; Dan. 7:3,17). The four horns symbolize all the world powers who have scattered God’s people, sifting them as a sieve among the nations (Amos 9:9). The four “smiths” (craftsmen, workmen) symbolize the “instruments” (divine and human) by which the Lord is going to terrify the four horns (world powers). The powers would be destroyed by instruments raised by the Lord for this purpose. The power of their own destructiveness resides in the nations that destroy. In the Book of Revelation, John symbolizes the Roman empire as cannibalizing itself from within (Rev. 17:15-18). “Those who live by the sword shall die by the sword.” God used both human and divine instruments to keep the nations in check as he saved a “remnant” through which to work out his redemption of the world. He used the Persians to overthrow Babylon, and the Greeks to overthrow the Persians, and the Romans to overthrow the Greeks. He used a “death angel” to slay 185,000 Assyrian soldiers in one night who were attacking Jerusalem (Isa. 36-39). He used famine, floods, wars, pestilence, locust plagues and all manner of “smiths” or instruments to proceed with his redemptive program. AND HE STILL DOES TODAY! The very power of the written Word of God is working among the nations today to keep them in check against eradicating the church from the face of the earth. In addition, God uses wars, famines, earthquakes, floods, and even angels (Heb. 1:14) to “administer” his redemptive program to an unbelieving world, wishing they might repent (2 Pet. 3:1-13)! Let us rejoice that we serve a God who cannot be defeated—and let us cooperate in his victorious march to final redemption with all our energies and resources!

Here is the first instance of “shortened-perspective.” The prophet has “telescoped” his prophetic view-point from his own time at the close of chapter 1 to the Messianic age in 2:1-5. This “measuring of Jerusalem,” as is apparent from 2:4, is not any physical Jerusalem. It is the “measuring” of a Jerusalem that will have so many people it will be utterly without “walls” (i.e., without limits). Furthermore, it will be a Jerusalem that will “have a wall of fire” around it to protect it and God will live in it in all his glory! This cannot possibly any physical Jerusalem, past, present to Zechariah, or

future to Zechariah, or future to any time in the history of this world. If not any physical Jerusalem—then which “Jerusalem?” IT IS THE CHURCH OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST! It is the “Jerusalem” that Zechariah’s “remnant” would produce some 500 years later on the Day of Pentecost in Acts chapter 2. It is the “heavenly Jerusalem” (Gal. 4:26; Heb. 12:22-24). It is the “Israel” that walks by the rule that neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts with God, but a new creation (creature) (Gal. 6:15-16). It is the formerly “barren” covenant people who will “enlarge the place of their tent”—for they will spread abroad to the right and to the left, and your descendants will possess the nations and will people the desolate cities” (Isa. 54:1-3). That this prophecy in Isaiah is indubitably Messianic may be seen from 54:13 which is fulfilled in John 6:54! God certainly does not reside in his glory in physical Israel today. The “temple” as Ezekiel saw it in his vision (Ezek. chs. 40-48) is also the church of Christ. If Ezekiel is taken literally his temple would be so large it would have extend out into the Mediterranean Sea and would be located in the middle of Palestine—not in Jerusalem (see my Sunday School notes on Ezekiel).

Touching the “apple of God’s eye” means touching the eye-ball! The eye-ball is the most sensitive spot on the human body. Any attempt to touch it causes an immediate reflex of the closing of the eye-lid. God’s most sensitive “spot” is his covenant people for by them he intends to redeem his creation! Again, in 2:6-13, Zechariah is prophesying about the spiritual Zion—the NT church. God is going to take out his wrath upon the impenitent nations of the world because they have “touched him at his most sensitive spot—his covenant people.” This future “Zion” will include some many among the “nations” (Gentiles) as “plunder” (i.e. possession) for his covenant people. Many nations will join themselves to the Lord “in that day” and shall be the Lord’s people, and he will dwell in their midst (see Eph. 2:11-22). The “holy land” is wherever the Lord dwells. The reference in 2:12 is not limited to Palestine as his holy land, for that land has been rejected (Matt. 23:36-38)—but it is “the mountain of Jehovah’s house” unto which the nations shall flow (Isa. 2:2-4), the “mount Zion...the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem” to which the redeemed have come (Heb. 12:22-24). The Jerusalem he would yet choose would be that above (or pre-imminent) which is our mother (Gal. 4:26). So, God calls for reverence in his presence (2:13—see also Habakkuk 2:20). Things were about to change, cataclysmically. The indifference reported by the horsemen was to be altered. The heathen nations would be judged. The Lord would build and inhabit the new Zion, and he would fulfill his promises concerning Jerusalem. This is the Lord’s answer to the Jews who could not see beyond the immediate physical temple and city and to those indifferent to his purposes. The same principle holds true today—any nation or group of nations who presumes to “touch the apple of God’s eye”—the church of Jesus Christ—where God is most sensitive and protective—will ultimately suffer the wrath of God through some instrument or another! That is the essence of the Book of Revelation concerning the attempt of the ancient Roman empire to eradicate the church—and that is the essence of world history today in its attempt to stamp out Christianity! CHRISTIANITY IS THE FASTEST GROWING “RELIGION” IN THE 21ST CENTURY WORLD! God is “plundering” the nations and “possessing” from them their best and brightest for his kingdom—even this very hour!

Joshua, the high priest, standing before the angel of the Lord symbolizes not only the

priesthood of God's covenant, but all the people of God's covenant for that is what the high priest was to do—represent God's people in atonement and offerings of service and worship to God. Satan stands beside Joshua (notice, Satan is not enthroned—but stands at the foot of the Throne of God as one of God's creatures) in order to accuse God's covenant priesthood and people as guilty of sin. That is Satan's obsession—to drag sinners down to hell with him! He is the master slanderer. He accused Job of serving God for “what was in it for Job” (Job chs. 1-2). Satan tried to seduce Jesus Christ, the Perfect Man, into disobeying God (Matt. 4; Mk. 1; Lk. 4). Satan asked to have Peter to “sift him” (pulverize his faith) but Jesus prayed for Peter (Lk. 22:31-34). When the Lord “rebuked” Satan for accusing Joshua, Satan must have fled from the presence of the Lord for we hear no more from him. The priesthood had been grossly guilty of “doing violence to the law of God” (Ezek. 22:26; see also Hosea 4:6,8; Micah 3:11) as well as the “princes, prophets and people” of the covenant (Ezek. 22:27-31). They had defiled everything God called holy! Satan was trying to accuse them so the Lord would totally cast them off and have no more to do with them in his program of redemption. Satan apparently thought that would bring a halt to any redemptive program the Lord might have! Clearly, the priesthood and the people were in a penitent frame of mind and action (see the books of Ezra and Nehemiah)—certainly a “remnant” of them were! Joshua symbolized “a brand plucked out of the fire.” The “furnace of affliction” (Isa. 48:9-11)—the captivity—a remnant had been purified and returned, determined to live out God's Messianic destiny in their lives. The Lord had declared himself to be their Savior (Isa. 43:3; Hos. 13:4), and through his care a remnant would return (Isa. 10:21). He was going to cleanse this remnant and give to the ones who returned a “new heart and a new spirit” (Ezek. 36:25ff). Joshua represented this remnant of the Lord whom he would cleanse and make his own. Satan can accuse, but those who remain faithful to the Lord will be rescued from his accusations!

Bearing the sins of the priesthood and of the people, Joshua was “clothed with filthy garments” as he stood before the angel of the Lord. The filthy garments symbolized the sins by which the priesthood and the nation had become polluted. Instead of the beautiful and glorious garments of the priesthood, or “the beauty of holiness with which the people of God should ever be adorned, he was in the condition of the people of other years as described by Isaiah, “For we are become as one that is unclean, and all our righteousness is as a polluted (filthy) garment” (Isa.64:6). The Lord speaks to those (angels) that stood before him, saying, “Take the filthy garments from off him.” Then, to Joshua it was said, “Behold I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee.” The removal of the filthy garments symbolized the forgiving or taking away of the iniquity which they symbolized. The vision of Zechariah here is to portray God's imputation of holiness to the priesthood and the people, preparing them to serve him and rebuild his temple and resume their Messianic destiny. As a “priestly nation” (Ex. 19:6) which had been polluted and unfit for service before the Lord, they are now penitent and obedient and the Lord makes them fit, by his grace, to serve him. It is by the grace of God than anyone is made fit to serve him. But for the sinner there is required an attitude of penitence, expressed in actions, to prepare him to receive God's grace. Even the great Saul of Tarsus, Pharisee of the Pharisees, Hebrew of the Hebrews, who lived in all good conscience until he met Jesus on the road to Damascus, had to say, “Lord, what will you have me do?” And then go to the “street called Straight” and be immersed in water to wash away his sins (Acts 22:16)

before he was ready to serve Christ.

Notice the statement in 3:8: “Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, you and your friends who sit before you, for they are men of good omen (the Hebrew word is mophet which means “sign” or “symbolic” NIV): behold, I will bring my servant the Branch.” What God had just done in assuring the priesthood a place of access to him would find its full and ultimate realization in the “Branch” (i.e., Messiah—Jesus Christ, read the book of Hebrews). The high priest and his colleagues were typical of the righteous Branch to come. This is the first mention of the “Branch” by Zechariah. Both Isaiah (4:2; 11:1-10) and Jeremiah (23:5; 33:15) introduced the Branch who was to come. He would be a descendant of David and a servant of Jehovah. In him the priesthood and kingship through Zerubbabel (Hag. 2:23) would be combined and made complete. Later (6:12-13) Zechariah will state unequivocally that Jehovah’s servant, the Branch, would be brought forth, in whom is to be combined the office of king and priest. The “stone” symbolizes the “kingdom of God”—the church. At Zechariah’s time it was a rough, un-hewn stone, but it was to be complete with the engraving or sculpture of the Lord. The “seven eyes” focused on the stone are symbolic of the completeness and fulness of God’s watchful care over his people and his promise that he would bring forth a kingdom which should never be destroyed (Dan. 2:44), which would endure forever (Dan. 7:14). When the “Branch” came God would, in a single day, remove the guilt of his covenant people. That is when a “new” land would be created in a single day (Isa. 66:8). This “land” is the church which the Messiah would purchase for himself by his own blood (Acts 20:28). “Under one’s vine and fig tree” was a symbol of peace enjoyed in the midst of safety and security (1 Kings 4:24-25; Isa. 36:16), promised by the Lord through the prophet Micah (Micah 4:4) to be in the Messianic kingdom. One of the greatest lessons of the book of Hebrews in the NT is that Jesus Christ is our ultimate, final, perfect, exclusive High Priest who was tempted in all points as we are and yet without sin. He is a priest FOREVER after the order of Melchizedek, validated by the power of his “indestructible life” (Heb. 7:16). WE SHOULD NEVER FEAR THAT WE ARE NOT BEING “REPRESENTED” BEFORE THE THRONE OF ALMIGHTY GOD BY SOMEONE WHO DOES NOT UNDERSTAND US!

The lamp-stand in the tabernacle symbolized the “light” of God’s word. It was the only light allowed inside the tabernacle. Jesus used the menorahs in the temple at the Feast of Tabernacles to symbolize himself as the “light of the world” (John 7-8). The “lamp-stand” (in Hebrew it is menorah) was different in three ways from the menorah in the tabernacle and from the 10 menorahs in Solomon’s temple—(a) this one had a bowl or reservoir on top; (b) it had pipes (Heb. moutzaqim, “channels” NIV) that fed the oil to the lamps; (c) the oil was provided by two olive trees—one on each side of it. The number “seven” is the Biblical number of perfection or completeness. The pipes symbolize an abundance of oil, amply provided. The olive trees was the source of the oil. The angel expected Zechariah to know something of the symbolic significance of this vision. It is a message of complete source and supply of abundance to Zerubbabel and Joshua (4:14) to complete the work of rebuilding the temple. THAT SOURCE AND SUPPLY WOULD BE FROM THE SPIRIT OF GOD THROUGH THE WORD OF GOD. No doubt Zerubbabel and Joshua viewed the task before them and the weakness of the people with despair and discouragement. The word of God

revealed to Zerubbabel and Joshua through Zechariah that the Divine Holy Spirit should be the source and supply for courage, faith, and determination which the governor and the high priest would then relay to the people. That word from God was, "Not by might (Heb. khail, "army"), nor by power (Heb. kouakh, "vigor") but by My Spirit (Heb. ruakh, "Spirit") says the Lord of hosts." Zechariah was to tell Zerubbabel and Joshua that their task to rebuild God's temple would not be accomplished by human force, strength, wealth, or prestige, on which man so often relies. It would be accomplished by divine omnipotence, the infinite power of God. The Spirit of the Lord provides the "light" by which Zerubbabel and Joshua might "see" their mission to its completion. Another message from the angel of the Lord to the two leaders was, "For whoever has despised the day of small things shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel." When the foundation for the temple had been laid, the people who had returned from Babylon wept with a loud voice because of the insignificance of the temple then being constructed when compared with the temple of Solomon (Ezra 3:12). And even after Zerubbabel had begun the work it appeared in their eyes as nothing (Haggai 2:3). All the things done since returning from the exile to the coming and work of the Messiah were small in comparison God's past works in the covenant people. But when the work is God's work, carried out by his Spirit, nothing is inconsequential—everything has its place in his plan. The "seven eyes" symbolize the perfect watch of God over his purpose and the carrying it out (2 Chron. 16:9; Prov. 15:3). The two olive trees symbolized the two "anointed of God" (Zerubbabel, the governor, and Joshua, the high priest). Under the Old Covenant there were two offices held by men who were anointed, thereby being set apart as holy to the Lord, specially appointed to serve his purpose—these were the office of high priest (Ex. 30:30; Lev. 8:30; 21:10) and king (1 Sam. 10:1; 2 Kings 9:1-6). These two offices represented the religious or spiritual, and civil or temporal powers of the theocracy. These two anointed ones as "they that stand by the Lord of the whole earth"—i.e., they are near to do his bidding, to carry out his will. The two offices would ultimately be united in the Messiah, the Priest-King to come. The angel leaves a full discussion of this point to a later time (6:12-14). The application for Christianity is obvious. God has two redemptive instruments in this world—the church (symbolized by the high priest) and civil government (symbolized by the "governor" or king). After the Old Testament dispensation, the two were not, I repeat, not united in function. The church has its sphere of function, and civil government has its sphere of function. **THE TWO SHOULD BE SEPARATE**—just as America's founding fathers provided for in our American republic/democracy. God has one, other, instrument of redemption, and that is the home! It is the home that is the fiber holding all three instruments of redemption (church, government, family) together.

ZECHARIAH 5:1—8:23

The flying “scroll” would have looked like the Dead Sea Scrolls, only larger. Scholars estimate the 20 cubits by 10 cubits to be about 30 feet long by 15 feet wide. The size of the scroll is the same as the size of the holy place or first section of the tabernacle built by Moses. Thus the “scroll” symbolizes the demand for holiness upon all who draw nigh to God in his Holy Sanctuary. There is a “curse” written on the scroll that goes forth over the face of the whole land (the “land” of God’s people wherever they may be—not to include Gentiles for they will be dealt with later 5:5-11). The curse is aimed at those who steal and those who take oaths falsely. Evidently the people who had returned from captivity had grown careless in enforcing the law of Moses about right relationships to both man and God. Nehemiah confirms this—he writes of “governors” laying heavy burdens of usury (exorbitant interest payments) on the people and indenturing them into servitude, as well as violating their oaths of marriage (Ezra writes about this). Zechariah’s vision of a curse upon those who were blatantly sinning is nothing more than the law of Moses enjoined (Deut. Chs. 27-28). This is a threat from the Lord! Some people today do not like to think of God as “threatening”—BUT HE IS AND DOES! If you don’t believe it, read the letters to the seven churches of Asia Minor in the Book of Revelation, chapters 2 and 3! What rational, loving parent has never threatened their disobedient child with some form of punishment if obedience is not forthcoming??? To threaten punishment for disobedience is of the very essence of love. Think of what a recalcitrant child would become if allowed to continue to disobey without threat of punishment! The NT is “chock-full” of apostolic threats to the churches about individuals within those churches sinning (Rom. 16:17; 1 Cor. 5:1-13; 6:9-11; 11:27-34; Ga. 3:10; 5:19-21; Eph. 5:1-20; 1 Thess. 4:1-8; 2 Thess. 3:6-15; Heb. 6:1-8; 10:26-31; James 4:1-17). To put it bluntly, in the New Testament, the curse of God is upon those in the church who, along with other other sins, impenitently commit fornication and adultery; upon those who are greedy, drunkards, revilers, gossipers, slanderers, carousers, robbers, thieves; upon those who cause division; upon those who will not work (if they are able); and upon those who seek to be justified by the law (any law).

No one knows how large this “ephah” was but it had to be large enough to contain a woman “crouching” inside it. This “vision” is directly connected to the preceding one because it is all about “getting rid of the sin within the camp” of God’s covenant people. The “ephah and the wicked woman” symbolize the wickedness within the covenant people upon which God has declared a “curse.” Other prophets use the metaphor of an immoral woman to signify the wickedness of God’s covenant people (Isa. 1:21; 57:3; Jer. 2:20; 3:1,5,8; Micah 1:7 Hosea 2:5; Ezek. chs. 15-16-23, etc.). Other prophets also use the “harlot” to symbolize heathen Gentile nations (Nahum 3:4; Rev. 17:1,15,16; 19:2). The angel tells Zechariah that the “two-flying-women” were taking this “ephah” filled with the wicked woman into the “land of Shinar” to “build a house for her there.” The land of Shinar was the land in which Nimrod founded the first “world” kingdom, out of which other “world kingdoms” were established (Gen. 10:10-11). These “world kingdoms” were inveterate enemies of God’s “redemptive kingdom” (Israel) from the time of their establishment until God destroyed them, one

after another. They were all wicked, cruel, idolatrous and made war on God's people. Therefore, wickedness is taken from God's "kingdom" and placed where it belonged—in the midst of impenitent worldliness. Wickedness does not belong in the midst of God's people! **THIS VISION SYMBOLIZES A COMPLETE SEPARATION OF WICKEDNESS FROM GOD'S PEOPLE BY THE GRACE OF A FORGIVING GOD TOWARD A PENITENT PEOPLE!** Again, the lesson for the 21st century church is obvious! If it isn't obvious here—it certainly should be after reading the New Testament. And this is especially true of the Book of Revelation. The church is told in the Revelation, "Come out of her (the harlot—ancient Roman idolatry) my people, lest you take part in her sins, lest you share in her plagues" (Rev. 18:4). The apostle Paul warned the Corinthian church in the same terms (2 Cor. 6:14—7:1). **THE CHURCH MUST BE SEPARATE FROM THE WORLD—IN THINKING, IN WHAT IT WORSHIPS, IN HOW IT GIVES, IN WHAT IT ENJOYS, IN WHAT IT DOES!**

The four chariots undoubtedly symbolize war (red), black (famine), white (victory) and the dappled ones (a multiform of judgments by famine, pestilence and sword)—all powerful. They were "impatient" or "straining" to get out and patrol the earth. So, the Lord turned them loose. When Zechariah asked what this was all about, the reply was, "These are the four winds (or spirits) of heaven, which go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth." These are "instruments" of God to serve him wherever he sends them. Jeremiah writes of the "four winds" as scattering winds, when the Lord said, "Upon Elam will I bring the four winds from the four quarters of heaven, and will scatter them toward all those winds (Jer. 49:36). Jeremiah also spoke of a "destroying wind" to be brought against Babylon (51:1). In the vision shown to Daniel, "the four winds of heaven broke forth upon the great sea (Dan. 7:2) ("sea" symbolizing the Gentile nations—the mass of humanity) out of which, when the wind of God blew upon it, emerged four world empires to do his bidding in chastening the covenant people. All this symbolism in Zechariah is very similar to the symbolism in Ezekiel chapters 1 and 2—except Ezekiel sees "living creatures" and "wheels" patrolling the earth, doing God's bidding upon the enemies of his people. Ezekiel also spoke of God's four sore judgments (14:21). The four winds of Zechariah's vision "go forth from the Lord of all the earth" and are his messengers (cf. Psa. 104:4; Heb. 1:7), sent anywhere throughout all the earth to accomplish his purpose of scattering, destroying, or stirring, depending on the need of the hour. The judgments God did upon these "nations of the four winds of the earth" vindicated his righteousness and "quieted his spirit" (see also Ezek. 5:13; 16:42; 24:13). When God's judgments are in the earth, the inhabitants of the world learn righteousness" (Isa. 26:9). This vision was to encourage the returned exiles that God has sufficient resources at his beck and call to fulfill his promises to be victorious over all their enemies so they may rebuild! The church of the 21st century does not need to fear Communism, Fascism, Islam, or any other enemy outside herself—God has the resources and the will, and has promised, that even the gates Hades (death) cannot prevail against her. What the church must fear is apostasy from the true doctrine of God (the Bible), worldliness in living, and unloving attitude toward the unsaved! **NO THREAT FROM OUTSIDE THE CHURCH ITSELF IS POWERFUL ENOUGH OR LONG-LIVED ENOUGH TO BE ANY PROBLEM WITH GOD—HE WILL KEEP THE CHURCH ALIVE SO LONG AS SHE ABIDES IN HIM!**

In this vision, the Lord declares 5 things concerning the “man whose name is the Branch” (a) “he would grow up out of his place”—i.e., from the tribe of Judah; (b) he shall build the temple of Jehovah—Zerubbabel, the type of the Messiah would build the physical temple—but the “Branch” would build the everlasting temple (Eph. 2:11-22); (c) he shall be clothed with majesty; (d) he shall be a priest upon his throne—in the “Branch” is combined both the kingly and priestly offices over God’s people; (e) and there will be harmony (“peaceful understanding”) between the two—king and priest—in the “Branch.” For a Jew to propose uniting both the office of high priest and the office of king in one person would seem apostasy and blasphemy from the standpoint of the law and the prophets! IT JUST WAS NOT SO IN THE O.T. One king, Uzziah, thought he would perform the functions of the high priest and was stricken by the Lord with leprosy (2 Chron. 26:16-21). When God gives a commandment, he expects it to be kept, until, and if, he chooses to change his commandment. God didn’t actually change the commandment about keeping separate the office of high priest and king. He intended to send his Messiah from the moment of the fall of mankind in the Garden of Eden. In this Messiah, born of woman, would reside the original, ultimate, perfect Person to fulfill the plan he had for the redemption of mankind—and this Messiah would be both Intercessor and Lord. Jesus’s authority extends into all the facets of human life—religious and secular. He is King of Salem and High Priest—all on one Person (Heb. 7:1-28). Zechariah is actually predicting a “change in the law of God” (see Heb. 7:12) that will harmonize the whole gamut of the believer’s relationship to him in the majestic “Branch” that was to come! Zechariah is predicting a New Covenant! And in this New Covenant would be the eternal, spiritual blessedness for which the law of Moses was only a shadow—not the true realities (Heb. 10:1ff). This “Branch” would be none other than God himself, in the flesh while on earth, but eternal in the heavens after he accomplished his redemptive mission! This “Branch” is now at the right hand of God interceding as one who knows our temptations and trials having gone through them in the “weakness of the flesh” just as we are! All this came to pass (i.e., God’s changing of his law to produce a New Covenant) because there was a “remnant” that diligently obeyed the voice of the Lord (see Luke chs. 1-2). There is no greater evidence to the divine origin of the Bible nor to the integrity of God’s messengers, than the fulfilled word which they spoke. THAT’S THE LESSON TO BE LEARNED FROM THIS VISION.

Evidently, down in Babylon, in exile, they added more “fast days” than had been ordained in the law of Moses. We know of at least one they added—it was called “Purim” and was added in the days of Esther. Besides, when the kingdom divided in the days of Jeroboam and Rheoboam, the northern kingdom not only added “fast days” to their religion, they added altars and all kinds of other trappings (not the least of which was golden calves) to the worship of God. For nearly 70 years the exiles had fasted and mourned in the 5th and 7th months—but did they do it unto Jehovah was the question! The Hebrew word *innah* is the word always used in the Law of Moses (Pentateuch) for “fast” and literally means, “afflict” your souls. The Lord only appointed one day in which the Jew was to “afflict his soul” and that was the Day of Atonement (see Lev. 23:26-32). There is no stipulation that the Hebrew was not allowed to eat on the Day of Atonement. “Fasting” according to the law of Moses did not stipulate dieting or going without food—only that they should “mourn for their sins” and do no work on that day! The later books of the O.T. (never in the Pentateuch) use the word *tzoumouth* for “fastings” in which the Hebrew practiced “abstinence” but why

abstinence was added by the people we do not know! Of course, one practical way of concentrating on the spiritual things (i.e., sins, atonement) would be to abstain from food—but not necessarily—if a person is hungry his physical appetite might distract him from such “afflicting of the soul.” Whatever the case with the form of “fasting” these “fasts” about which Zechariah’s people inquired had not been authorized by the Lord, but had grown out of their own self-pity rather than a consciousness of sin. Zechariah tells the people, on behalf of the Lord, that they could have found the answer to their question in the words of the prophets before the captivity, for the word of the Lord was not to the generation before the captivity, only, but for all generations (7:7). Had their forefathers paid heed to the words of the prophets before the exile, when Jerusalem was inhabited and in prosperity, there would have been no occasion to add days for “the affliction of their souls” beyond that Day of Atonement ordained in the law of Moses. Their city and temple would not have been destroyed and they would not have had to grow up in exile! Thus all they could think of in captivity was “affliction and mourning.” There is a message for the church of Christ here! If the church would do more to purge itself of worldliness and “idolatry” (worship of people of influence, “pet traditions and rituals” not ordained in the New Testament, etc.) she might not have the burden of a guilty conscience and have to spend so much time exhorting against sin and have more time to exhort in favor of righteous and good deeds.

The fuller answer is now given by the Lord through Zechariah about their “fasting and mourning.” “Execute true judgment (i.e., execute justice—Jer. 7:5; Ezek. 18:8-9; Micah 6:8); show kindness and compassion (Hosea 6:6; Micah 6:8); oppress not the widow, fatherless, sojourner, or the poor (Jer. 7:6); and let none of you devise evil against his brother in your heart (Levi. 19:17-18; Isa. 32:7; Micah 2:1). When the Lord required in the law and before they went into exile, he required then in Zechariah’s day. What the Lord required in Zechariah’s day, he had required in the law and by the revelations of the earlier prophets, long before they went into exile (e.g., Isa. 58:1-12). Neither the Lord nor his word changed—both remained immutable! Their “fathers” had refused to hear before the captivity, now their present condition of having added to the word of God and displeased God, is the inevitable consequence of their refusal to hear when the Lord had called. Their “fathers” had been cast out of the land into Babylon, their city and their temple destroyed—now, if these who have returned do not wish to suffer the same fate, they must hear the prophets the Lord has sent to them after the exile—Haggai and Zechariah (and including, Ezra, Nehemiah, Zerubbabel and Joshua). If the church of Christ today does not want to suffer the “exile” (enslavement in denominationalism) their “forefathers” suffered during the Middle Ages and resulting from the “Protestant Reformation,” she had better listen and obey the pure word of the Lord as it is preached and taught by Bible-loving, Bible-preaching evangelists and elders who know not only the Bible but “Restoration Movement” history!

In chapter 7 Zechariah looked to the past and told his people the cause for their fasting—sin on the part of the “fathers” who had refused to hear Jehovah. In chapter 8 he looks to the future and announces what Jehovah propose to do in fulfilling his redemptive purposes through them. When the Jews had rejected the Lord before the destruction of Jerusalem, Ezekiel had seen in a vision the withdrawing of the Lord

form the city (9:3; 10:4,19; 11:23). Jerusalem had now been purged by the “blast of judgment and blast of burning” (Isa. 4:4), so that Jehovah could now return and dwell in the midst of it. Jerusalem would be called “the faithful city.” Zechariah paints a “word-picture” (using metaphors) of security and happy old age which stands in stark contrast to the times of the Jews that had been before their exile and repentance. But there is no doubt that Zechariah is “shortening the perspective” again and also looking far down future to his own day to the day of the Messianic age (see comments on Zech. 2:1-5). This “old age” metaphor is also used by Isaiah as he figuratively describes the Messianic “Zion” (Isa. 65:17-25). Furthermore, even initial fulfillment of this promise being made by Zechariah to the returned remnant was conditioned on the people’s faithfulness to the Lord. We know that even as early as the days of Malachi (about 100 years after Zechariah prophesied) most of the Jews had fallen back into their sinful ways and the Lord then permitted the Seleucids (i.e., Syrians) to create the holocaust upon the Jews described in Daniel chs. 8 and 11, and in 1 & 2 Maccabees. Then came the Roman oppression described in the Gospels and Acts. **BUT GOD DID SAVE A “REMNANT” THROUGH WHICH HE “BUILT” HIS “NEW ZION”—THE CHURCH—AND THERE GOD WILL DWELL FOREVER.** That “remnant” produced Anna the prophetess (of the Gospel of Luke) and Simeon the old prophet (Lk. 2); John the Baptist, Mary & Joseph, the apostles, and many others who became believers in Jesus Christ.

Just as the Lord fulfilled his word of judgment by captivity and exile, so now he was going to fulfill his word of blessing and good—IF the people of God would “speak the truth to one another, render judgments that are true and make for peace, and do not devise evil in their hearts against one another, or love a false oath.” The “goodness” that God promised to give came with conditions of penitence and faith expressed in lives of “loving truth and peace.” It isn’t that God could not shower goodness (grace) on anyone he chooses—but the assimilation and enjoyment of that grace depends on the attitude of the one upon whom it may fall. God makes his rain and sun to shine on the just and unjust alike—but the unjust do not appreciate it, do not want it, do not enjoy it and so God is going to give the unjust a place in eternity where they will not have to be showered with the grace of God which they do not want! **IF YOU WANT GOD’S GRACE TO MAKE YOU INTO THE IMAGE OF HIS SON (Rom. 8:29) THERE ARE PARAMETERS WITHIN WHICH YOU CAN HAVE IT—THOSE PARAMETERS ARE FAITH, REPENTANCE, OBEDIENCE, TRUTH, LOVE, AND RIGHTEOUSNESS!** Judah could turn all those days they had been “fasting and mourning” into days of “gladness and cheerful feasts” IF they will “love truth and peace.” IF they repent and change their evil to righteousness, their nature, their character will be changed and it will be observed by those around them and many will see what doing the will of the Lord can do and many peoples and nations shall come to seek the Lord of hosts. When would this be fulfilled? “Ten men” symbolizes a full or complete number—a large number (Gen. 31:7; Num. 14:22; Neh. 4:12; Job 19:3; Dan. 1:20). “Of every tongue (language)” symbolizes the fact that when this is fulfilled that diversity of languages which hinders unity among men will be overcome (by translations of the Scriptures into many different languages) as these goyim (Heb. for “Gentiles”) “seize the skirt of him that is a (yehudi) Jew,” seeking to worship God with him. The Jew, once a curse, a byword and despised by all, would be sought after as a means of reaching God. This began to be fulfilled from the moment Zechariah uttered it—but it would have its ultimate fulfillment when the gospel began to be preached by

Christians in the first century A.D. Examples of its fulfillment are the many Gentiles who, after the restoration of the exiles, became Jewish proselytes—and later became Christians (i.e., Cornelius and his household, Acts 10-11; the worthy subjects for the gospel among men of “understanding” found by the apostle Paul, Acts 13:7; the “taking out of the Gentiles a people for God’s name,” Acts 15:12-21, a fulfillment of Amos 9:11-12; “devout Greeks” and “chief women” who attended the synagogue, Acts 17:4, etc.). What would happen today if millions of Jews became Christian? It would be like a “resurrection from the dead” (Rom. 11:15). BUT THE “RESURRECTION FROM THE DEAD” OF ANY JEW IS DEPENDENT UPON THEIR HEARING AND OBEYING THE GOSPEL OF JESUS CHRIST (Rom. 10:1-21).

ZECHARIAH 9:1—11:17

We know this text applies to Jesus Christ, the Messiah, because the New Testament says so—in two places (Matt. 2:5; Jn. 12:15). And it is not just Zechariah 9:9, jerked out of context that applies—the whole text (Zech. 9:1—11:17) except for a few passages that apply, initially, to the Jews of Zechariah’s day. **NONE OF IT APPLIES TO THE 2nd COMING OF CHRIST—IT ALL APPLIES TO HIS FIRST COMING.** And, even that which applies, initially, to the Jews of Zechariah’s day, ultimately applies to the Messianic age. In the first part of this text (9:1-17) we have, in metaphorical, apocalyptic, symbolic language a prophecy of the fall of heathen nations and the coming of the Messianic King who would rule in peace. When did the “nations” really “fall” to the triumphant King? They “fell” to the triumph of Christ at his death and resurrection! “He disarmed the principalities and powers and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in him (Jesus Christ)” (Col. 2:15)—when he (Christ) was “nailed to the cross.” The same apostle writes, “For it is written, I will destroy the wisdom of the wise and the cleverness of the clever I will thwart” (1 Cor. 1:19). Christ, at his death and resurrection, destroyed the power of the devil and delivered all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong bondage (Heb. 2:14-15). “The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil” (1 John 3:8). Satan has been “bound” by gospel of Christ (Matt. 12:29; Rev. 20:1-4; 20:7—see my Sunday School lessons on Revelation). While heathenism (the nations mentioned in 9:1-8 symbolize all heathen opposition to God’s program of redemption) is being conquered by the gospel, the Lord will encamp around his people (the faithful “remnant” which became the beginnings of the church) and through them fulfill his redemptive purpose. So, Zechariah says, “Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem! Lo, your king comes to you; triumphant and victorious is he, humble and riding on an ass, on a cold the foal of an ass.” (9:10). Notice, it doesn’t say he will be victorious—it says he is victorious! When “He” comes, “He is victorious!” Zechariah next describes what the character of the King’s rule will be when he arrives (9:10-17)—note the connecting words, “Then” 9:14 and “On that day” 9:16. The nearest antecedent to those connectors is the King! His rule will be militant conquest of the nations—but will that conquest be physical or spiritual? He is going to use the purged “remnant” as his “bow and arrow.” If this prophecy in Zechariah is to be fulfilled physically and literally, then Christ’s “war” upon the nations will be involving “bows and arrows.” While this prophecy in Zechariah may have an initial, temporary, fulfillment in the warfare against the Jews during the Seleucid (i.e., Maccabean) period, it’s ultimate fulfillment is in the spreading of the gospel of Christ to the ends of the earth and the “possessing” out of every nation, tribe, tongue and people, a “church” for Christ.

Very important to the interpretation of this whole text is the translation of the Hebrew word *davar* in 9:10. In the KJV it is translated “speak”—in the RSV it is translated “command”—in the NIV it is “proclaim”—in the NASV it is “speak.” The word could be translated “sue.” In other words, the King will not force peace upon anyone—it is not a matter of physical force or physical war the King will be making—it is a “war of words.” Peace cannot be ultimately forced upon anyone! It has to come by

persuasion—by words—by the gospel! The only weapon authorized for the church in conquering the nations is the gospel—the “sword of the Spirit.” So, all the physical words used by Zechariah in what the King is going to do for his people are merely “window-dressing” metaphors to portray spiritual warfare and spiritual victory by the word of the King—the gospel! Many dispensationalists/premillennialists allege Christ will physically return to earth, set up a “millennial” kingdom in physical Palestine, set up a new physical temple in which a physical Israel will re-institute the physical rituals of the O.T. and be gradually converted to Christ, while Christ rules the Gentile nations with a “rod of iron” commanding them to be at peace. But they will not be at peace for, according to the d/ps the Anti-Christ (in spite of the fact that John in his epistles says there is no one, singular “anti-Christ” but many) will arise and make war on the saints. Then Christ will catch up his church in the rapture while there will be tribulation on the earth for 7 literal years and then Christ will make physical war on the Anti-Christ and conquer him and make a new heaven and earth. I have said all this to insist that Zechariah says nothing about a physical war in which Jesus and the church will ever engage (nor does any of the rest of the Bible).

Zechariah is clearly talking about the FIRST coming of the Messiah when Jesus was born, lived, died and was resurrected and instituted the church! It is not at all unusual for the O.T. prophets to portray in highly figurative, symbolic language, the militancy of the New Covenant kingdom of God—the church of Christ—they all do it! If people would only let the references in the NT to OT prophecy become the “key” to interpreting the prophets there would be no problem understanding that the prophets were using metaphors, symbols, apocalyptic language to speak of the people of God conquering and possessing the “nations.” All one has to do is turn to Amos 9:11-15 and then to Acts 15:6-21—then to Joel 2:27—3:21 and then to Acts 2:14-38—then to Hosea 1:1—3:5 and then to Romans 9:22-33 and 1 Pet 2:9—then to Isaiah 61:1-11 and then to Luke 4:16-29 to see how figurative language is used by the O.T. prophets to predict the Messianic age. Those and many other NT passages are “keys” to interpreting the fulfillment of O.T. prophecy! **USE THEM INSTEAD OF HAL LINDSAY!** Even the New Testament speaks of evangelism of the nations in figurative language of “conquering” with “weapons” (Eph. 6:10-20; 1 Tim. 1:18; 2 Tim. 2:1-13, etc.). The Book of Revelation uses the same kind of metaphorical, symbolic, apocalyptic language as do the O.T. prophets (compare Revelation with Daniel). The point is, God expects his people to be militant in a spiritual way—not sitting around on the defensive—but going on the offensive—conquering the nations for his glory! “For though we live in the world we are not carrying on a worldly war, for the weapons of our warfare are not worldly but have divine power to destroy strongholds. We destroy arguments and every proud obstacle to the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ....” (2 Cor. 10:3-5).

God’s people have been scattered, and would continue to be scattered (see Matt. 9:35-38) by “false shepherds.” This is a reference to the false prophets and corrupted priesthood of their forefathers who used “teraphim” (household gods) and diviners and dreamers to lie to them about God and his word. The other literary prophets are full of such accusations against false prophets—huge segments of Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and others are devoted to condemnation of the false shepherds (see esp. Ezek. 34:1-31). Ezekiel 34 is a prediction of the Good Shepherd (John 10), the Messiah, who will

come to do away with the false shepherds. One has only to read Malachi and the history of the Jews between the Testaments (Maccabees), to see that “false shepherds” continually “scattered” the “remnant” of God’s people. Their ultimate hope lay in the Good Shepherd who was to come. That’s exactly what Zechariah ch. 10 and 11 is talking about! It is all to be fulfilled when the Messiah (from the tribe of Judah) who shall be the cornerstone (Eph. 2:20; 1 Cor. 3:11; Matt. 16:18; 21:42). If Christ is the “cornerstone” he is also the Lord’s “bow and arrow” (see Isa. 49:1-7). Christ, the Messiah, will “come out of Judah” and lead them in conquest of the best out of every nation through the proclamation of the gospel. The Messiah is also the “peg” or “nail” (Heb. yathed). The “nail” or “peg” was driven into the wall of the house to hang household utensils or clothing on. It here indicates one who can be depended on to uphold, serve and support the laws of the house of the Lord (see Isa. 22:23-24).

While this prophecy (Zech. 10) may have been temporarily fulfilled when the Lord “brought” Judah out of captivity and through the Seleucid period of their existence (see Dan. ch. 11-12), it has to have the Messianic age as its ultimate fulfillment. Two phrases, “and they shall be as many as of old” and “till there is no room for them,” clearly indicates Zechariah is not predicting something physical and literal as the ultimate fulfillment of this scene! Zechariah is certainly not talking about 21st century Israel! There’s not much joy over there today—they are not as “many as of old”—half of Palestine is inhabited and ruled by Arabs—they have not taken up all the space until there is no more room for them. And, the Jews did not “pass through the sea of Egypt” when he brought them back from exile, nor when modern Israel occupied the portion of the land they now rule! Furthermore, the Jews in modern Israel are “not strong in the Lord” nor do they glory in his name! Just this week, as I was composing this lesson (January 20-26, 2003) there was news that the government of modern Israel was going to insist on separation of “church” (synagogue—Hasidim) and state. That can’t be the Old Testament Jews! There are four great theophanies in the O.T. where the “conquest” of the Lord’s people by the Messiah which are put in bloody, war-like figurative language (Isa. 34; Ezek. chs. 38-39; Dan. 7; Joel chs. 2-3). They are all predicting the victory of the Messiah and his people over the “nations” of the world. Notice in this passage that the Lord makes this promise of victory to both Judah and Ephraim. “Ephraim” is a metaphor for the ten northern tribes—they and their descendants will have part in the “coming out of the cornerstone”—so the 10 northern tribes of Israel were never “lost” completely. This scripture had its ultimate fulfillment in the Messianic gospel (Rom. 9:24-26).

This prophecy (11:1-6), in the context of all of chapters 10 and 11, is predicting the complete destruction of the Jewish economy (see Ezek. 34). The Old Testament scriptures clearly predict that the whole Jewish economy would be, someday, utterly fulfilled, as far as God was concerned (see Jer. 3:15-20; Isa. 66:18-24). Even Jesus predicted it (Matt. Chs. 23 and 24). The Lord called called his people to return from exile in Babylon. A small remnant responded whom he blessed by rebuilding the Jewish commonwealth (see Ezra & Nehemiah). However, the old order was to eventually pass away to make way for the New Covenant. When God sent his “Good Shepherd” to his people to accomplish this New Covenant, and they rejected him, the Romans were brought against the land (Matt. 21:42-46; 22:1-14; 24:1-35; 1 Thess. 2:13-16; Heb. 13:8); and all that was lofty, great, and meaningful to the Jews was

destroyed. Zechariah is picturing the final judgment upon the political and religious Jewish system effected by the Romans in A.D. 70. Read Josephus's account of the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple and you will see that the "shepherds" of the Jews had no mercy on their own people at the time. The Lord puts Zechariah in the role of a shepherd, saying, "Feed the flock doomed to slaughter." The "flock of slaughter" are the Jewish people being destroyed by their "possessors" or masters, those who ruled over them. Read Jesus's denunciation of the Pharisees in Matthew 23 and Luke 11. Jesus called the Jewish rulers of his day, "hireling" shepherds" (John 10:12-13). The "flock of slaughter" was given to Zechariah's care; he carried out the instruction of verse 4 and fed them the word of God. The prophet "fed" them with two shepherd-staves—"Grace" (Favor) and "Union" (Band or Binder). He brought the people back within the Grace of God and bound the formerly divided nation back into one nation. But it did not take the Jews long to have back in the priesthood and in the teachers of the law a bunch of corrupt, exploitative leaders (see Malachi chs. 1-2). And the Jewish leadership got even worse during the reign of the Maccabeans! When we get to the time of Christ we learn from the Gospel accounts just how wicked and corrupt the priesthood and the "teachers" (Pharisees) were. They were supposed to be shepherds of God's flock but they were "devouring" God's flock for their own ends. Jesus saw the multitudes as sheep without a shepherd (Matt. 9:35-38).

When the Jewish nation went back into its old ways (Malachi), especially the priesthood, and an attitude of contempt for the Lord and his law, it constituted a rejection of the Lord himself and what he was doing for them, so the prophet "gives them up to their fate." He "destroyed" three (a symbolic number for completeness, along with 4, 7 and 10) this "shepherd-rejecting" people in "one month" (i.e., quickly). The "covenant" was the mercy of God upon the Jews and God's restraint upon their enemies so they could bring into the world the Messiah. But they defaulted on their part of this "covenant." God mentally (or prophetically) annulled his covenant with the Jewish people as far back as Zechariah—but in historical fact when Jesus died on the cross. With this restraint annulled the flock would be at the mercy of the goyim (Gentiles, "nations"). The Jewish nation, because it paid no heed to the post-exilic prophets, was left to cannibalize itself—which it did—read Josephus's account of these days! Of course, God predicted all along, as we have pointed out in Jer. 3:25-26, etc., that the Old Covenant would be "annulled" and a New Covenant would be made (see also Jer. 31:31ff).

Zechariah, with his part of the "shepherding" work done and rejected, seeks an evaluation of the people's estimate of his work (11:12). As a token of their contempt for his service, they weighted for his hire 30 pieces of silver, the price of a servant gored by an ox! (Ex. 21:32). **THIS WAS A DELIBERATE AND INTENTIONAL INSULT, NOT JUST TO ZECHARIAH, BUT TO ALMIGHTY GOD!** It was an expression of contempt for all God had done for them through all the prophets (especially Zechariah). But it would find its fulfillment in Jesus Christ (Matt. 16:15; 27:9). Israel's contempt for the Lord was repeated in the contempt of their ancestors for his Son, Jesus Christ—and upon them all the innocent blood shed on earth, from the blood of innocent Abel to the blood of Zechariah the son of Barachiah (Matt. 23:35). The book of Zechariah was part of a scroll headed by Jeremiah's work, which was referred to by the title "Jeremiah" and that is why Matt. 27:9 refers to the "30 pieces of silver" text as

being in Jeremiah. There are those today who would “sell-out” the Lord and his church for money or prestige—or simply because they are contemptuous of the Lord’s word. It is happening all the time—right within formerly Bible-believing congregations! Whole congregations are “betraying” the Lord for the “filthy-lucre” of this world—not just individuals! GOD HAVE MERCY UPON THEIR SOULS!

Zechariah is once again told to symbolize a “worthless shepherd.” There was not just one “worthless” shepherd of the Jewish people. Zechariah was to “act out what a worthless shepherd” would do. He was to symbolize the “hirelings” of the time from Malachi to Jesus (John 10:12)—the religious and civil leaders who had “fed themselves” (Ezek. 34) all through the centuries, climaxed at the time of Jesus. They were men like most of the priests in Malachi’s day, in the days of the Maccabean family, in the days of the Herods, like Annas and Caiaphas, like the Pharisees and Sadducees. In the hands of “worthless shepherds” the Jews outside of Christ have been ever since! Jewish religious leaders are men expected to “feed the flock of God” on the goodness of God in Jesus Christ but they have used the “flock” for their own purposes. Zechariah was trying to relay God’s warning to the people of his day that in spite of their zeal to rebuild the temple and the city, within a few short years they would be suffering again under religious and civil leaders who were false and worthless to the Lord and to them. Sad to say, there are probably some “worthless” shepherds still holding the office of “elder” or “evangelist” in the church of Christ today! They are only there for what they can get out of the “flock.” They do not care about the flock and when they see the “wolf” coming, they flee! CHURCHES NEED TO SELECT THEIR LEADERS WITH GREAT CARE—THEIR ELDERS AND PREACHERS—THEIR “SHEPHERDS” FOR IF THEY SELECT HIRELINGS THEY WILL NOT ONLY SUFFER, BUT THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE BLASPHEMED BECAUSE OF “WORTHLESS SHEPHERDS.”

ZECHARIAH 12:1—14:21

“On that day” (12:1-6) has as its nearest antecedent the “day” when the “Shepherd” of the flock doomed to slaughter is paid the wages of a “worthless shepherd”—i.e., on the day when the “covenant” is annulled. Jerusalem, the “new Zion”—the church of Christ—would become a “cup of reeling” for the nations of the world who are trying to eradicate it. Zechariah is, again, predicting, ultimately, the Messianic age. “On that day” is used 16 times in chapters 12-14—“that day is all the same day” and is speaking ultimately of the Messianic age—the church. While all this warfare against “Jerusalem” and “Judah” may have an interim fulfillment in the Lord’s thwarting of Judah’s enemies to eradicate them (i.e., the Samaritans and later the Seleucids), Zechariah certainly has again used “shortened perspective” to predict the ultimate victory of Christ over the “principalities and powers” (Col. 2:15) and the establishment of the never-vulnerable church. That all this is a prediction of the Messianic age may be clearly seen because 12:10ff is connected context (i.e., “they shall look on him whom they have pierced”) to all in 12:1-9. The apostle John states that 12:10 (“they shall look on him whom they have pierced”) is fulfilled in the crucifixion of Jesus Christ (John 19:37). All the heathen nations (consolidated in the ancient Roman empire) would gather against spiritual Jerusalem (the church) in attempts to destroy it, but the Lord will fight for his people. This section of Zechariah parallels beautifully the 7th chapter of Daniel. Read the Book of Revelation in light of this prophecy in Zechariah!

“On that day”—when the Messiah comes—victory and glory will be given to the “house of David” and “the house of David shall be like God. David in Hebrew means, “Beloved.” To “be like God” means the “house of David”—the church founded by David’s King, Jesus Christ—will be invincible. The church will have the strength of God against all the nations of the earth that come against it! And everyone will be equal in this New “house of David”—they will all be servants—there is only one King—Jesus! This so aptly parallels the Book of Revelation where the church of Christ is pictured with “the mark of God” on its forehead and is ultimately victorious over all that the “beast, false prophet, and harlot” (instruments of the devil) can do against it! The Lord did not, of course, “destroy” all the nations physically. But the Lord “destroyed” the power of devil who uses the “nations” (Heb. goyim) to keep them in bondage to the fear of death (Heb. 2:14-15). The Lord exercises his POWER in this earth both physically and spiritually—mainly, spiritually, when it comes to “warfare” against unbelief and sin! As of the date of the composition of these lessons (January 2003) Christianity is the fastest growing religion in the world, and is the number one religion in the world in number of adherents—and the Restoration Plea churches are the fastest growing churches in the USA!

Actually the Hebrew word in 12:10 is aelayee and should be translated “Me whom they have pierced” instead of “him whom they have pierced.” Here, in Zechariah (according to John’s statement that it was fulfilled in Christ— John 19:37) we have a statement of the Incarnation of God in the Messiah!. The O.T. teaches that God was going to come in the flesh as the Messiah. Jesus confirmed that in Matt. 22:41-46 when he stated that David’s son (Jesus Christ) was also David’s Lord (Jesus was

quoting Psa. 110:1). It was God on that cross at Calvary who was pierced by the Roman centurion with the consent of the Jews who cried, “Crucify him, crucify him, his blood be upon us and upon our children. God was “poured out” on the house of David for “a spirit of compassion and supplication.” For those Jews who repented of this (Acts 2:38) Jesus became a “spirit of compassion and supplication.” For those who have never repented of it, his death has become a cause of their “mourning” for the curse of God is upon them for it (1 Thess. 2:12-16). All their troubles may be attributed to their rejection of their Messiah (Luke 19:41-44; 21:1-33 and parallels in Matt. 24 and Mk. 13).

Again, “On that day” (13:1) connects to all that has been said, actually, from 9:1 to this point and on through chapter 14. It is all Messianic in its ultimate fulfillment. That should be apparent to any discerning reader of the text of 9:1—14:21 and one who knows the O.T. prophets well! Who else could the “fountain opened” to “cleanse David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem” be other than the Messiah? Zechariah clearly is not speaking literally—about some physical cleansing! The day this “fountain” was “opened” was the day God-in-Jesus-Christ was “pierced”—the crucifixion of Christ. The book of Hebrews makes it clear that “cleansing” comes only through accepting the vicarious death of Jesus Christ—it cannot ever be done by the blood of bulls and goats. Zechariah is not talking about any rebuilt temple here—not in Ezra’s day nor in the alleged “millennium” of the dispensationalists! NOT EVER! The death of Christ was once for all time the cleansing power for sin and alienation from God (Heb. 19:23-28; 10:1-18). The death of Christ cleanses “the house of David” which is the house of the son of David—the Messiah—the church! There is simply nothing else to say about this “fountain”—it is Jesus Christ! Those who have not accept him, on his terms, faith, repentance and immersion in water for the remission of sins have not been cleansed! That’s all there is to it!

Notice, Zechariah does not say “on that day” (the Messianic age) the Lord will remove false prophets! Even the New Testament plainly says there will be false prophets until Jesus comes back in his glory at the end of time. BUT ZECHARIAH IS SAYING THAT WHEN THE MESSIAH COMES HE WILL COMPLETE THE REVELATION OF GOD TO MAN THROUGH HIS WORDS IN THE GOSPELS AND THROUGH HIS APOSTLES IN THE REST OF THE N.T.—SO THERE WILL BE NO NEED FOR ANY MORE “PROPHETS” SPEAKING THE REVELATION OF GOD! This coincides with 1 Cor. 13:8-11. When that (neuter) which is perfect is come (i.e., the final, complete, revealed, written will of God for salvation and sanctification—i.e., the New Testament Scriptures) that which is in part will be done away! Zechariah is saying what Paul said in 1 Cor. 13:8-11 and what Jude says in his statement that “the faith was once for all delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3). Zechariah goes on to say that “on that day” (when they pierce the Son of God, when the fountain for cleansing is opened) any one who claims to be a prophet is subject to the Lord’s curse! Not only will “prophecy” cease—there will be no more “unclean spirits.” This clearly indicates that, just as Jesus said in Matt. 12, he came and entered the house of the “strong man” (Satan) and bound him. In other words, in the conquest of Christ over Satan and his forces, unclean spirits have ceased to control men as they did in the time of the ministry of Christ and the apostles (see also Micah 5:12-13, in the context of a Messianic prophecy of Micah 5:2ff). What purports to be “demon possession” today is not, I repeat, not, the demon

possession of the days of Christ and his apostles! (See my special studies on demon possession today and the power of Satan in my commentaries *The Gospel of Luke*, and *Lessons on Revelation*, published by College Press).

The “sword” symbolizes execution (Rom. 13:7ff). It will be done to “My shepherd” (i.e., the Messiah). The “man who is close to me” (NIV) or “the man who stands next to me” (RSV) is from two Hebrew words, *gever* (“man of strength”) and *ameeth* (“an associate”). Here is another O.T. prophecy of the Incarnate God, the Son. This is the Good Shepherd who was at that time “standing beside God as his Associate.” But this shepherd was to be smitten (see Isa. 53:1-12), and as a result the “sheep would be scattered.” This Shepherd is of the very essence of God (Col. 1:19; 2:9; Heb. 1:1-3; 5:8-9; Phil. 2:5-11; John 1:1-18). The command “smite the shepherd” points out that which was done was “by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God” (Acts 2:23; Heb. 10:1-10). Upon the smiting of the shepherd the sheep were scattered. Jesus quoted this and applied it to himself and the scattering of his disciples (Matt. 26:31-32; Mk. 14:27)—therefore, like Zech. 11:4ff, and 12:10, this prophecy can look only to the Messiah for its fulfillment, and can find it in none other! Judgment and refining of “the sheep” will follow the smiting of the shepherd. Two thirds (which indicates a major portion of the people) would be “cut off and die.” The remaining third would continue. This “third” part would be separated from the others and would pass through the fire of trials and afflictions. Through these trials they would be tested, refined, and purified as are silver and gold. The 2/3 symbolizes the majority of the Jews who rejected the Messiah when he came and were destroyed by the Romans in A.D. 70. The 1/3 symbolizes those Jews who repented (3000 on the Day of Pentecost, and later thousands more) and became the Christians converted in the book of Acts and to whom the apostle Paul wrote in the book of Hebrews. The 1/3 (Christian-Jews, plus Gentiles—the “new Israel” Gal. 6:15-16 and “new Zion” Heb. 12:22ff) were to undergo “fiery trials” (1 Pet. 1:6-7; 4:12; Acts 14:22; Heb. chs. 10 and 12; Rev. chs. 1-20). The church of Christ will be undergoing trial of some kind, whether of persecution, false teaching, or the temptation to fleshly indulgence, until Jesus comes at the end of time. **LET THE CHURCH PREPARE HERSELF FOR THIS BY FEEDING ON THE “MEAT” OF THE WORD** (Heb. 5:11-14).

The refining and purging introduced by the prophet in 13:8-9 in which the 2/3 would be cut off is continued under the highly symbolic and metaphorical picture of Jerusalem’s assault. “A day of the Lord was to come” in which the Lord would manifest himself to his people in a special way. Again, this is pointing to the spiritual Jerusalem as the capital of Christ’s spiritual kingdom (Heb. 12:22; Gal. 4:26), and of the assault upon it by the world. Daniel described just such an attack on the saints by the “little horn” of the fourth world power (ancient Rome) in which the saints were given into his hand (Dan. 7:21). The book of Acts and the Epistles confirm this as an assault on the church mainly by the Jews until the end of the first century A.D. The apostle John concludes this was also fulfilled in the persecution of the saints by imperial Rome (Rev. 13:7ff) from A.D. 100 to 500 (see our comments in the Sunday School lessons on Revelation). This attack by the world on Christ’s spiritual kingdom (the church) affords the Lord an opportunity to go forth and fight against those nations and in defense of his own city and people (see Rev. 11 and 19). As the Lord had fought for Israel in the past, he would fight for the church during the assault upon her.

The presence of the Lord is indicated by his standing “in that day” in which he fights for his church against the enemy nations, as the Lord being “upon the Mount of Olives which is before Jerusalem.” The purpose of his standing upon the Mount of Olives is that the Lord may provide a means of salvation for his saints. Half the mountain will (metaphorically) remove toward the north and half toward the south. By this great symbolic valley the people of the besieged “city” (church) may flee. John, in his Book of Revelation, represents the church “given two wings of the great eagle that she might fly from the serpent into the wilderness, to the place where she is to be nourished for a time, and times, and half a time (i.e. 350 years—from A.D. 100 to 450/500). The Lord stood by his saints as they were scattered from Jerusalem (Acts 8); he brought literal Jerusalem to an end by the Romans (Matt. 24:1-34) at which time the Christians who believed Jesus’s predictions about the destruction of literal Jerusalem fled from the city to Pella, beyond the Jordan in the Decapolis; he cast the beast and the false prophet, and the harlot (the Roman empire) into the lake of fire (Rev. 19:11-21) all the while the “woman” (the church) was in the “wilderness” (the Roman empire) being “nourished” and saved. That is what all this “catastrophic,” apocalyptic, symbolic picture is about—not the 2nd coming of Christ! The O.T. prophets concerned themselves and their message with the FIRST COMING OF THE MESSIAH and not the second coming. Why would they even mention his 2nd coming when it was so difficult for them (and even for Jesus and the apostles) to convince the Jews that Jesus’s first coming was the fulfillment of the Messianic age? There would be no edifying factor in writing large portions of their prophecies about the second coming of Christ and leave only a few words about his first coming, his redemptive work, and the character of his kingdom (the church)!!! The Lord announces the “plague” that will fall “on that day” (the Messianic age) upon the peoples who war against his spiritual Jerusalem. They will experience a living death as their flesh rots away while they stand upon their feet—they are dead while they live. The curse of the Lord will rest upon those who would curse his saints.

Out of the judgment of the Lord upon those who tried to destroy his spiritual Jerusalem (the church) which is the “apple of his eye,” a remnant will turn to the Lord. These will “keep the feast of tabernacles” as they “go up from year to year to worship the King.” This can only mean that under the Messiah the converted Jews and Gentiles will be one people and both will worship the Lord according to his prescribed service. The literal feast of tabernacles, held in the 7th month, was the festival of rejoicing and thanksgiving. It was the time when the Jews literally dwelt in booths in memory of the Lord’s deliverance from bondage and the care of his people in the wilderness wanderings (Lev. 23:39-44). It is used by Zechariah as a symbol portraying the rejoicing and thanksgiving of the church for its deliverance from its enemies. Jesus used the Jewish feast of tabernacles to symbolize the fulfillment of his first coming as the coming of the Living Water and the Light of Life (John 7-9). Paul used the Passover feast to symbolize the whole Christian life (1 Cor. 5:6-8). Upon those of the earth who go not up to worship the King, the Lord, “upon them there shall be no rain.” These will live in a perpetual spiritual desert, for in Christ and in him only is found “every spiritual blessing” (Eph. 1:3). Egypt had long symbolized the great enemy of God’s people and had been a synonym for bondage and captivity. The Lord promised in Isaiah (19:23-25) that he would provide a highway out of Egypt and that she would be a “third” with Israel and Assyria; all would stand as equals before him. If “Egypt” (those from whom God’s people were delivered of their

bondage) refused to go up there would be no rain upon it; instead, the Lord would smite her with the plague pronounced upon the nations that reject his offer and go not up to the feasts. This will be the fate not only of Egypt, but of all nations who follow her example and refuse to “keep the feasts of thanksgiving” (i.e., worship) to the Lord, Jesus Christ. This is in full and complete harmony with the word of earlier prophets (e.g. Isa. 60:12; Micah 5:15—both are in Messianic contexts). “In that day” (the Messianic age) everything that pertains to the kingdom of God will be holy to him—everything formerly consecrated to war and secular usage will be consecrated to holiness. All distinctions between instruments and ministries of service would be abolished. Nor would there be a “Canaanite”, one who is unclean and unredeemed, and thereby devoted to destruction, found in the house of the Lord. These wonderful and glorious promises (although couched in highly symbolic, apocalyptic and metaphorical language) are realized in the church of Christ today. Every individual and every principle of worship and service has been cleansed and dedicated by the blood of Christ (Matt. 26:28). In Christ there is no distinction; all have sinned and all have been redeemed by him (Rom. 3:21-26). The church thus cleansed and sanctified is going to be presented to Christ “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). This certainly can be said only of the church—not some re-established literal Israel in some re-built literal temple, in a literal Jerusalem, with a literal priesthood.

Introduction to Paul T. Butler Th.D

Paul was born in Springfield Missouri and graduated from Conway High School prior to enlistment in the US Navy. He began serious bible study with correspondence courses from San Jose Bible College. He later enrolled in Ozark Bible College and acquired his Bachelor of Theology degree June of 1961. He received a Master of Biblical Literature degree from Ozark in May of 1973. He received a Doctorate of Theology from The Theological University of America in October of 1990.

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