

"The righteous . . . shall grow
like a cedar in Lebanon"

Psalm 92:12

Reading Companion to the Book of

Zechariah

"So they read in the book in the law of God . . .
and caused them to understand the reading"
Nehemiah 8:8

By

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Preface

The contents of this book were part of a course in the Bible College at New Germany Baptist Church. In order to make these materials more easily useable for further class use we have kept the class divisions used in the course. Listed separately in the Table of Contents you will find the starting pages for both the 17 class portions and as well the 14 chapters of Zechariah.

This is a book of prophecy concerning our Lord Jesus Christ, both in His first and second comings. Helpful toward a good understanding of this most interesting Bible book is a foundational awareness of the books of Daniel and Revelation. The three books together are a stunning study of *"things to come".* The Apostle John wept when he could not know the contents of the sealed book in God's hand in Revelation 5. May we approach our study of God's eternal words with the same earnest passion to know and understand all that our God has revealed.

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"And the LORD
shall be King
over all the earth"

(Zech. 14:9)

Class 1 - Introduction

The last three books in our English Old Testament are the last of the writing prophets to minister during the Old Testament (O.T.) era. These three books of Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi are commonly called the "post-exilic" prophets because the ministry of all three came after (post) the return of the Jews from exile in Babylon. We find the setting for these three last prophets in the historical books of Ezra and Nehemiah, two of the main leaders of the post-exilic period (Ezra 5:1; 6:14). The other two main leaders of that era of Israel's history were;

- Zerubbabel – Appointed governor of Judea by Cyrus upon their return from Babylon (Ezra 5:14). He was the grandson of King Jehoiachin (I Chron. 3:17-19).

- Joshua – The high priest (Zech. 3:1). He was the son of Jehozadak, the high priest when Judah was taken to Babylon.

The empire of Babylon under Nebuchadnezzar had destroyed Jerusalem and taken captive the Jewish people of Judah. When the Medo-Persian Empire conquered Babylon 70 years later and Cyrus came to the throne, the Jews were allowed to return to

Judah with a motivation from Cyrus to rebuild the temple and city of Jerusalem. About 50,000 Jews returned at that time.

Haggai was the first prophet of God to be heard by that returned colony, joined by Zechariah two months later. Compare Haggai 1:1 with Zechariah 1:1. Malachi's ministry came much later. The main thrust of the messages of both Haggai and Zechariah was to stir up the Jewish people to put their hearts and backs to the Lord's work, particularly to finish building the temple, a construction project that had remained unfinished for a decade and a half when these two prophets were sent by the Lord. Theirs was a call to their people away from selfish materialism and indifference to the Lord's things.

Ezra relates in his book how opposition arose with the initial effort under Zerubbabel to rebuild the temple (Ezra 4);

- Upon the arrival of the Jews in Judah they quickly cleared away the rubble and laid the temple foundation.
- The people of the area (Samaritans) offered their help as the temple work began. These local people were a mixed race of Jews and

Assyrians who were settled in the area decades before (II Ki. 17:24ff). Thus their religion was a mixture of pure and pagan.

- Therefore the offer was firmly declined by the Jewish leaders, fearing compromise!

- With this the would-be helpers turned hinderers in their angry resentment over Jewish exclusiveness. Hiring advocates they turned things to a legal wrangle, bringing the temple project to a halt in the process.

- As soon as Cyrus was out of the picture at the Persian capital a formal letter of complaint was lodged by the Samaritans, and was upheld by the new administration. Thus an official restraining order was placed upon further construction of the temple or city of Jerusalem.

- With the arrival of Haggai and Zechariah, bringing God's rebuke for their lethargy, the temple work began again in spite of illegalities.

- The local Samaritans sent off another letter of complaint to the powers that be (Ezra 5). But the administration, now under Darius, found and confirmed Cyrus's old decree to build (Ezra 6).

- Not only was permission granted to carry on with the temple project, but those bitter opponents were commanded to help finance the work out of their tribute money (Ezra 6:8-9). And as to anyone who would dare to alter the king's decree, a gallows was to be made of timber from his own house, he executed by hanging from that gallows, and his house then made into a dung heap (Ezra 6:11)!

- Four years later the job of building the temple was done (Ezra 6:14).

It is evident that the returning Jews were a bit too willing to be stopped in their temple rebuilding project, too eager to turn their full attention to their own lands and houses and concerns. Very little resistance do we see in them toward the resistance raised up against them. We find no inspiring tenacity or fight in Zerubbabel as we see later in Nehemiah, though the returning Jews possessed every right from the Persian government to rebuild their temple and capital city. How quickly they had fallen into an attitude of selfish indifference to the Lord's things. How easy for us to fall to the same. Quick they were to see to their *own* things, while at the same time content to leave the Lord's interests to fall to neglect and idleness. Thus God sent this

potent pair of prophets to bring His rebuke to this self-serving mindset.

Irving Jensen suggests the following dates and sequence of events;

- 606 B.C. – The first invasion of Babylon.
- 536 B.C. – The first return of some 50,000 Jews under Zerubbabel (Ezra 1:5-2:70).
- 536-535 B.C. – Altar built at Jerusalem and temple foundation laid (Ezra 3:1-13).
- 535-534 B.C. – Opposition arose from neighbouring Samaritans (Ezra 4).
- 534 B.C. – Temple construction stopped (Ezra 4:24).
- 536-520 B.C. – Zerubbabel serving as governor and Joshua as high priest (Haggai 1:1).
- 520 B.C. – Haggai, and then Zechariah, prophesied and the temple project resumed in spite of opposition (Ezra 5).
- 516 B.C. – Temple completed (Ezra 6:14-15).

Zechariah apparently served as a priest as well as a prophet in Jerusalem, having returned with the

exiles under Zerubbabel (compare 1:1 with Nehemiah 12:1, 4, 16).

As with Haggai, the thrust of Zechariah's ministry was to move the people to set the Lord and His things in priority, especially to finish the temple construction in Jerusalem. Yet Zechariah's approach is very different. There is a strong emphasis on things future in this book, particularly on Jesus Christ and His coming. Dr. Charles Ryrie suggests there is more predicted of Jesus Christ in the book of Zechariah than in any other of the prophetic books except Isaiah's, a book 6 times as long. The Lord, through Zechariah, sought to set the hope of His people upon their coming Messiah in spite of the sorry state of the nation at that time. He wished to instil in them a will to make practical preparations now in the light of that *"blessed hope".* The very same lessons are valid and vital for us as well.

Consider some of the prophesies of Jesus the Messiah in Zechariah's book;

- The "BRANCH" (3:8; 6:12).
- The King and Priest (6:13). Compare in Hebrews 6:20-7:1, Jesus, as Melchizedek, *"made an High Priest for ever"* and *"King of*

Salem".

- The lowly King coming on a donkey (9:9-10). Compare Matthew 21:4-5; John 12:14-16.
- The Saviour sold out for silver, and the potter's field purchased (11:12-13). Compare Matthew 27:9.
- Israel looking upon Him *"whom they have pierced"* (12:10). Compare John 19:37.
- The cleansing fountain opened (13:1).
- The smitten Shepherd and scattered sheep (13:7). Compare Matthew 26:31.
- Christ's 2nd coming in glory, Armageddon, and the Millennial Kingdom (chapter14).

Outline

- Chapter 1-6 – Eight Visions.
    - Note the reflections of some of these in Revelation.
- Chapter 7-8 – Question & Answers concerning fastings,
- Chapter 9-14 – Two Burdens.
    - This portion is where the bulk of things yet future is found.

Highlights

Chapter 3

- Satan stands to resist every man who stands for the Lord (3:1). Compare vs. 5, where the angel of the Lord stands by as well. With every effort to hinder there is adequate help for the one standing for the Lord.
- Every saved soul is *"a brand plucked out of the fire"* (3:2), now with a clean change of clothes (3:3-5). Compare Jude 23.

Chapter 4

- Note the specific promises in this chapter;
    - Temple completed by divine power (vs. 6).
    - All opposition removed (vs. 7).
    - Successful completion (vs. 7).
    - Zerubbabel's hands to finish the work (vs. 9).
    - God's word to be fulfilled and Zechariah affirmed as His prophet (vs. 9).
    - Criticism to be silenced, and all to rejoice (vs. 10).

Chapter 9

- Matthew 21:4-5 records the fulfilment of Zechariah 9:9…or does it? What is missing in Matthew's quote, and why?

Chapter 12

- Here is national repentance of Israel at Christ's return (12:9-14).

Chapter 13

- National *cleansing* of Israel at Christ's return (13:1).

Chapter 14

- Vs. 1-7 – The return of Jesus Christ.
- Vs. 8-11 & 16-21 – The millennial kingdom on earth.
- Vs. 12-15 – The battle of Armageddon.

"Therefore thus saith the LORD;
I am returned to Jerusalem
with mercies:
my house shall be built in it,
saith the LORD of hosts..."

(Zec 1:16)

Class 2 – Zechariah 1:1-17

Zec 1:1 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,

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As mentioned earlier, the prophecy of this book of Zechariah is strongly Messianic or centred on Jesus Christ. It is a book often quoted in the New Testament (N.T.), for the Lord through Zechariah had much to say about Christ's comings, especially His 2nd coming. More specifics are foretold of Jesus in these 14 chapters than the combined prophecy of all the rest of the Minor Prophets. The many visions and symbols in Zechariah's book make the work of interpretation an interesting challenge.

1:1-6 – *"Turn ye unto Me"*

Vs. 1 – This beginning of Zechariah's prophecies came to the remnant of Judah in the 8th month (Marchesvan) of the 2nd year of Darius. Therefore we understand that Zechariah began his ministry between Haggai's 3rd message in the 7th month of that year (Hag. 2:1-9) and his final two messages in the 9th month (Hag. 2:10-23). That the dates of these prophecies would be reckoned according to

the king of Persia rather than according to the reign of Jewish kings as before the captivity points up an interesting fact. These post-exilic times are now *"the times of the Gentiles"* (Lk. 21:24), that era when Israel's sovereignty over her land and capital city is not entirely her own. That era begun with Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon and extending to the end of Antichrist's reign with Christ's return. This of course is why the Lord first began to lay out the basic outline of Gentile kingdoms through Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Daniel 2 at the outset of this era. The prophetic profile given there extends from Nebuchadnezzar's reign through to Christ's return to His kingdom, pictured in Nebuchadnezzar's dream as the stone cut without hands coming from heaven to earth and forcefully striking the image of earthly kingdoms at the feet, at its final stage. The entire structure is then crumbled and gone, with Christ's kingdom then filling the whole earth. Only then at Christ's return will Jerusalem at last be fully liberated from Gentile control, and the recording of time will ever after be reckoned according to the reign of the King of kings, Jesus Christ.

"Zechariah…the son of Iddo" – Iddo was listed among the priests who returned with the remnant from Babylon 16 years prior (Neh. 12:4). Being

Zec 1:2 The LORD hath been sore displeased with your fathers.

Iddo's grandson, Zechariah was born of the priestly line, and thus was both prophet and priest. This as well would perhaps make Zechariah quite a young man to be so used of the Lord as a prophet. But then Samuel also became the Lord's spokesman at an early age (I Sam. 3).

Vs. 2 – The Lord calls His people to full awareness of the extent of His *"sore"* anger with their forefathers, as seen in the severity of His judgment upon them. The magnitude of the Lord's anger is strongly emphasized here in the original Hebrew. The literal phrase here in vs. 2 is "indignant the LORD upon your fathers (with) indignation". The Hebrew language tends to place first in the sentence the point to be emphasized. And the doubled form of "angry with anger" is a Hebrew idiom adding even greater emphasis. The Lord was not a little displeased with that generation He destroyed or took captive through Babylon. The reality and threat of this must be fully grasped by the new generation if they would continue in the fear of God. Compare in Lamentations 3:17-22 the record of when *"in the day of the LORD's anger none escaped nor remained".*

Zec 1:3 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.

Vs. 3 – Here is the classic call of God's prophets and the theme of this book, the call to repentance. This is God's characteristic representation to the nation of Israel and to mankind as a whole in every age through His messengers. We find words almost the same in Malachi 3, *"Return unto Me, and I will return unto you, saith the LORD of hosts"* (vs. 7). We see the same focus on the need for turning or repentance in God's N.T. messengers as well (Matt. 3:2; 4:17; Acts 2:38; 17:30; 20:21). If man would enjoy the benefits of the hope God lays out before him in the future through His sure prophecies, he must come to a genuine turn of heart to God and appeal to Him for His cleansing. Repentance from sin and saving faith are two sides of the same coin. This book of Zechariah is a book of great hope, as is every book of God's prophecy. Indeed the whole of God's Book is a book of hope for lost mankind. But only for the soul who will heed the Lord's earnest plea here to *"turn ye unto Me"*. For only in such a humble turning is the promise of God found, *"and I will turn unto you"*. Only at that point of believing and turning does God's wrath turn to mercy and

Zec 1:4 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.

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hope.

"Look unto Me, and be ye saved, all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else" (Isa. 45:22).

Notice the name *"the LORD of hosts"* three times in this verse. He is the Lord of armies, the Almighty. This is the same name of God featuring so prominently in Haggai, and found now over 50 times in this book of Zechariah. They (we) must understand who it is demanding their repentance. Because it is *"the LORD of hosts"* calling them, there can be no question of disobedience or even delay in turning to Him from their evil ways. Even so with the same authority of the same Almighty One we are to proclaim the truth of His words to our own generation, calling still to repentance and truth.

Vs. 4 – *"Be not as your fathers"* – This is the 2nd time the mention of *"your fathers"* (vs. 2). In fact 4 times Zechariah refers to them in this introductory sermon. This is all about the failure of their fathers,

seeking to lead this new generation to learn from past blunders. The most notable lesson from history is that it repeats itself! As well, history and tradition must not be the standard of conduct we follow. Rather God's words, His accounting of what pleases Him, must be the standard of right for every generation. And what was the core failing of their fathers? They would not *"hear, nor hearken unto"* the Lord, neither to His written words nor to His words sent verbally to them through *"the former prophets"*, the Lord's pre-exilic spokesmen. So again, Zechariah now brought to this current generation the same the Lord's previous messengers had brought to the former generation, the same that God's true messengers are to bring to every age of men, the same I bring to you, the call to "*turn ye now from your evil ways, and your evil doings"*. Their *"evil <u>ways</u>"* the broader description, taking in attitude, thoughts, purposes, wishes, plans, etc., leading on to the practical expression of evil ways in *"evil <u>doings</u>"* or deeds. Both *"ways"* and *"doings",* attitudes and actions must be self-judged and brought to the Lord in sincere repentance in search of His mercy. Thus saith *"the LORD of hosts",* backed with all of the authority of God Almighty! *"Seek 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" (Isa. 55:6-7). *"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).

Do not miss the stamp of authority the Lord puts upon the words of all His prophets here. When His people refused to hear the words and warnings of those men it was in fact the Lord Himself they were refusing to *"hearken unto…saith the LORD".*

Vs. 5-6 – *"But My words…"* – Hear the meaning. Though God's servants who actually spoke or wrote the words are long since dead, yet the *words* remain and were shown to be wholly accurate, for they are the very words of the eternal God. Though man and his purposes, whether good or bad, be temporary and passing, yet God and His words are eternal and sure. And man's window of opportunity is relatively brief, either to proudly resist God as *"your fathers"*

Zec 1:6 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.

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or to humbly serve God as did *"the prophets"*. *"All flesh is grass…the grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever"* (Isa. 40:6-8; compare Ps. 103:15-17). It is our wisdom to *"redeem the time"* while we have it. Oh the heartache of opportunity forever lost!

"Did they not take hold of your fathers?" – Is it not true that all that the Lord spoke to your fathers overtook them just as He warned? Compare Deuteronomy 28:15, 45. Even those preserved in Babylon *"returned"* or were forced to turn and admit that the Lord *"dealt with us"* just as He had said. It is strong warning indeed for every soul upon earth!

"O earth, earth, earth, hear the word of the LORD" (Jer. 22:29).

Though the remnant had so recently turned to renewed delight in the Lord's business under Haggai's ministry, still Zechariah's words indicate that things were not entirely right with them. As

Zec 1:7 Upon the four and twentieth day of the eleventh month, which is the month Sebat, 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,

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well, it was an effort at spiritual inoculation, even as Haggai's final two messages to the people and leader were more confirmatory in purpose, seeking to shore them up against a future turning from their right walk. Though they may have been less in need of Zechariah's stirring challenge then, they would need it later.

1:7-17 – 1st Vision – Red Horse Rider

After the prophet's opening sermon, calling his people to an ongoing attitude of repentance, there follows now a series of 8 visions in these first 6 chapters. These visions, while providing immediate instruction and comforts, tend to look to the future day of Israel's restored kingdom under her Messiah when *"the times of the Gentiles"* at last come to an end. Understand how this was a vital message of encouragement for such a weak little remnant, huddled on the back side of what is happening, under the most imposing Gentile rule. Their once great city was only scattered rubble. Their once glorious temple was little more than a plan, and that

Zec 1:8 I saw by night, and behold a man riding upon a red horse, and he stood among the myrtle trees that were in the bottom; and behind him were there red horses, speckled, and white.

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quite plain. Has-been's, looking very little like will-be's at that point in the nation's existence. How these people of God needed to understand that God would *"shake all nations, and the Desire of all nations shall come"* (Hag. 2:7).

Vs. 7 – *"The four and twentieth day of the eleventh month"* – This is now 3 months after Zechariah's 1st sermon, and 2 months after Haggai's final sermon, to the day (Hag. 2:10).

Vs. 8 – *"I saw by night"* – Though it was night Zechariah does not say this was a dream. Perhaps it was more a vision or trance such as Peter's at Joppa in Acts 10. What he saw;

- A man sitting on a red horse standing among myrtle trees.
- The rider was *"in the bottom"* or in a low place.
- Behind him were other horses of various colours, apparently also with riders.

Zec 1:9 Then said I, O my lord, what are these? And the angel that talked with me said unto me, I will shew thee what these be.

What it means – The focus is on the first rider mentioned, who in vs. 11 & 12 is called *"the angel of the LORD"*. This is Jesus Himself it would seem, revealed now to His prophet in vision. That He stands in a low place likely speaks of the low point of Israel's existence at that time, in contrast to the great Gentile nations who were then riding the crest. Israel was certainly in a place of deep humiliation, as throughout most all of *"the times of the Gentiles"*. Yet do not miss how the Lord stands there in that low place *with* them, even as that *"one like unto the Son of Man"* walking with Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the midst of the burning fiery furnace (Dan. 3). The Lord stands with us in our lows and woes, bringing the assurance that we will be standing with Him in the high point of His exaltation.

Look well at the reminder that our God is never unaware of our heartaches, nor is He ever distant. Yet we, as this remnant, must see His closeness only through eyes of faith, through the pen of His seer or prophet.

Zec 1:10 And the man that stood among the myrtle trees answered and said, These are they whom the LORD hath sent to walk to and fro through the earth.
Zec 1:11 And they answered the angel of the LORD that stood among the myrtle trees, and said, We have walked to and fro through the earth, and, behold, all the earth sitteth still, and is at rest.

Vs. 10-11 – *"We have walked to and fro through the earth"* – The other riders depict the patrolling work of the angels, ever involved in active surveillance of the world situation and the governments of the nations (Dan. 10:13, 20), particularly as they relate to the nation of Israel, keeping abreast of the precise state of affairs. These make their report to the Lord, that *"all the earth sitteth still, and is at rest"*. This reflects the relative peace within the Persian Empire at that time, but perhaps points as well to that coming day when the people of earth *"shall say, Peace and safety"* before *"sudden destruction cometh upon them"* (I Thess. 5:3). God had spoken through Haggai of a coming day of shaken nations (Hag. 2:21-22). Though there was not the least indication at that time of the nations being shaken before the restoration of Israel to kingdom blessing, yet the Lord was still not the least bit out of touch with the situation. He ever keeps Himself fully informed.

Zec 1:12 Then the angel of the LORD answered and said, O LORD of hosts, how long wilt thou not have mercy on Jerusalem and on the cities of Judah, against which thou hast had indignation these threescore and ten years?
Zec 1:13 And the LORD answered the angel that talked with me with good words and comfortable words.
Zec 1:14 So the angel that communed with me said unto me, Cry thou, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; I am jealous for Jerusalem and for Zion with a great jealousy.

Vs. 12 – *"How long wilt Thou not have mercy on Jerusalem"* – After more than two millennia the devout are still asking it of the Lord, for Jerusalem is still held under Gentile thumb. The 70 years mentioned here refers to the Babylonian captivity, that being the starting point of Israel's dominance by Gentile nations.

Vs. 13 – *"Good words and comfortable words"* – The response of God to this query of *"how long"* is to give several comments offering comfort to the remnant through Zechariah's vision.

Vs. 14 – *"I am jealous…with a great jealousy"* – Again there is here a duplication of terms, as in vs. 2, expressing the great magnitude of God's jealousy for His place and people, and now with the adjective *"great"* added to tip the power of His emotion even

Zec 1:15 And I am very sore displeased with the heathen that are at ease: for I was but a little displeased, and they helped forward the affliction.

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higher. God is *exceedingly passionate* for His people in their condition. It speaks of their exceeding dearness to Him. *They were not forgotten after all!* And it speaks of His great anger toward those abusing them. They are still as the apple of His eye, and He does not take lightly those touching ones so dear to Him. This is the exceedingly comforting point God brings to his trampled people

Vs. 15 – "*I am very sore displeased…"* – Again the Lord's anger is expressed in the most intense of terms. This time His displeasure is with the nations at ease, and arising from His jealousy for His people. He is thoroughly incensed with the abusive nations living in tranquillity and quite pleased with themselves. Though He was already displeased with the nations through their abuse of His dear ones, they had now stirred Him to greatest displeasure! And as His former displeasure with His own people had most certainly resulted in His searing wrath upon them, even so His hottest displeasure with the nations would and will yet attract the stroke of His just judgment. *"Here is the*

Zec 1:16 Therefore thus saith the LORD; I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies: my house shall be built in it, saith the LORD of hosts, and a line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem.

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patience and the faith of the saints" for every age. Justice will be done, for *"I will recompense, saith the LORD"*. The believing remnant could rest in this word of assurance from their God. Such words are especially applicable to the final birth pangs of *"the times of the Gentiles"*, the closing days of Antichrist in the Great Tribulation period, just before Christ's return to His earthly kingdom. The shuddering agony of that time will at last bring forth Jesus Christ to His kingdom of peace. And in that day our God will reveal the full measure of His fearful wrath upon the sinful nations of men.

"For our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:29).

"Thine hand shall find out all Thine enemies: Thy right hand shall find out those that hate Thee. Thou shalt make them as a fiery oven in the time of Thine anger: the LORD shall swallow them up in His wrath, and the fire shall devour them" (Ps. 21:8-9).

Vs. 16 – *"I am returned to Jerusalem with mercies"* – Though there have been partial fulfilments of this, the ultimate will be these words in Christ's mouth and heart upon His return to earth in glory, spoken

at last to the redeemed remnant of Israel.

"My house shall be built in it" – Israel would not be forsaken or left to wither and die, do you see? They will most certainly possess their land and city and temple site at the last with the glorious millennial temple of Ezekiel 40-42 built there. The fear of Israel fading to obscurity and even to extinction would have been a common anxiety among the poor and feeble returned remnant of that day, in contrast to their wealthier cousins of the Diaspora still scattered and prospering throughout the Persian Empire. It is a fear the faithless of Israel still ponder in this day. It is a fear the faithless Amillennialist nurtures through his twisted view of God's promises. But God gives His assurance concerning *"Mount Zion, which He loves"* with a word, ***"My house shall be built in it"***. He has spoken. All ye faithless, be silent!

"A line shall be stretched forth upon Jerusalem" – This is a measuring line, speaking of examination before reconstruction. Compare Nehemiah 2:12ff. The more immediate fulfilment of this would come through the leadership of Nehemiah (Neh. 6). The fuller and final fulfilment in Christ's earthly kingdom and the New Jerusalem to follow. This measuring rod is seen again in Revelation 11, when

Zec 1:17 Cry yet, saying, Thus saith the LORD of hosts; My cities through prosperity shall yet be spread abroad; and the LORD shall yet comfort Zion, and shall yet choose Jerusalem.

John is bidden to measure the temple in imminent anticipation of this happy hope.

Vs. 17 – The Lord was and is not done with His land and city. His people shall yet experience overflowing abundance. It is that day when *"all the nations shall flow to…the mountain of the house of the Lord"* (Isa. 2:2). It is that day Jesus spoke of, when they *"shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord"* (Matt. 23:39). It is that day of which Hosea prophesied, when the Lord will give *"the valley of Achor for a door of hope: and she shall sing there"* (Hosea 2:15). The day when the Lord shall *"give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness…that He might be glorified"* (Isa. 61:3).

"The LORD…shall yet choose Jerusalem" – Could there ever be a day when these words would no longer be true? Even after Israel's rejection and murder of her Messiah? Indeed they are His chosen people *forever!* The Lord shall yet choose them and mercy them as He has clearly promised, despite any

indications otherwise. No point of the nation's history is so low that this promise does not continue to stand like a sentinel between He and His people Israel. *"For the gifts and calling of God are without repentance"* (Rom. 11:29). If God should find cause to sidestep His promises to Israel of old, how could we ever find hope in His promises to us?

The wonderful assurance of this 1st vision of Zechariah, both to Israel and to us, is that things are not as they appear to be on the surface. The Lord is aware and watchful and His ancient promises still stand, though we see little evidence of it with our physical eyes.

Class 3 – Zechariah 1:18-2:13

After Zechariah's opening sermon these first 6 chapters of his book are largely the record of 8 visions communicated to and through God's prophet. In his first vision (1:7-17) Zechariah saw a rider on a red horse in a low place with other horsemen behind. It is a picture of the Lord through His angels ever keeping Himself abreast of the world situation, especially as it relates to the nation of Israel. Though they as a nation *"were in the bottom"*, in a very low place in their national history, yet the Lord was there with them and aware of them. With the question of *"how long"* before He would mercy Jerusalem and Judah the Lord answered *"with good words and comfortable words"* (vs. 13);

- That He remained intensely passionate (*"jealous"*) for Jerusalem (vs. 14).
- That He was greatly displeased with the oppressing nations (vs. 15).
- That He would return and rebuild His house and city (vs. 16).
- That His chosen would yet know abounding prosperity and comfort (vs. 17).

All pointing toward ultimate fulfilment in Christ's

Zec 1:18 Then lifted I up mine eyes, and saw, and behold four horns.
Zec 1:19 And I said unto the angel that talked with me, What be these? And he answered me, These are the horns which have scattered Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem.

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return to His Millennial kingdom.

1:18-21 – 2nd Vision – Four Horns & Carpenters

Vs. 18 – *"Then lifted I up mine eyes"* – The impression is given that this vision now comes immediately on the heels of the last.

"I…saw, and behold four horns" – These are horns of an animal of some type, though the animal itself does not feature in what Zechariah saw.

Vs. 19 – With Zechariah's question as to *"What be these?"* the angel speaking to him gave as much of an interpretation as the prophet would receive. These four horns represented powers having a scattering effect over Judah, Israel, and Jerusalem. A horn is a common biblical symbol of the strength of a nation or individual (I Ki. 22:11; Jer. 48:25). Now understand that the prophecies of Daniel would have been fresh in the minds of these people, they having so recently come from Babylon where

Daniel's influence was well known. In comparing Scripture with Scripture we must remember that in Daniel's chapter 7 vision he saw four beasts representing four kings or kingdoms. In that same chapter we also see that ten horns out of the 4th kingdom *"are ten kings that shall arise"* (Dan. 7:24; compare Rev. 17:12). So horns there represent the power of Gentile kings in their kingdoms. In Daniel 8 we see a similar representation. The ram with two horns there represents the Medo-Persian Empire, and the he-goat with *"notable horn"* a picture of Alexander the Great over the conquering nation of Greece. These kingdoms are named there. The Lord is given to depicting pagan nations as animals in His revelations through Daniel and their power or king as horns. So what do these four animal horns of Zechariah's vision represent? What else but the power of pagan nations, four of them? Who else but the same four great world powers so recently described in Daniel's chapter 7 vision, and represented as well in the great statue of Nebuchadnezzar's dream in Daniel 2? These are the four pagan nations following one after the other in their domination over Israel through the entire span of *"the times of the Gentiles"*, Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome. And as revealed in Daniel's prophecy, Rome will still be ruling in some way at the end in a revived form under Antichrist. These

Zec 1:20 And the LORD shewed me four carpenters.
Zec 1:21 Then said I, What come these to do? And he spake, saying, These are the horns which have scattered Judah, so that no man did lift up his head: but these are come to fray them, to cast out the horns of the Gentiles, which lifted up their horn over the land of Judah to scatter it.

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four nations would all have their day in dealing brutally with Israel, *"which have scattered"* God's people, nation, and city.

Vs. 20-21 – *"The LORD showed me four carpenters"* – The sense of the word behind *"carpenters"* is not confined only to those skilled at working with wood. These are craftsmen or skilled workers, the Lord's gifted technicians adequate for the task of terrifying (*"to fray them"*) and casting out each succeeding Gentile empire. Though for a time each of these nations *"sitteth still and…at ease"*, each will in turn come to their time of terror and trouble. Do you see? For every scattering horn of Gentile power raised up to oppress Israel there is a corresponding power skilled and adequate to bring it down. The Babylonian Empire came to its end through God's anointed servant in Cyrus of Persia, named by God over 2 centuries before his time (Isa. 44:28-45:1). The Medo-Persian Empire met their end in Alexander, that *"notable horn"* of Greece. The

Grecian Empire came to their end under the sandals of Rome. The Roman Empire will at last come to its end in the return of the King of kings. Indeed *"the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will"* (Dan. 4:32). Though it may appear to be only human powers bringing down each successive world empire, it is God's skilled work and workmen behind every human fall or rise,

What was the message for the Jewish people of Zechariah's day? Could the nation of Israel, in such a weakened condition under Gentile rule throughout these *"times of the Gentiles",* ever hope for victory over its oppressors? Would this people, though so small and weak *"so that no man did lift up his head"*, ever rise to their promised kingdom? Had they as a nation sinned God's promises right away? Yes, they could still hope for victory. No, they had not sinned away God's kingdom promises. Though they had fallen, they were not utterly cast down. Though there will come four horns, there will come God's four skilled craftsmen as well. Not *three* craftsmen, leaving Israel languishing under a remaining horn of oppression at the last. But *four* craftsmen. All coming with sufficient power to bring down *every* oppressing horn. The Lord's scatterers will themselves most certainly be scattered at the

Zec 2:1 I lifted up mine eyes again, and looked, and behold a man with a measuring line in his hand.
Zec 2:2 Then said I, Whither goest thou? And he said unto me, To measure Jerusalem, to see what is the breadth thereof, and what is the length thereof.

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last, *every one!* It was a message of encouragement, an uplifting word meant to carry God's people with happy hearts through the worst of times, in the lowest of low places.

2:1-13 – 3rd Vision – Man with Measuring Line

First a vision of our watching God, a vision of *God's* vision, with a word of hope for His demoralized people. Then a vision of assurance in Israel's final victory over every oppressing enemy. Now we find an expansion of the comforting words in 1:16-17, a picture of a rebuilding, expanding, and prospering Jerusalem and Judah in the last days.

Vs. 1 – Again we are given the impression of this vision following immediately on the last. And again *"a measuring line"* as we saw in 1:16, speaking of examination before reconstruction. Compare Ezekiel 40:2-3.

Vs. 2 – Zechariah in his vision speaks to this man

Zec 2:3 And, behold, the angel that talked with me went forth, and another angel went out to meet him,
Zec 2:4 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:

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directly, asking him of his purpose, which is to measure the breadth and length of Jerusalem. This is the Jerusalem of Christ's millennial kingdom as described with great detail in Ezekiel 40-48.

Vs. 4 – *"Run, speak to this young man"* – The haste expresses earnestness in delivering the good message. God would not be slow about bringing good news to His people. He is more excited than we are about good things for us. And then the typical Christian never even bothers to read or understand it! How earnest we should be in grasping all that God has done for us and so earnestly brings to our attention. And how earnest we should be in running the good news of His gospel to the world. Perhaps you have heard the same still, small voice of the Spirit whispering to you concerning the telling of God's good news to another, saying *"run, speak to this young man"*, like Philip with the Ethiopian Eunuch (Acts 8).

Again, it was a message of hope for this little remnant of God's people struggling to pull together the rubble of their ruined temple and city. The prophetic picture here presented was of the city of Jerusalem one day spreading beyond its walls and right out into the surrounding countryside. In fact, it will be a city without the protection of walls, because no longer would such be needed with the Lord become *"unto her a wall of fire round about"* in that day (vs. 5). No longer would human defences be needed, with swords and spears beaten into ploughshares and pruning hooks then. No longer needed with the transformed nature of predator animals (Isa. 11). No longer needed with the Lord's firm and fair rule with a rod of iron in that day. Life in modern South Africa is a kind of grace, that we might appreciate like few others that coming day when God *"will cause the evil beasts* [two-legged, four-legged, and otherwise] *to cease out of the land: and they shall dwell safely in the wilderness, and sleep in the woods"* (Ezek. 34:25).

Jerusalem shall spread right out of the city limits *"for the multitude of men and cattle therein".* This is an obvious prophetic picture of booming population and prosperity (Isa. 49:19-20). This promise would perhaps have had a more immediate fulfilment in Israel's history, but the ultimate answer will only

Zec 2:5 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.
Zec 2:6 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.
Zec 2:7 Deliver thyself, O Zion, that dwellest with the daughter of Babylon.

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come in the golden age of Christ's earthly kingdom.

Vs. 5 – Not only will the Lord surround His people with His protection, but as well He *"will be the glory in the midst of her",* both surrounding and centrepiece. The focus of man's attention and glorying will at last be where it should be.

Vs. 6 – *"Ho, ho…"* – These next 4 verses are a cry to God's children to escape from the nations, beginning with this earnest call to attention.

"Come forth, and flee" – Obviously this solemn call to flight implies looming judgment. As Noah and family escaped to the ark before the rain began. As Lot and family were called out to a safe distance before the fire fell. Compare John's similar call in Revelation 18:4-8 before the fall of Babylon.

Vs. 7 – *"Deliver thyself"* – We are called to personally

see to our own deliverance from the entanglements of the world (II Cor. 6-7). This is God's call out of Satan's corrupting world system, having both physical and moral implications in every age. The people of Israel were meant to return from Babylon upon their release by Cyrus. But only a very small fraction or remnant of them returned. The vast majority chose rather to remain in the ease and financial benefits of the world rather than to embrace the Lord's purpose for them as a nation. That majority of Jews who remained among the nations became the "Diaspora" or dispersion, the more worldly branch of Judaism. The same is true of every day. The temptation before God's own people will always be to neglect God's purposes for the advantages the world seems to offer. The call of God has always been to lead us out and away. God bids His children to forsake the world and give themselves in abandonment to Him and His cause. Most ignore His call, to their ultimate sorrow, becoming the more worldly branch of Christianity. Many will be those with *"great searchings of heart"*, who give some inward thought to the possibility of maybe someday making a move for God. But only the true remnant will ever actually get up and leave the world for Him, arising from their familiar ease, placing their faith in Jesus Christ, and then fully embracing His purpose on this earth. Though this

Zec 2:8 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.

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call to Israel was only partially heeded in the return of the remnant from Babylon, the response will be on a much more far-reaching, supernatural scale in the last days (Isa. 11:10-16; 48:20; 52:11; Jer. 51:6, 45).

Vs. 8 – Here is God's solemn warning to the scattering nations of earth that their judgment is sure. Notice is issued as well to the Rahabs and Ruths among them to make their exodus while they may.

"After the glory hath He sent Me" – Jesus Christ will be sent to God's glory in that day of His return, not for any human glory. For man's day, the era of man's greatness, will be over then. That will be *"the day of the Lord"*. God will be glorified in that day in that it will be another Gilgal, for all reproach upon Israel and the church will at last be rolled away then. All of God's seemingly impossible promises will indeed come to pass then for all to see. Our God will be seen in that day by both saved and unsaved as good for His word, to the last jot and tittle. He

will be shown to be quite able to handle the combined power of all that can be mustered under the sun. The marvellous depth of riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God will be known by all then. In all of these things God will be glorified. It is in pursuit of this purpose that Jesus will be sent in His return to earth.

"For he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of His eye" – *"Apple"* is an old term referring to the pupil or black aperture of the eye in the centre of the iris. The term "pupil" comes from the Latin, literally meaning "small boy". This in turn comes from the Hebrew word behind it here, which literally means "small man" (Deut. 32:10; Ps. 17:8), perhaps due to our small reflection visible in the pupil of another. The expression speaks of that part of the body most sensitive and precious. To "touch" is to handle with intention to hurt. It is the Lord's supreme sensitivity for His people that becomes evident in this well-known word of warning, and a warning it is! In the day the Lord at last arises to give answer to the abusing nations it will be displayed without question that He Himself has suffered with the suffering of His people. Even as Christ's words concerning the church when demanding of Saul of Tarsus *"why persecutest thou <u>Me</u>"* (Acts 9). Saul discovered that he was actually persecuting Jesus

Zec 2:9 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.

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in his bitter abuse of believers. To touch one was to touch the other. The evident lesson of the last day will be that God is indeed exceedingly jealous for His people after all (1:14). His closeness to that chosen nation is as if they were a part of Him, *a most sensitive part!* Those messing with them were in fact lifting their hand against God Himself. Though God has dealt severely with His chosen people, yet the grave mistake of assuming that He no longer cares for His own will become quite clear at the last. The warning is here and is clear for every hater and persecutor of God's people.

Vs. 9 – *"I will shake My hand upon them"* – With only a wave of God's hand servants shall be turned to spoilers. Pictured here is the ease with which God is able to turn the table upon the oppressors. His people, though under the thumb of the nations during these *"times of the Gentiles",* shall at last become masters over those who once ruled them. We have perhaps begun to see a hint of this today with the miracle of modern Israel, strong against her surrounding, seething enemies.

Zec 2:10 Sing and rejoice, O daughter of Zion: for, lo, I come, and I will dwell in the midst of thee, saith the LORD.

Zec 2:11 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 sent me unto thee.

Vs. 10 – *"Sing and rejoice"* – Compare Zephaniah 3:14-15. The day of Christ's return, when at last the *"King cometh",* will be the day of greatest joy and song for the redeemed (Zech. 9:9). Even *"the mountains and the hills shall break forth…into singing"* then, *"and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands"* (Isa. 55:12). For the Lord Himself will personally and tangibly *"dwell in midst of"* His people ever after (Rev. 21:3, three times *"with"*). Compare that great millennial hymn of praise in Isaiah 12 (vs. 5-6).

Vs. 11 – *"Many nations shall be joined"* – *"A great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues"* of both church and tribulation saints will also be a part of Christ's kingdom. For *"they shall come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God"*, as Jesus promised (Lk. 13:29). Compare

Zec 2:12 And the LORD shall inherit Judah his portion in the holy land, and shall choose Jerusalem again.

Isaiah 2:1-4; 14:1; 60:1-3; Zechariah 8:20-23. Time can never nullify God's ancient promise to Abraham that *"in thee shall all families of earth be blessed"* (Gen. 12:3).

"Thou shalt know that the LORD of hosts hath sent Me unto thee" – See also vs. 9. How prominent were such words in the mouth of Jesus throughout His earthly ministry. The phrase, *"Him/He that sent Me"* or *"The Father which hath sent Me"* is found some 40 times in John's gospel. It seems perhaps Jesus referred to these very words of the prophet when so describing Himself. Knowing and acknowledging that Jesus Christ is that one and only true Son of God having come down from God the Father is a matter of vital concern to God! Compare I John 4:2-3.

Vs. 12 – *"And the LORD…shall choose Jerusalem again"* – A return to 1:17. No point of the nation's history is so low, no remnant so small that this promise does not hold. No "replacement theory" of confused men can reverse such promises. For again, *"the gifts and calling of God are without*

repentance" (Rom. 11:29).

Vs. 13 – *"Be silent, O all flesh"* – God speaks to the whole world here, demanding their silence. Compare in Romans 3:19 every mouth stopped and all the world guilty before God. The raging nations of corrupt man will be brought to silence in that day when God is silent no more. Compare the conspicuous silence of Babylon at the last when finally fallen in Revelation 18:22-23. The book of Revelation is in fact the record of the day when our God will no longer be silent. This in answer to the cry of the righteous through the ages for God to speak His judgment over the injustices of men. Here again is hope for the oppressed. God *will* at last bring to an end the clamouring of arrogant man. He will eventually bring His 4th and final Craftsman against the oppressing, scattering nations of earth in that day when He finally arises to show Himself strong in behalf of His beleaguered people.

"In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting

destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of His power" (II Thess. 1:8-9).

God's promise of old concerning the nation of Israel stands; *"I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee"* (Gen. 12:3). He eventually brings an end to all who dare touch His own. History is the proof of it! His prophecy is full of it!

"Behold, I will bring forth
My Servant
the BRANCH"

(Zech. 3:8)

Class 4 – Zechariah 3

Zec 3:1 And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him.
Zec 3:2 And the LORD said unto Satan, The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan; even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?

3:1-10 – 4th Vision – Joshua the High Priest

Vs. 1-2 – The Accusation.

"He showed me Joshua" – The name "Joshua" is the Hebrew form of the English name "Jesus", meaning "Jehovah Saves" or "Jehovah is Salvation". In Joshua of the conquest we see that one who led his people into their Promised Land of rest. In Jesus we see that One who removes the sin of all who come to Him in faith, and leads the believer into eternal rest (Heb. 4). And now here is Joshua the high priest, poised in history between these two great "Joshua's", and standing before the Lord as the spiritual representative of his people, standing as representative of every believing child of faith, for we are all brands *"pluck out of the fire"* (Jude 23).

"And Satan standing…to resist him" – It is a needed

Zec 3:3 Now Joshua was clothed with filthy garments, and stood before the angel.
Zec 3:4 And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the filthy garments from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with change of raiment.

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reminder that whenever a child of God stands to lead in God's service, Satan will be there at his side to resist and seek to shut him down.

Vs. 2 – It would seem Satan thought he had good cause to stand as the adversary of Joshua and of the chosen people he represented, as we will soon see. But rather than that great resister meeting with the Lord's nodding agreement in his slanderous evaluation of Joshua and the defiled people he represented, he instead ran right into the Lord's stinging rebuke!

"The LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee" – The basis of the Lord's rebuke is His choosing, not only of Joshua but of Jerusalem, hinting at the larger image of the people of God represented by Joshua in the vision.

Vs. 3-5 – The Cleansing – Joshua stood there *"clothed with filthy garments"*, and therefore quite

Zec 3:5 And I said, Let them set a fair mitre upon his head. So they set a fair mitre upon his head, and clothed him with garments. And the angel of the LORD stood by.

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worthy of the accusations Satan brought against him. But to Satan's surprise the Lord stood with the man and the people behind him. Because they were the people of His choosing and for no other reason. It is what Balak and Balaam discovered as well in Numbers 23, when the Lord said in vs. 21, *"He hath not beheld iniquity in Jacob, neither hath he seen perverseness in Israel".* No man can earn righteousness, but only receives the gift of God's righteousness as He graciously grants this to one who believes in Him. Only when a soul at last turns to the Lord in genuine repentance and faith in the only Saviour, only then is perfect righteousness given. And there can be no convincing of the Lord to turn back from His choice to receive a believer, even through the sharpest argument on the cleverest tongue of that highest created being, Satan himself. That evil one, with all who are his, *meets only rebuke* when attempting to argue one of God's chosen ones out of His hand or fold. It is God's hold on us that we see depicted here in Zechariah's vision, in spite of our personal unworthiness. Filthy is the sinful soul standing before the

holy God to whom he has in humility come, with not the least merit in himself to fit him for God's presence. He stands silent, with no word of response in defence of himself against Satan's charge. What could he say? For he is *guilty as charged!* He stands as every human soul, with mouth stopped and *"guilty before God"* (Rom. 3:19). Joshua's silence is perhaps proof of his guilt. Yet with repentance, with humble appeal, with the simplicity of faith, with a casting of ourselves upon the Lord for His mercy, there is sure promise of cleansing and an eternal hiding place in His gracious acceptance and presence. *What a wonder!* Satan forgot about that. He forgot about the mercying God of pardons. He seems to have the hardest time remembering the potency of God's grace upon all whom He chooses to grace. Regardless of the clamouring protests of the evil one, Joshua, as every true child of God, came and found cleansing. The deal was sealed. The garments were changed. Now clothed in spotless purity. And the soul is forever delivered *"from the power of darkness"* and translated *"into the kingdom of His dear Son".* Again, the sole basis of the transaction is that the Lord *so chose to receive* in His grace. For every soul's deliverance is indeed *"of God that showeth mercy"* (Rom. 9:16). Who can argue with the deal done if it be *God* who sealed it? *"If <u>God</u> be for us, who can be against us?"* Who in

all of God's creation? For if *Satan* runs headlong into the stone wall of God's rebuke so do all below him.

So Joshua's cleansing here is a picture of the cleansing, justification, forgiveness, and acceptance available in Jesus Christ for every lost sinner who will come to Him. Both negative and positive aspects are involved and pictured;

- Negative – The filthy garments removed, signifying sin taken away.
- Positive – New, clean garments put on, signifying God's righteousness put on (Rom. 3:22, 26).

Yet once the man was restored, with a clean change of clothes and a new turban placed upon his head bearing the insignia "Holiness to the LORD", the Lord then turned and spoke very pointedly to Joshua. We do well to hear His words.

Vs. 6-10 – The Challenge.

Vs. 6 – *"The angel of the LORD protested unto*

Zec 3:7 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; If thou wilt walk in my ways, and if thou wilt keep my charge, then thou shalt also judge my house, and shalt also keep my courts, and I will give thee places to walk among these that stand by.

Joshua" – There is a ring of sharpness and solemn warning in that word *"protested"*. The Lord had a case against the man. He had dealt strongly with Satan, who would very gladly see the man destroyed for his sin. But having dealt first with that bitter accuser the Lord did not spare to deal sharply with His own child as well. He would be less than loving to not faithfully do so.

Vs. 7 – *"<u>If</u> thou wilt walk in My ways, and keep My charge, <u>then</u> thou shalt also judge My house, and shalt also keep My courts, and I will give thee places to walk among these that stand by"* – The Lord spoke both concerning the man's *walk,* and his *work*, and by means of an "if…then" statement He made the one dependent upon the other. Continuation in the *work* of the Lord depends on a continued *walk* with the Lord. Good and godly service of the Lord flows out of a good and godly walk. Two things were promised to Joshua in the context of a faithful walk with the God who cleansed him. *"Thou shalt also <u>judge</u> <u>My</u> <u>house</u>, and shalt also <u>keep</u> <u>My</u> <u>courts</u>".* He would be allowed to continue as the Lord's servant

and protector of religious purity (Deut. 10:12-22). The priest was not only to obey God's law, he was to see that it was obeyed by others as well. As God's royal priests we are to be the same, both keepers of our own purity and that of others. As Joshua, we too are to be custodians of the purity of God's house.

"I will give thee places to walk among these that stand by" – Who were *"these that stand by"?* This is likely a reference to the angels who had done the Lord's bidding in vs. 4 in redressing Joshua. The Lord promised Joshua a place among the angels in His presence as he walked in the light. It is a picture of intimate communion with the Lord and access to Him, freedom to pass in and out of the Lord's presence, going up and down the ladder of Jacob's dream with the angels of God (Gen. 28:12; Jn. 1:51). Should the man of God run back into his ways of filth from which he had been cleansed he would lose his communion with the Lord, and he would eventually lose his opportunity for service. Eli was one to whom this happened, and with such suddenness, severity, and finality (I Sam. 2:27-36). Abiathar was another who came to the same (I Ki. 2:26-27). The Lord is quite willing and able to strip a man of his opportunity for service when he refuses to walk with the Lord in it. It is ever a question of attitude toward the God of our cleansing. To love

and live for Him is to know His blessing and the joy of His presence and service. To turn from Him is a fool's corner. David charged Solomon with the same upon his installation as king over Israel (I Ki. 2:3), and we see the reality of his words played out in the life of that son of David. Solomon, with his nation, did *"prosper in all that thou doest, and whithersoever thou turnest"* as long as the man did *"keep the charge of the LORD thy God, to walk in His ways".* But with King Solomon's infamous turning, through his wives who did not know and love the Lord, it all came down to the most disappointing and disastrous mess. For a true child of God to turn from a *"walk in His ways"* is never to lose salvation, but it is most assuredly to lose His blessing and the stamp of His presence upon such a wayward life. We glory in the Lord's choosing of us to be sure, but we are chosen;

- Unto sanctification or purity – *"For whom He did foreknow He also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of His Son"* (Rom. 8:29).

- Unto fruit bearing – *"Ye have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain"* (Jn. 15:16).

As God's royal priests, every one of us are chosen

Zec 3:8 Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, thou, and thy fellows that sit before thee: for they are men wondered at: for, behold, I will bring forth my servant the BRANCH.

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for a larger role on this earth, as long as we keep the conditions for blessing in an attitude and practice of obedience. God's purpose for His people is pictured here in His cleansing and restoration of Joshua the High Priest. It is a figure of what will indeed happen to Israel as a nation, for God will do with those chosen ones what He did with this chosen one here. God's chosen nation will be cleansed and restored to a place of honour and ministry and leadership at Christ's return.

Vs. 8 – *"I will bring forth My servant, the Branch"* – In the remaining three verses of Zechariah's vision the Lord links the cleansing of Joshua to the coming Messiah, presented in three well-known messianic titles; *"My Servant"*, *"the Branch"*, and *"the Stone"*. Both of the two titles in this verse, the Lord's *"Servant"* and *"the Branch",* commonly refer to the coming Messiah in the writings of the prophets;

- *"Servant"* (Isaiah 42:1, quoted of Jesus in Matthew 12:18-20; Isaiah 50:10). It is a name common in Isaiah.

- *"Branch"* (Sprout, Shoot).
    - Isaiah 11:1ff reveals that branch out of Jesse's root and the nature of His kingdom.
    - Isaiah 53:2 speaks of the growth of God's *"tender plant"* and *"root out of a dry ground"*. A picture of initial weakness, and arising from obscurity.
    - Jeremaih 23:5; 33:15 – *"A righteous Branch"* from the offspring of David *"in those days"*, who would reign as King of righteousness. Beginning as a small sprout, and arising to be King of Kings (Rev. 19-20).
    - Zechariah 6:12-13 – Jesus coming in His first advent as *"the man whose name is the Branch"*, who would *"grow up out of His place"*.
    - This title always pictures Messiah's growth or rise to significance from a small beginning, sprouting from obscurity.

Both of these titles express the lowly humanity of the Messiah in His 1st coming.

Zec 3:9 For behold the stone that I have laid before Joshua; upon one stone shall be seven eyes: behold, I will engrave the graving thereof, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day.

Vs. 9 – *"The stone"* – This is also a title commonly used of Messiah in Scripture, describing the strength and stability of that promised One. This is in contrast to what might be taken for weakness in those first two titles. Here is that One who is the very *"chief cornerstone"* of the church. Here is the rock spewing water in the wilderness, a figure of the refreshing flow of *"rivers of living water"* from Jesus Christ when struck, as that rock in the wilderness (I Cor. 10). He came to become that fountain of blessing from the struck rock (Zech. 13:1) to all who will look to Him in the wilderness of our barren existence under the sun. Here is the cleft rock in which Moses found refuge from the threat of God's presence (Ex. 32), picturing Jesus Christ broken in His brutal death that we might find refuge in Him, that we might find wholeness in His wounding. Here is that *"stumbling stone and rock of offence"* spoken of so repeatedly, and connected with Jesus in His coming (Isa. 8:14; Rom. 9:32; I Cor. 1:23). And here too is that disallowed stone, destined to become the head of the corner (Ps. 118:22-23; Matt. 21:42; Acts 4:11; Isa. 28:16; I Pet. 2:6).

"Behold the stone that I have laid" – It is a stone placed by the Lord Himself. It is the Lord's doing and marvellous in our eyes, marvellous that He would do what He did for the likes of us. And it was a stone *"laid before Joshua"* in a prophetic vision of that One to come.

"Upon one stone shall be seven eyes" – The *"seven eyes"* speak of the perfection of sight or insight, describing supreme intelligence and even omniscience in that *"stone"* to be laid. This is no normal, lifeless stone, but one living and with fullest awareness (I Pet. 2:4). Jesus Christ will not judge as men judge, but will examine the hearts of men according to perfect knowledge. He is flawlessly able to discern every cover-up, to trace out every diversion, to see through every front. Compare the slain Lamb of Revelation 5, also pictured with *"seven horns and seven eyes"* (vs. 6), the perfection there of both power and insight.

Consider as well that Jesus pictured as the Stone describes the hardness of stone in Him toward sin and sinful mankind. God does not pre-figure Jesus in His coming as all warm and fuzzy. He came as a Lamb the first time, but He comes again as a *Lion*. It will be no day to be found without Him, or at odds with Him.

"Behold, I will engrave the graving thereof, saith the LORD of host" – The Lord announced that He will do some carving upon that stone. I have pencilled two words into the margin of my Bible beside this phrase. "Nail prints!" For this must surely be a reference to those eternal marks of Messiah's suffering. They are in fact the Father's own engravings we now discover, cut deeply and permanently into that precious Cornerstone, writing the story of God's supreme grace revealed in Jesus Christ for time and eternity. As He wrote His law into the stone tablets, so He engraves His grace into the Stone who is Jesus Christ. Men and Satan in their rage were merely the chisel under the Lord's hammer.

"I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day" – That one day can only be the day of Christ's return, when Israel will finally turn to the Lord in true repentance (Zech. 12:10), and the merits of His atoning death will at last be applied to the believing remnant of His people (Zech. 13:1). It will be the greatest Day of Atonement ever, the very fulfilment of every foreshadow in Israel's yearly feasts. It will be a day when the nation as a whole, like Joshua in this vision, will be cleansed of their iniquity and restored to the Lord's fullest blessing in Christ's kingdom *as His priestly nation*.

Zec 3:10 In that day, saith the LORD of hosts, shall ye call every man his neighbour under the vine and under the fig tree.

Vs. 10 – This image of all resting under their vine and fig tree is a picture combining the ideas of peace, safety, and security with prosperity or fruitfulness. Israel's golden age under Solomon's wise and righteous rule was a pre-figure of the coming reign of that *"greater than Solomon"* (I Ki. 4:24-25; Matt. 12:42). Peace will be the prevailing rule, comparable to Eden. Israel, with all people of earth in that day, will dwell safely. Again, a very common prophetic picture of the day of Christ's coming earthly reign (Micah 4:4).

Consider that all three of these figures of Jesus Christ relate to both His first and second comings. Jesus as *"My Servant"* pictures His life of humility, poverty, and seeming weakness, His obedience unto death as the servant of His Father. Yet He will come again to do His Father's bidding.

Jesus as *"the Branch"* sprouted from the stem of David, as David's descendant. And though a branch *"cut off"* (Dan. 9:26) He will yet unexpectedly sprout again, as Aaron's rod that budded, showing surprisingly indestructible vitality. He will yet rise

to power and glory out of the humiliation of the royal line of David now fallen to seeming extinction. Both comings reflect that *"root out of a dry ground"* (Isa. 53:2), unexpectedly arising from obscurity. Even so it will be for all who have ever stood for Jesus on this earth and were humiliated, even put to death by men. Though Satan's followers may think they have quite crushed such faithful ones in their death, these will be seen as well in that day of Christ as victors at last.

Jesus as *"the Stone"* of course came first as that *"stone of stumbling and rock of offence"* upon which Israel tripped. And as *"the Stone"* He comes again, bringing judgment upon the nation of Israel, grinding to powder every objector (Matt. 21:44). As the *"stone cut without hands"* He comes again, bringing judgment upon the Gentile world as well, striking and crushing the kingdoms of men and then swelling to a great mountain filling the earth (Dan. 2:44-45). Only through the destruction of Satan's world system can Christ's kingdom be established at last, and the nation of Israel lifted to a place of honour at the head.

The first coming of Jesus Christ would provide the basis for the nation's conversion and restoration. His second coming will complete the Lord's purpose

to restore and elevate her as a nation of priests. How matchless the grace of our God, who transforms a filthy, polluted priest, so condemnable by God and Satan, into one who is clean and restored to honour and service and blessing. This is a figure of what He will yet do with the nation of Israel as a whole. It is an image of what He longs to do with every man through His exalted Servant, the Branch, the Stone, He who is tender, humble, and firm. My Rock and my Fortress and my Strong tower. May the "Lord haste the day when my faith shall be sight".

Class 5 – Zechariah 4

Zechariah's first 4 visions have revealed some wonderfully hopeful truths concerning the nation of Israel;

- The Lord's ongoing passionate care and awareness of His people in the world and continued union with them.
- The Lord's sure return to rebuild and prosper His house, city, and people.
- The ultimate victory of God's people Israel, with every scatterer themselves scattered in the end.
- His people, though now defiled and accusable, fully cleansed and restored to a priestly role among the nations.

With this 5th vision the focus now turns to Israel's *witness* to the nations. She will yet become the shining light for God on earth as His people were always meant to be, as the Jewish remnant will be, both during the coming tribulation period and into the millennial age to follow. As the tabernacle, that point of God's testimony on earth, was set in the centre of the camp of Israel, so Israel was set *"in the midst of the nations"* (Ezek. 5:5) to be the lighthouse

Zec 4:1 And the angel that talked with me came again, and waked me, as a man that is wakened out of his sleep,

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of God's truth to all the earth. And though it was a role Israel neither fancied nor fulfilled, they will yet fulfil it, for this too God has spoken. The biblical order is cleansing and restoration to God's fellowship first, followed then by His call and equipping for effective service and testimony. Compare Isaiah 6 & Psalm 51 (vs. 13). This pattern, begun in the 4th vision with promise of the cleansing and restoration of national Israel as pictured in their spiritual leader restored, continues here in this 5th with promise of Israel restored to a light bearing role in *"the Lord's day".*

4:1-14 – 5th Vision – Golden Lampstand

Vs. 1-5 – Vision Presented.

Vs. 1 – *"The angel…waked me"* – Visions from God apparently can be an exhausting business. We saw the same with Daniel. His chapter 8 vision put him into *"a deep sleep on my face"* at one point (vs. 18), and left him faint and *"sick certain days"* at the end of his ordeal (vs. 27). Likewise Daniel's angelic visitation of chapter 10 (vs. 9). Remember those three disciples *"heavy with sleep"* on the Mt. of

Zec 4:2 And said unto me, What seest thou? And I said, I have looked, and behold a candlestick all of gold, with a bowl upon the top of it, and his seven lamps thereon, and seven pipes to the seven lamps, which are upon the top thereof:

Transfiguration with the sight of *"the Son of Man coming in His kingdom"* (Lk. 9:32). These too, as Zechariah here, needed to be awakened to receive further revelation from God.

We too need to be awakened from our dullness in order to receive God's revelation. We have been given the completed canon of Scripture, but we need the Spirit's stirring, enlightening work to be able to perceive the meaning of what He has written. Sometimes He needs to thump us awake, as the angel did Peter in Herod's prison, before we can see what wonders He has for us. How often the very worst of knocks become the best of times, times of heightened receptivity. The heavy knock of God's great wrath threatening Israel's annihilation in the wilderness gave rise to the opportunity for Moses to see the Lord never so closely (Ex. 32-33). Jonah was never closer to God than in the hard thump of his submarine experience. May the Lord be pleased to thump us, to wake our dull and heavy hearts and sharpen our sensitivity to perceive wonderful things out of His revealed words.

Zec 4:3 And two olive trees by it, one upon the right side of the bowl, and the other upon the left side thereof.

Vs. 2-3 – The prophet saw the seven-branched golden candelabra of the holy place, but with some interesting differences;

- There was *"a bowl upon the top of it".* This apparently was situated above the seven lamps.
- There were pipes running from the bowl down to the lamps.
- There were olive trees to the right and left of the bowl. As described further in vs. 12, these trees were keeping the bowl supplied with oil through *"two olive branches"* serving as *"pipes"* or channels.

Got the picture? Two olive trees on either side of a seven-branched golden candelabra pouring their oil through two channels into a bowl positioned over the candelabra, with pipes from the bowl distributing the oil to the seven lamps of the candelabra. Of course these added features made the work of human priests unnecessary, for through this interesting set-up the lamps would be continually supplied directly from the trees.

Zec 4:4 So I answered and spake to the angel that talked with me, saying, What are these, my lord?
Zec 4:5 Then the angel that talked with me answered and said unto me, Knowest thou not what these be? And I said, No, my lord.

Vs. 4-5 – *"Knowest thou not what these be?"* – When Zechariah asked of the angel the meaning of the vision the angel's response seems to indicate that the man should have been able to figure it out. In fact he gives him little more than hints to the larger meaning. Only the immediate significance for the nation at that time is given with clarity.

The candelabra represented Jesus Christ and His people as the light of God, testifying the truth of God to the world. The *perfection* of illumination is seen in its seven-fold aspect. God has in fact given the perfection of light, enough for all men to be *"without excuse"* (Rom. 1:20). The nation of Israel, the one nation of earth having the golden candelabra of testimony in the heart of her, was the sole source of revelation of the true God on earth. But this golden candelabra now with the added features described in the prophet's vision speaks of divine supply, and thus of heightened ability to shine, in fact the perfection of supply is suggested by the seven-fold supply pipes to the lamps.

Oil in the Bible seems to be an image of the Holy Spirit. Men were anointed with oil upon entrance into three offices in the O.T.; priest (Ex. 28:41), prophet, and king (I Sam. 9:16; 10:1; I Ki. 19:15-16). The title "Christ" (from Greek) or "Messiah" (from Hebrew) literally means "anointed". Jesus is the Christ or Messiah in that He is the ultimate Anointed One, being the only one ever anointed to all three offices of Prophet, Priest, and King. Yet upon His entrance into His earthly ministry Jesus was never anointed by men with oil. Men did not recognize Him as a prophet, priest, or king. Instead it was God who anointed Jesus with the Holy Spirit at His baptism (Matt. 3:16-17: John 1:32-34). Thus it seems that by the oil anointing of God's human leaders He was picturing the Holy Spirit's anointing or indwelling. So the prophet's vision here seems to picture dependence upon God through the work of the indwelling Holy Spirit. There must be oil if the lamps are to keep burning and giving their light. There must be the Spirit's presence if a soul is going to be a shining witness for God. From a wider perspective the image of Messiah is evident here in His beaming demonstration of God to the world through the limitless supply of the Spirit which Jesus knew in His earthly ministry (Jn. 3:34). The imagery extends as well to the witness of His saints in the world, again through the Spirit's presence

and working. For though Jesus is *"the true Light"* and *"the Light of the world"* (Jn. 1:9; 8:12), we who are His are so described as well (Matt. 5:14).

In the context of the other visions, which relate particularly to the nation of Israel, it would seem that Israel is the point of focus in this vision as well, and the coming day of the Lord the particular time concerned. It is not surprising that this figure arises again in Revelation 11 (vs. 4) in describing God's *"two witnesses"* to be given power to prophesy in Jerusalem during the first half of the 7-year tribulation period. These two divinely empowered and protected servants will be the Lord's lights to the world in its very darkest days. This function as the light-bearer of God's testimony of Himself on earth has passed to the church in the current era (Rev. 1:20; Phil. 2:15). But this role will pass back to Israel when the church is raptured away, and God's focus returns to national Israel as the world enters into the Great Tribulation. It will then be 144,000 untouchable *Jewish* witnesses shining God's truth to the earth (Rev. 7) together with His *"two witnesses".*

Vs. 6-14 – Vision Interpreted.

Zerubbabel is the one who now features

Zec 4:6 Then he answered and spake unto me, saying, This is the word of the LORD unto Zerubbabel, saying, Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts.

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prominently, his name appearing 4 times in the next 5 verses. Joshua the priest was the point of focus in the previous chapter as the spiritual leader, and now it is Zerubbabel's turn as the civil leader. Several specific promises now follow;

- Temple would be completed through the Spirit's power (vs. 6). As divine supply is demonstrated in this vision of testimony, even so by His own power God would restore the temple, His place of earthly testimony in Jerusalem in the midst of His people, and in the midst of the nations. It would be the Spirit's work through His leader and men on the ground. This becomes a general principle for the Lord's work on earth as well. *"Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain who build it"* (Ps. 127:1). Though all human labour must be expended in the Lord's work, it is the Lord who makes it work. Thus all dependence must be upon Him in the labour. Though we must be active in the Lord's work, we must ever guard against the subtle fall to trusting in our activities and abilities. A true

Zec 4:7 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.

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work of God is not through man's organization, committees, construction, plans, drives, contests, budgets, banquets, rallies, etc. It is God who gives genuine increase, through the shining of His light, the preaching of His words, empowered by the Spirit.

- <u>All opposition would be removed</u> (vs. 7). The phrase in the King James Version *"thou shalt become"* is supplied (*italics*). The statement of the text is actually quite blunt, suggesting the ease and brevity with which God can flatten mountains. Though the very pinnacle of earthly power in the Persian Empire might stand in the way of the temple completion, God would show Himself bigger than the biggest human empire. And lo and behold the old decree of Cyrus was then found, and with the arrival of a letter from the east all earthly hindrance so suddenly turned to lively help in the work! Though it be a mountain of an obstacle before us, yet by simple faith and patience we can see it removed through God's

Zec 4:8 Moreover the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,
Zec 4:9 The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this house; his hands shall also finish it; and thou shalt know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto you.

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power (Matt. 17:20). If God be in it and behind it, no power on earth can stand in the way!

- The last *"headstone"* of the temple would indeed be laid with great celebration (vs. 7). Even so the *"chief Cornerstone",* the Lord Jesus Christ, shall yet suddenly come again to His temple, capping and completing God's great construction work through the centuries. This coming of the Keystone will be with greatest celebration and praise among His saints as well. The more immediate fulfilment looks beyond to the final.

- *Zerubbabel's* own hands would finish the work (vs.9). The temple project would not take ages with the Lord's power now behind them. When God is in the work, much more is accomplished in much less time. Compare how quickly Nehemiah's wall went up (Neh. 6:15). Compare how quickly Jericho's wall came down (Josh. 6:20).

Zec 4:10 For who hath despised the day of small things? for they shall rejoice, and shall see the plummet in the hand of Zerubbabel with those seven; they are the eyes of the LORD, which run to and fro through the whole earth.

- Zechariah would be affirmed as God's prophet through the fulfilment of his/His words (vs. 9).

- Criticising would be turned to rejoicing (vs. 10). Those old ones concerned about the plainness of this house compared to Solomon's (Hag. 2:3; Ezra 3:12) would be turned from cynics to celebrators at the temple's completion. This looks beyond as well to that coming day of the Lord when all reproach is at last rolled away, when every word of God is seen to be true and trustworthy. To despise the day of small things is to look down on the seasons and situations where little of God's work and presence is in evidence. But though the nation was then *"in the bottom"*, still God was with them. "Little is much if God is in it", if God is glorified in it. The *"small"* thing they were busy with, the building of that plain temple, would become the very focal point of Messiah's presence and ministry on earth.

Zec 4:11 Then answered I, and said unto him, What are these two olive trees upon the right side of the candlestick and upon the left side thereof?
Zec 4:12 And I answered again, and said unto him, What be these two olive branches which through the two golden pipes empty the golden oil out of themselves?

Though a work seems small, it is big if done in sincerity for the Lord. If God could deliver fearful Israel from the threatening giant through one small stone from the sling of faithful David, then He can take up and use to wonderful effect the smallness of what we are and do for Him on earth.

Vs. 10 – *"The eyes of the LORD"* – Again a picture of the perfection of God's insight (*"seven",* 3:9) ranging *"to and fro"* through the whole of His creation. The same thought is described in Zechariah's 1st vision in a different way. And again the implication is of God's absolute awareness of His people, and of all people of earth, of His watching care over His own.

Vs. 11-13 – Zechariah enquired further concerning the two olive trees and their supply branches or channels by which the trees emptied their *"golden* [pure] *oil out of themselves"* into the bowl. It was all gold, with channels of gold pouring golden coloured

Zec 4:13 And he answered me and said, Knowest thou not what these be? And I said, No, my lord.
Zec 4:14 Then said he, These are the two anointed ones, that stand by the Lord of the whole earth.

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oil into *"a candlestick all of gold"*. Zechariah in his query reflects the same eager interest in fullest understanding of God and His works that we see in Daniel (Dan. 9-10; 12:8) and in John (Rev. 5).

Vs. 14 – *"These are the two anointed ones"* – *"These"* olive trees with their branches seem to point to Zerubbabel and Joshua as the human representatives of king and priest at that time, or the roles into which they were anointed as civil and spiritual leaders. These roles will combine in Messiah, *"The BRANCH"*, who *"shall build the temple of the LORD…and shall sit and <u>rule</u> upon His throne; and He shall be a <u>Priest</u> upon His throne"* (Zech. 6:12-13). Jesus will sit as both King and Priest. Zerubbabel and Joshua were then the current branches of those trees, the priestly office over God's people being the focus of chapter 3 and the ruling office now the focus of this chapter. Thus perhaps Messiah in His combined role of King and Priest is pictured by *"these"*, as the true source of supply or channel of blessing and power through the Holy Spirit (oil). He is the Mount of Sources for

His people.

"That stand by the Lord of the whole earth" – This title of the Lord seems to refer to the image of Armageddon in Micah 4:11-13. Compare Zechariah 14:9. Jesus Christ will be revealed as Lord of the entire earth in that day, *His* day, that day when the kingdoms of men will be forever ended, and both the kingly and priestly offices of all the earth will be centred in Jesus in Jerusalem in the midst of a fully restored national Israel.

There is an evident connection of these olive trees and branches with those *"two witnesses"* of Revelation 11, for they are described as *"the two olive trees, and the two candlesticks standing before the God of the earth"* (Rev. 11:4). Their ministry in those days is then described as a divinely empowered witness. They will come to their earthly end at the mid-point of the coming Great Tribulation, but not before they give clearest testimony to all *"they that dwell upon the earth"* of the imminent coming of God's great King-Priest, who will show Himself at last as *"Priest of the Most High God…the possessor of heaven and earth"* (Gen. 14:18-22). The same is pictured as well in Melchizedek, that O.T. type of Jesus Christ, both as King of Salem (peace) and Priest of the Most High

God. At both ends of the Bible, from first to last, Jesus is pictured coming in His kingdom as the great King-Priest. In fact the time is clearly marked at the point of Revelation 11 as only 3½ years until Christ's return (vs. 2-3). See our Reading Companions to the books of Revelation and Daniel for greater clarity.

Thus in this 5th vision Messiah is revealed as both *"the true Light"* and source of light, and the true *"Lord of the whole earth"*. This was witnessed to the earth as if a candelabra shining in its sevenfold perfection of light;

- In the rebuilt temple of Zerubbabel's day, that earthly point of God's witness.
- In these recorded words of God through Zechariah.
- In the Messiah who came, and the N.T. written around Him.
- In the saints during this church age, and their proclamation of the true words of God.
- In God's two anointed ones during the tribulation period.
- And at the last in Messiah's return to His earthly kingdom, with His light flowing out to

the world through His kingly, priestly nation throughout His 1000-year reign on earth.

Class 6 – Zechariah 5

Zechariah's 4th and 5th visions (chapters 3 & 4) pictured the future rise of national Israel to a priestly and kingly role over the nations of earth. In Christ's coming earthly kingdom, both spiritual and civil leadership will be centred in Jerusalem in that Anointed One. Joshua, the anointed high priest in Zechariah's day, the focus of the 4th vision, is a picture of Israel's restoration to spiritual leadership under her great High Priest. Zerubbabel, the anointed ruler, the focus of the 5th vision, pictures Israel's eventual rise to world rule under her King of kings. The roles of these *"two anointed ones"* combine in the Messiah, the ultimate Anointed One, with the testimony of the true God shining never so brightly and continually over all the earth in the day of Christ's earthly kingdom. It is an image of greatest hope and courage for the people of God.

The theme now of this 6th of Zechariah's visions is a chilling one, yet still one of hope. We see now the sure ability of God's curse to find, abide upon, and destroy those who break His law. As we have seen, these visions of Zechariah have largely been a discussion of the coming day of God's rule on earth, when these *"times of the Gentiles"* have at last risen to their pinnacle, and then tumbled to their final

destruction at Armageddon. These visions are a stirring education on the nature of God's kingdom to follow the kingdoms of men on earth. This aspect of Christ's rule, as a rod of iron, is vital for us to understand as well. A hint of the same hardness of Christ's rule was seen in Zechariah's 4th vision, where he saw *"the Stone…laid before Joshua"* with *"seven eyes",* indicating perfect insight (3:9). In His return and earthly reign the Lord Jesus Christ will come with stony hardness toward sin, and with the very perfection of insight into the truth of men's hearts. He is not one to be messed around. Sin is not something to be dabbled with if we would be confident in that day and not ashamed before Him in His coming (I Jn. 2:28).

5:1-4 – 6th Vision – The Flying Roll

Vs. 1-2 – Again the prophet lifted his eyes and looked (1:18; 2:1, 5), and again in doing so he saw another vision from God, describing more of the wonder of what God had for him and for countless multitudes through him. It takes obedience to Christ's command to His disciples to *"lift up your eyes, and look"* (Jn. 4:35) before we can know the

Zec 5:2 And he said unto me, What seest thou? And I answered, I see a flying roll; the length thereof is twenty cubits, and the breadth thereof ten cubits.

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joy of really seeing and serving and being used for God's glory. There must first be a waking up (4:1) and a looking up before ever there can be a lifting up to "a higher plane than I have found" in our Christian experience. We must want from God and be looking for His kingdom and righteousness. *"Seek and ye shall find"* is God's conditional promise.

"Behold a flying roll" – The prophet saw a roll or scroll flying in the air. Scrolls or rolls of papyrus paper or animal skin were the ancient form of "books", with sheets fastened end to end and rolled onto two sticks from either end. Only in the 3rd century A.D. did the modern "codex" form come into use, with sheets stacked and fastened on the side.

This flying scroll was huge, being 20 cubits long and 10 cubits wide. A cubit is about 18 inches (point of elbow to middle finger tip), making this scroll approximately 4.5 x 9 metres! Though scrolls in actual use at that time might have been as long as 9 metres their width was generally only 250-400 mm. Some suggest special meaning in the size of

Zec 5:3 Then said he unto me, This is the curse that goeth forth over the face of the whole earth: for every one that stealeth shall be cut off as on this side according to it; and every one that sweareth shall be cut off as on that side according to it.

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this scroll, in that the dimensions were the same as the holy place of the tabernacle (Ex. 26:15-25) and of the porch of Solomon's temple (I Ki. 6:5). Perhaps a measure of caution is due in attempting to find meaning for every aspect of these visions, as with Christ's parables. Just because some detail is given may not mean that it has to mean something. That Zechariah saw a scroll indicates some written message. That he saw it in a vision from God implied a message from God. That he saw it flying suggests easy mobility or speed, as well as perhaps the dynamic energy or working of that message. Compare the he-goat of Daniel's dream in Daniel 8, that *"touched not the ground"* (vs. 5). That the he-goat was flying in his coming is a clear reference to the great speed and finesse of the attacking Grecian army under Alexander.

Vs. 3 – *"This is the curse"* – We find now the nature of the message of this "book". This was no message of blessing, or of Israel's hopeful prospects of which we have seen much in these visions so far. This is rather the written curse of God *"that goeth forth"*

freely *"over the face of the whole earth"*, travelling by air without the least resistance from man or terrain. Compare the angel of Revelation 14:6-7 flying *"in the midst of heaven"* carrying the message of *"the everlasting gospel"* in the last day. It will be a final call *"to every nation, and kindred, and tongue, and people"* to fear and worship God in view of the soon coming *"hour of His judgment"*.

"On this side…on that side" – It seems this scroll was written on both sides, the one side dealing with offence toward man (*"every one that stealeth"*), the other side dealing with offence toward God (*"every one that sweareth…falsely by My name"*). Whether abusing God or man, whether a breaker of God's first great command or His second (Matt. 22:37-39), whether touching a *man's* possessions or *God's* greatest possession, His holy name, every offender shall be handled *"according to"* this flying message of God's curse. Every soul *"over the face of the whole earth"* showing hatred for either man or God will ultimately be visited by God's curse on the fly. And whether touching God or man, in both cases the outcome is the same. *"Cut off"* refers to death. God will most certainly root out all who are wicked before establishing His earthly kingdom.

Compare that *"book"* or scroll *"in the right hand of*

Zec 5:4 I will bring it forth, saith the LORD of hosts, and it shall enter into the house of the thief, and into the house of him that sweareth falsely by my name: and it shall remain in the midst of his house, and shall consume it with the timber thereof and the stones thereof.

Him that sat on the throne" in Revelation 5. That scroll was also *"written within and on the backside"*, and *"sealed with seven seals"* as well. The contents of that book comes down to us as *"the Revelation of Jesus Christ",* given by God through John to complete His revelation to man. The book of Revelation is a book of cursing for every godless corrupter of earth, and a book as well of the most brilliant blessings for every redeemed soul. It is a book full of wonderful patience for the saints (13:10; 14:12), for God's message of final justice and judgment upon evil and evildoers is found therein. It is the account of God wrenching every vestige of possession and control of earth from Satan's clutching grasp, and presenting all at last to the One worthy, the King of kings and Lord of lords.

Vs. 4 – *"I will bring it forth"* – God will guide His mobile message of menace to the house of every violator. *"Vengeance is Mine, I will repay saith the Lord".* For He is *"the LORD of hosts"*, with countless armies of angels strong to help in the execution of

His purposes. And the Lord will cause His curse to enter, indwell, and engulf the home of every offender, like a heat-seeking missile that just cannot be shaken until it accomplishes its designed destruction.

"It shall <u>remain</u> in the midst of his house" – Implied is the abiding presence of God's curse in the house of offenders, remaining there until *"it shall"* accomplish its work. This indicates a measure of time involved, requiring a measure of patience on the part of the redeemed. Though God's sure, purging work upon sin and sinners invades the feeble defences of every rebel and marks him for destruction, the fire may not fall today or tomorrow. This is certainly so in this current age of God's longsuffering grace. But the sentence of God has made its entrance, and is poised and ready to fall in His good timing. It is a picture of His sure, searching judgment.

"With the timber thereof and the stone thereof" – No matter how solidly built by earthly standards. No matter how firmly established one might be among men. No matter how tall a man stands on earth. If he does not stand for God he will not stand at the last. It just does not matter how high and mighty his Masada.

Such is God's work in every age. Such will be the searching work of His Great Tribulation judgments described in Revelation. Such will be the nature of the iron rule of that Stone with seven eyes throughout the days of Christ's earthly kingdom. Though Christ's kingdom will begin with only the saved, the children of the redeemed born during that era will be born as all men, with unsaved souls. The environment in that kingdom age will be perfect;

- Jesus Christ present and reigning on earth.
- Near Eden conditions in that time *"of the restitution of all things",* with God's blessing evident on every hand.
- No open sin or rebellion tolerated in the least, but dealt with directly and severely. As the *"bird of the air"* carrying every cursing word of dissension from the privacy of bedroom to the king's presence, as Solomon warns (Eccl. 10:20). Even so the flying scroll of God's curse upon sin will pursue, pinpoint, penetrate, and purge out all. A lesser *excuse* for evil in that day will allow for a lesser *tolerance* of it.
- Satan and his unholy host entirely absent, with no measure of his old world system able

Zec 5:5 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.
Zec 5:6 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.

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to prosper in that setting and without his influence.

Though these things will be true and the environment nearly perfect then, it will be the wicked heart of unredeemed man that will be proven the true root of man's problem in the end (Rev. 20:7ff). But God will faithfully, accurately, fairly, relentlessly root out every wretched root of it at the last!

5:5-11 – 7th Vision – Woman in Ephah

This vision runs along the same vein as the previous, but now takes it an important step further. Whereas the flying scroll reports God's ability and ultimate purpose to deal with every sinner, this vision now relates God's purpose *"to finish the transgression, and to make an end of sin"* altogether (Dan. 9:24). Important parallels are found here with John's end-times vision of the final fall of Babylon before the return of Jesus Christ to

Zec 5:7 And, behold, there was lifted up a talent of lead: and this is a woman that sitteth in the midst of the ephah.

His kingdom (Rev. 17-18).

Vs. 5-6 – *"This is an ephah that goeth forth"* – Upon looking, the prophet saw an ephah on the move. Twice we are told that it *"goeth forth"*, thus the point is underscored. That it is not staying is an important feature.

"Their resemblance through all the earth" – The ephah was an ancient dry measure comparable to a bushel, equal to about 22 litres. The point here is that this was a standard measure of a very normal size and shape like that used around the globe. The size of this container was too small to put even a small woman in, but it seems an ephah is used in the vision because it was the standard measure for all dry foods in commerce *"through all the earth"*.

Vs. 7 – There was a heavy lid over the ephah, and when this was lifted the prophet discovered a woman sitting *"in the midst of the ephah"*. This lid was made of lead and weighed a talent (about 34 kgs). Lead was the metal commonly used for weights in weighing out goods in all the buying and

Zec 5:8 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.
Zec 5:9 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.

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selling of the market place. And the talent was the largest unit of weight used among the Jews, just as an ephah was the largest unit of dry measure. The ephah, lead, and talent here, all coming from the markets of men, seem to suggest symbols of commerce or the business world *"through all the earth".*

Vs. 8 – *"This is wickedness"* – Notice that first this woman is sitting in the ephah and then she is cast into it. As if the angel, while holding the heavy lid in one hand, picked up the woman in the other, introducing her to Zechariah as *"wickedness"*. And with that statement he then cast the woman back into the ephah and slammed the leaden lid over the container opening. Enclosed, and now even *imprisoned* within these symbols of human commerce, they become her support or carrier in the next aspect of Zechariah's vision.

Vs. 9 –Two more women then appeared, but women

of a very different kind, for these had great wings *"like the wings of a stork"*. Their wings were even then stirring with wind in them, tending to lift them. God through His wind (Spirit) was aiding them in the task at hand, confirming the fact that it was God's mission they were conducting. These winged women then together took up the ephah, with woman and leaden lid, and lifted up on their wings.

"Between heaven and earth" – This was the same place to which Jesus was lifted up in that fateful moment when He was rejected by *earth* in the rebellious denial of mankind, and rejected by *heaven* in the wretched defilement of man's sin placed upon Him. It is a like picture here, but of a very different kind of day, when neither heaven nor earth will tolerate the presence of wickedness anymore.

Vs. 10-11 – *"Whither do these bear the ephah?"* – Upon Zechariah's question the angel responded that this unholy cargo was on its way to *"the land of Shinar"* or Babylon to be housed and based there. And though this basket of wickedness would be established there, it would only be until God tears

Zec 5:11 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.

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it all down at the last.

Let's give some thought to the interpretation of this vision. The picture here is of the day when wickedness shall be completely removed from God's land, indeed a day when it will be a *"holy land"* at last (2:12). For fullest clarity we need to compare Revelation 17 (see discussion in Reading Companion to the book of Revelation). As that chapter of John's Apocalypse opens the apostle was invited to witness the judgment of *"the great whore"*. She is called *"BABYLON THE GREAT",* and she is the mother or fountainhead of all spiritual infidelity and every abomination of idolatry. And she is seen positioned in a place of corrupting influence over all people of earth. Clearly the image of Babylon, as embodied in this woman, is beyond just a *city*, but extends to the far-reaching effects of a universal *system*. She represents that system of false worship stemming from the insidious mysteries of ancient Babylon, begun in that *"mighty hunter",* Nimrod, *"in the land of Shinar"* (Gen. 10:8-10; 11:1-9) and playing out through the ages in every form of religious apostasy and idolatry and deception

permeating the earth from there. In John's Revelation 17 vision this woman rides *"a scarlet coloured beast, full of names of blasphemies"*. The identity of this beast carrying the woman is given there in the context of Revelation. This is Antichrist or *"the beast"* (Rev. 13), the very masterwork of Satan, the final world ruler of *"the times of the Gentiles",* who will arise during the final 7 of years before Christ's return. This final world ruler will be indwelt by the evil one, yet like no other man ever was. It will be at the midpoint of the tribulation period that Satan shall be cast from all access to heaven, and in an absolute rage shall pour forth his poisonous purposes through his supreme champion on the ground, knowing that his time is short (Rev. 12). As revealed in John's vision, Antichrist, that world civil or political head, will begin by carrying the woman, who represents the combined apostate "church" of those last days. These two will be working together at first. World religious power riding or using world political power as a vehicle for her own evil ends of shedding *"the blood of the saints, and…the martyrs of Jesus"* (Rev. 17:6). But Antichrist has other, more self-serving designs. For at the mid-point of that final 7 of years he will turn and consume her when he no longer needs her, and would have none in the way of world worship of himself alone (Rev. 17:16). This will be

the point when *"he as god sitteth in the temple of God showing himself that he is god"* (II Thess. 2:4). The record of the destruction of *commercial* Babylon in Revelation 18 then follows the end of *religious* Babylon in Revelation 17 before the great revelation of Christ's return to follow in Revelation 19. Thus the entire system of man-corrupted religion and rule on earth will be crushed by *"the Stone"* in His coming. He will then take complete possession at last as King of kings and our great High Priest and Chief Shepherd.

This 7th vision of Zechariah seems to hint at something of the same. This woman who is wickedness compares with *"the great whore"* of Revelation 17, incorporating all spiritual wickedness *"and abominations of the earth"* sourced in Babylon. She is carried/supported/sheltered in the symbols of commercial Babylon, the ephah, lead, and talent, until the point when these are turned against her, becoming her prison. Just as the apostate church will be consumed by Antichrist's regime when he will be finished carrying her. Pictured in this 7th vision of Zechariah is God sending spiritual (and commercial) wickedness back to her main source, pitching her out of His land, bringing both religious and civil Babylon, both the corrupt religion and rule of men together back

to *"the land of Shinar"* before their final crushing. God will rid His *"holy land"* of all that this corrupt world of men loves so well. Therefore God's earnest admonition, *"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in Him…And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever"* (I Jn. 2:15-17).

Of which land would you be a part?

Class 7 – Zechariah 6

Zec 6:1 And I turned, and lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and, behold, there came four chariots out from between two mountains; and the mountains were mountains of brass.

Characteristic of the writings of God's prophets is a tendency for the meaning of their words to shade in and out of clarity. Now apparent, now obscure. At one point with immediate application, at the next the focus ranging off into the far distant future. What is clear is that our God has not seen fit to lay all of His pearls of truth out by the wayside for any casual passer-by to pick up. Some aspects are hidden in the hills, requiring labour for the finding. And even in finding we are forced to tolerate the frustration of a goodly measure of things stubbornly unclear. God's trail of truth often seems more a broken line than a solid track of clarity at every point. I am afraid we are faced with a bit of a broken line in Zechariah's 6th chapter. The trend is obvious, though we will battle to assign meaning to every aspect.

6:1-8 – 8th Vision – Four Chariots

Vs. 1 – The vision now presented to the prophet was of four chariots approaching from between two

mountains of brass or bronze. The identity of the mountains is not given, only that there were two and they were made of brass. That they were mountains suggests an earthly association or source. That they were brass suggests a context of divine judgment, God meeting the hardness of man's sinfulness with the brazen hardness of His judgment, returning brass for brass, hardness for hardness in the end. Remember how the point of God's contact with sinful man at the tabernacle was the brazen altar, with all of its brass vessels, grate, pots, and censers. Remember how our sin placed on Jesus Christ at the judgment scene of Calvary was the O.T. picture of the brass serpent on the pole fulfilled (Num. 21:9; Jn. 3:14). Remember John's vision of Jesus returning to judge His churches and tread the winepress of God's wrath, with *"His feet like unto fine brass"* (Rev. 1:15). Thus the brass mountains of this final vision must describe a scene of judgment and involving earthly forces. If we assume the reference here to be mountains in the land of Israel (Mt. Zion and Mt. of Olives perhaps) then the focal point of activity will be around that *"glorious holy mountain"* of Jerusalem.

"Four chariots" – The number four often seems to contribute a universal aspect to the happenings on earth. The *"four angels standing on the four corners of the earth"* (Isa. 11:12; Rev. 7:1) describe a work

Zec 6:2 In the first chariot were red horses; and in the second chariot black horses;
Zec 6:3 And in the third chariot white horses; and in the fourth chariot grisled and bay horses.

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affecting all the earth. *"The four winds of heaven"* (Jer. 49:36) or *"of the earth"* (Rev. 7:1) speak of the whole. The four kingdoms of Daniel's prophecy are the sum of all human kingdoms. Here as well it seems there is a universal element to the work these are about. Thus a scene of judgment it seems, involving earthly forces affecting all the earth, yet perhaps with focus around or out from Israel.

Vs. 2-3 – In each case it is more than one horse pulling the chariot. Colours as follows;

- 1st Chariot – Red horses.
- 2nd Chariot – Black horses.
- 3rd Chariot – White horses.
- 4th Chariot – Grisled and bay horses. The Hebrew word behind "grisled" is literally the idea of hail scattered, or sprinkled with white spots.

It may be important to note that these horse colours appear in Zechariah's 1st vision of chapter 1, except

Zec 6:4 Then I answered and said unto the angel that talked with me, What are these, my lord?
Zec 6:5 And the angel answered and said unto me, These are the four spirits of the heavens, which go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth.

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for the absence of a black horse there. As well, horses and colours line up somewhat with the famous Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse (Rev. 6), except for a differing order of appearance. The meaning there in Revelation 6;

- White horse rider – Antichrist coming in peace and power as conqueror at the beginning of the end of Gentile rule.
- Red horse rider – Antichrist's about-face at the midpoint of the 7-year tribulation, with peace quite gone.
- Black horse rider – Worldwide famine resulting from war.
- Pale horse rider – Death to a quarter of the earth's population.
- All describe devastating aspects of the Great Tribulation period but from the *earthly* angle of God's human instruments of tribulation judgment, in contrast to God's array of

judgments poured forth from heaven in 3 series of 7 during that same era.

Vs. 4-5 – *"The four spirits of the heavens"* – Not "of heaven", but *"of the heavens".* Perhaps we could see comparison with the *"three unclean spirits"* of the 6th bowl judgment of Revelation (16:13), sent throughout the whole world *"to gather them to the battle of that great day of God Almighty… Armageddon".* That these spirits *"go forth from standing before the Lord of all the earth"* does not mean they must be good angels, for it seems these will be working in Antichrist, God's final earthly tool of destruction in that day. Remember that *"lying spirit"* commissioned by God toward Ahab's deception and destruction in I Kings 22 (vs. 19-22). Even so these would appear to be evil angels given to the task of man's destruction during the Great Tribulation, working through Antichrist's regime, dealing God's wrath upon the nations of earth with whom He was *"very sore displeased"*, who have touched the apple of His eye.

"The Lord of all the earth" – This again is that title of Jesus Christ as visible King over the earth in that day, *"the Lord's day"* (4:14; 14:9; Micah 4:1-13; Ps. 97:5), when *"the times of the Gentiles"* are finished and man's earthly empires are no more and Satan's

Zec 6:6 The black horses which are therein go forth into the north country; and the white go forth after them; and the grisled go forth toward the south country.
Zec 6:7 And the bay went forth, and sought to go that they might walk to and fro through the earth: and he said, Get you hence, walk to and fro through the earth. So they walked to and fro through the earth.
Zec 6:8 Then cried he upon me, and spake unto me, saying, Behold, these that go toward the north country have quieted my spirit in the north country.

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dominion is completely broken and trampled.

Vs. 6-7 – If the place of this vision is Palestine, which is likely, for Antichrist in his day will indeed be based there, then this is a picture of the devastation of the world through Antichrist's work, ranging out from his base in Jerusalem. He will think to go forth *"conquering, and to conquer",* empowered by evil spirits commissioned to the task, yet unwittingly he does God's own bidding, fulfilling His divine purpose of judgment upon both the Gentile world and Israel.

Vs. 8 – *"These…have quieted my spirit"* – The wrath of God will be appeased through His final worldwide judgments upon godless mankind.

As a whole, this final vision is a promise that God will deal with the Gentile nations bringing His sure judgment upon them when they have come to the end of their time. Again, God had not forgotten His people, or justice! He will so effectively answer all who have ever abused them, and most remarkably so. He will bring them to their end right at the very pinnacle of worldwide effort to trample Israel in the dust as the armies of earth gather to Palestine coming against Jerusalem in the final battle of this age.

6:9-15 – Crowning of the High Priest

In keeping with what we see in Daniel and Revelation, the crushing of man's kingdoms will be the crowning of the King of kings. The first must happen before the second. For just as God's Spirit will not share His abode with evil spirits, so Jesus Christ will not share His reign with godless mankind. Man's rule comes completely down before Christ's rule is set up. Compare Psalm 2:5-6, where first God vexes the raging kings of the earth, and then He sets His king upon His holy hill of Zion. Compare Daniel 2, where first the Stone crushes the image of human empires before growing to fill the earth. Compare Revelation 19-20, where first Jesus returns in glory to the destruction of human power, and then His 1000-year reign is established on

Zec 6:9 And the word of the LORD came unto me, saying,
Zec 6:10 Take of them of the captivity, even of Heldai, of Tobijah, and of Jedaiah, which are come from Babylon, and come thou the same day, and go into the house of Josiah the son of Zephaniah;

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earth. This same sequence we now find here, with the high priest symbolically crowned only after the vision of the day of God's judgements running to the ends of the earth. The crowning of Joshua is clearest reference to the crowning of Jesus Christ as the King of kings and the great High Priest and *"Lord of all the earth".*

Vs. 9 – *"The word of the LORD came unto me"* – There is a turn in the approach at this point. No longer the other-worldly visions as before, but the Lord now speaks instruction to Zechariah directly.

Vs. 10-11 – Apparently the men named here had recently come across from the east, perhaps coming to see to the temple progress and report back to those of the Jewish dispersion across the rivers. They seem to come as representatives of the dispersed Jews, perhaps carrying gifts from their eastern brothers toward the temple construction project. Their presence shows a measure of concern for what was happening in Judah, but not concern

Zec 6:11 Then take silver and gold, and make crowns, and set them upon the head of Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest;

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enough to immigrate. It was a one-footed concern rather than being in with both feet as the returned remnant. Every age and setting produces the same kinds of responses in men. In our own day as well there are those who wholly follow the LORD, as Caleb of old, coming right across to live in His land, however humbling that move might be, making whatever sacrifices necessary. And then there are the rest among the Lord's people; those who live in the world still, both *in* it and *of* it, refusing to make any really significant life changes; those who live according to the Lord's permissive will rather than hard after His perfect will for them. Oh there is some measure of interest in them in what the Lord is doing through His faithful ones, therefore the visit. And there is some willingness in them to financially contribute toward God's work on earth. But that is about as far as it goes. Such is the extent of their Christianity. The Lord does not fail to bless even such marginal interest and low-level sacrifices. He blesses according to the measure of our surrender. He will now meet the arrival and interest of these eastern visitors with a lesson on His blessing. We have no clues here or elsewhere

as to who these men were or what were the circumstances of their coming. They arrived and departed leaving little more than their names in the sacred text. Their interest in God's things gave them that much, God's mention. A nod *to* God grants them a nod *from* God. Judging by the way these men were handled here they seem to be men of some importance. Yet compare how well we know the leaders who made the greater sacrifice in actually returning to Emmanuel's Land. Consider well how the measure of their abundance of blessing from God and communication from Him so far exceeds what these eastern relatives ever received in their absence from God's place of blessing. Yet for the encouragement these brought to the faithful in Judah God would send them back with a God-sized measure of good news.

The Lord now set up an object lesson before them and His leaders in Judah, that these visitors might take the benefit back with them, for the encouragement of both companies of the Lord's greater body of people. Do not miss how God did not exclude from His encouragements those more selfishly unwilling for the sacrifice of returning to the Promised Land. Even so we should not exclude from encouragements those of God's people who make the more selfish choices in life, folks we may

find it a bit harder to live with or tolerate. Behold the grace and patience of God, so much greater than our own.

These representatives of the dispersed Jews (Diaspora) were to gather with the leaders in the land in *"the house of Josiah"*, and there they were to set *"crowns…upon the head of Joshua…the high priest"*. This was to be no public ceremony but a private affair. We can well imagine the dangers involved with crowning someone, as if an actual king, within the empire of Persia. That *"crowns"* is plural here immediately brings to mind John's vision of Jesus in His return with *"many crowns"* on His head (Rev. 19:12), expressing His supreme, unquestioned right to reign. So in this private celebration in Josiah's house Joshua the high priest is set up in a kingly role as well, as an object lesson or picture of that Anointed One who will one day come as both Priest and King. In Israel these two offices were always kept distinct. According to the Davidic Covenant the kingly line must come from the house of David, of the tribe of Judah (II Sam. 7; Ps. 89:3-4). According to the Law of Moses the priestly line must come from the house of Aaron, of the tribe of Levi. Thus these two offices could never meet in one individual. Only in Jesus Christ do these *"two anointed ones"* come together in one

Zec 6:12 And speak unto him, saying, Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is The BRANCH; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD:

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exalted Person. Again, this is pictured or pre-figured as well in Melchizedek, that king of Salem and priest of the Most High God (Heb. 7:1-2).

Vs. 12 – *"Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts"* – With ringing authority the Almighty now makes announcement here concerning His coming King-Priest.

"Behold the man" – These were the very words of Pilate when Jesus was brought out to the cruel crowd with purple robe and crown of thorn branches, after the Roman soldiers had brutally beaten and mocked Him (Jn. 19:5). As if the very words of God were put into the mouth of that weak "leader"! As if quoting from the prophet's announcement of Christ's kingly coronation, while Pilate was even then sending Jesus to His high priestly task of sacrifice, to make the ultimate offering of Himself for sin.

"Whose name is the BRANCH" – Though the venomous unbelieving world offered Jesus only

Zec 6:13 Even he shall build the temple of the LORD; and he shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne; and he shall be a priest upon his throne: and the counsel of peace shall be between them both.

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thorn branches for a crown, yet He will be as Aaron's rod that budded, life springing up where it could never be expected. Though He as *"a grain of wheat"* would *"fall into the ground and die"* (Jn. 12:24), yet He as a *"tender plant"* will grow as from the planting of a seed, bringing forth *"much fruit"*. Again *"the BRANCH"* is a title we have seen already (3:8), clearly pointing to Jesus Christ (Isa. 11:1), sprouting from earth in His humanity. He is that One who *"shall grow up out of His place"*. He will shoot up unexpectedly, from obscurity, *"as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground"* (Isa. 53:2), for God *"will cause the Branch of Righteousness to grow up unto David; and He shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land"* (Jer. 33:15).

"He shall build the temple of the LORD" – Jesus will fill up all of the image of Zerubbabel's leadership in building the millennial temple. To this great work Jesus made subtle allusion when referring to the resurrection of His body after His death at the hands of man through the analogy of rebuilding a destroyed temple (Jn. 2:19), the very comment that

Zec 6:14 And the crowns shall be to Helem, and to Tobijah, and to Jedaiah, and to Hen the son of Zephaniah, for a memorial in the temple of the LORD.

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was twisted into cause to kill Him (Matt.26:61) and cause to mock Him in His dying (Matt. 27:40).

"He shall bear the glory" – He alone will be the focus of all glory in that day, in His day, *"the Lord's day".*

"A priest upon His throne" – As pictured in a crowned Joshua, who was a priest but not a king. But in Jesus *both* offices will be fulfilled.

"The counsel of peace shall be between them both" – From between those two anointed offices of priest and king, from Jesus serving in those two roles, shall flow the golden oil supplying the worldwide witness of the true God during the millennial age, bringing soothing and healing at last to the world's open wound of sin. The result of Christ's combined reign as political and spiritual leader will be a world of righteousness and peace as so often pictured in the prophets. As the great *"Counsellor"* He will reign as *"Prince of Peace"* and King of Salem (Isa. 9:6). Because of His righteous rule on earth, because of His hardness toward all evil in that day, therefore

Zec 6:15 And they that are far off shall come and build in the temple of the LORD, and ye shall know that the LORD of hosts hath sent me unto you. And this shall come to pass, if ye will diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God.

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peace will be the result, for *"He is our peace"* (Eph. 2:14).

Vs. 14 – *"The crowns shall be…for a memorial in the temple of the LORD"* – So the crowns were not to remain on the head of Joshua when they walked out of Josiah's house, as indeed they could not. They would be left in the finished temple as an ongoing memorial of the royal line of David that must be set aside during *"the times of the Gentiles"*, memorials of that great descendant of David who would one day be crowned with many crowns. Those memorial crowns took on something of the function of the communion service or the Lord's Table for us, which looks back to what Jesus began in His first coming while it looks ahead to what He will one day finish, serving as a visual prop to help keep our faith and hope a burning and vibrant thing.

Vs. 15 – *"They that are far off shall come"* – A reference to the Gentiles who will be a part of Christ's kingdom (Isa. 2:2-3). For *"the Gentiles shall come to Thy light, and kings to the brightness of Thy*

rising" (Isa. 60:3). They too shall *"come and build in the temple of the LORD"*, contributing to the millennial temple. The delegation then visiting from the east, bringing their contribution to the temple project, becomes a token of the multitudes who in *"the Lord's day"* shall flow regularly to the Lord in Jerusalem (Isa. 2:2-3; Mic. 4:1-2; Rev. 21:24-26). The same is pictured in the Queen of Sheba's visit with Solomon as well (I Ki. 10). The same is pictured in the wise men from the east coming to worship the One *"born King of the Jews"* (Matt. 2).

"Ye shall know that the LORD of hosts hath sent Me" – Again, it was the claim so commonly in the mouth of Jesus in the days of His earthly ministry, seen throughout John's gospel. Compare 2:11.

"If ye will diligently obey the voice of the LORD your God" – It is not that the Lord's promise concerning the future through Zechariah was conditional, but *individual* participation in those promises is conditional upon a willing, listening heart of submission to the Lord's will and way of salvation in His Messiah.

Is He your Saviour?

Class 8 – Zechariah 7

Zec 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;

7:1-3 – The Fasts Questioned

Vs. 1 – *"In the fourth year of King Darius"* – It is a bit over two years later now as this chapter opens, for all the previous activities of Haggai's messages and Zechariah's 8 visions expressing Israel's future hope took place in the middle of Darius' second year (1:1). The temple rebuilding project must have been well along by this time, for they were at about the half-way point from a time perspective of what took them four years to complete. Considering God's promise of His good blessing two years prior, from the time of their decision to honour Him (Hag. 2:15-19), things must have been going well for them. The sun was shining and the rain was falling when it should. The fields and orchards were producing in abundance. The economy was soaring. There was likely a general sense of well-being pervading the nation. And with all going so well they were very likely pressing up close to the dangers on the other end of the health and happiness spectrum, neglect

Zec 7:2 When they had sent unto the house of God Sherezer and Regemmelech, and their men, to pray before the LORD,
Zec 7:3 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?

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of the Lord or the tendency to drift away from dependence upon Him in good times.

Vs. 2 – There came a delegation of men representing the people of Judah. They came *"to pray before the LORD"*, or literally "to entreat the face of the LORD". So they were looking for God's answer to a question being raised among the people, and they were first and foremost coming to God, seeking His will on the matter. As we shall see, they found answers for their sincerity, though nothing like they were expecting!

Vs. 3 – This delegation came *"to speak unto the priests"* in Jerusalem as those responsible for the spiritual concerns and questions of the nation, *"and to the prophets"* as those who could speak a direct word from God. So they came with humility and propriety, bringing their inquiry to those responsible and able to provide them with God's mind. Sometimes when we so come to God for His

answers His words are not quite what we might anticipate or even want. But even though His words are sharp we can always know that they are for our best. Access to God's mind like this, through His priests and prophets, is part of what the Diaspora despised in never returning to the land.

"Should I weep…as I have done" – They were asking from the perspective of each individual, thus the 1st person *"I"* here. And their question concerned the national observance of times of mourning and fasting. From the time Jerusalem was destroyed by Babylon the people, especially the more devout among them, observed yearly fasts in remembrance of the great tragedy of their city and temple destroyed. But now, with the remnant returned and the temple on the mend and the economy on the upswing and things looking up, it seemed a bit silly to continue such times of national mourning. Some had probably already stopped participating, moving others to wonder if it was ethically correct to end the long-standing tradition of these religious fasts, fearful that they were perhaps jeopardizing God's pleasure and their new found prosperity.

Now these fasts were not times traced upon their calendar by God, and thus were not required by Him from the start. The only regular time God suggested

such self-affliction was on the Day of Atonement, when He had said *"ye shall afflict your souls"* (Lev. 23:27). Even there He did not specifically prescribe fasting. There were times when God called His wayward nation to fasting as an expression of repentance (Joel 1:13,14; 2:5), but not on an annual, monthly, or weekly basis. The practice of fasting as a religious duty has always been a free-will thing, fine to do but not compulsory. God only regulates fasting in the *way* it is done when one should choose to do it (Matt. 6:16-18). It must be in secret, *"unto thy Father"* only, and without hypocrisy. Fasting is a voluntary form of self-affliction in quest of God's attention, will, or pleasure.

What these men enquired about were days set up by the people in that time of their greatest calamity, then becoming entrenched into their religious routine, and being observed still in Zechariah's day. The question for which they sought an answer from God was whether it would be right to discontinue such routine or ritual fasts.

"As I have done these so many years" – They made much of their loooong performance of this for *"so many years"*. Their words provide a glimpse into their feeling that they were due for some relief from

Zec 7:4 Then came the word of the LORD of hosts unto me, saying,
Zec 7:5 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?

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such irksome rigours. Obviously any heartfelt sentiment in the practice had long since dried up. They were merely following meaningless form or ritual, and were quite ready to be done with it, especially in the new, brighter mood with which their little nation was more recently infused. If they thought they might receive some commendation from God for their ritual performance, they did not! Instead of any word of praise from the Lord for their long endurance, they met only with God's rebuke.

7:4-7 – Questioners Questioned

Vs. 4-7 – *"Then came the word of the LORD of hosts unto me"* – Perhaps even while the priests were deliberating the question, arguing the merits of ceasing what had long since become an institution, the Lord sent word to and through Zechariah in response. And a word of rebuke it was! Rebuke not only aimed at these representatives, but at *"all the people of the land"* they represented as well. Even *"the priests"* were not by-passed. It was a needed

word from God for all.

"Did ye at all fast unto Me, even to Me?" – Do not miss the items adding force to the Lord's words here. *"At all"* raises the question of whether *any of it* was really for the Lord. *"Even to Me"* is the pronoun repeated for emphasis, raising the question of whether *the Lord* was really the focus of any of it. Was there any honest thought of God in their annual self-afflictions? So God pressed right past the concern they raised to address *His own* concern. A much deeper concern. In fact He never even entertained their question, as if it were of no consequence. He answered their one rather simple, superficial question with three questions of a far more penetrating nature;

- Vs. 5 – Were such religious self-afflictions ever really done out of genuine heart devotion to the Lord? Were they not done more for others to see that you were doing them? More out of fear of people than of God? More concerned that others would be concerned if we did not, than God's concern? Do we not often bow our heads at the table to give thanks for the same reason, more than out of genuine thankfulness to God welling up in our hearts?

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

- Vs. 6 – Even when eating and not fasting, was it not always far more about yourself and your own benefits than God's? Their self-centeredness far exceeded their God-centeredness. Should not all we do and receive be to the glory of God (I Cor. 10:31)? Should not all rather be done out of genuine thankfulness to Him?

- Vs. 7 – Should you not be listening more carefully to what God has spoken to past generations? The question of true importance is ever the degree to which we are hearing and heeding God's words. If the former generation had just done that His wrath would never have fallen and there would be no such petty questions now of whether to continue mourning their losses or not. Disobedience only ever confuses things. The answer is to carefully hear and follow what God proclaims from first to last, rather than what man

institutes. Hear the implications here;

- How long ago God spoke is irrelevant.
- Though spoken to a different generation, there is valid application for us today, to which our God holds us accountable.
- The old Book is not to be discarded or avoided, but is equally *"able to make thee wise unto salvation".*
- Without a heart of sincerest attention to the details of what God has said, the most careful religious observances *are a waste of time!*

"What doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all His ways, and to love Him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul" (Deut. 10:12).

The Lord speaks here to that all-too-common tendency in man for the real, heartfelt meaning to slip away from what we do for God. When I have in abundance, I should sincerely thank God. When I have nothing, I should *"rejoice in the Lord"* still, and *"joy in the God of my salvation"* (Hab. 3:17-18). Our delight should ever remain in Him throughout our waking thoughts. But instead we forget Him, even

while going through the motions of heartless morning "devotions", hollow prayers, and token table grace. With the burning of Jerusalem it was perhaps the first heartfelt cry to God from His people in a long time, and God was genuinely honoured in it. But that true and vibrant focus gradually bleached out of the worn routine it generated, and it just became a "what we do" thing. It is the danger of prosperity times when all is going quite fine. It is why God must burn our Jerusalems upon occasion. Every regular religious activity lends itself to shallow, perfunctory practice. And such surface formalisms are a harvest of apostasy in seed form. The Lord's point in vs. 7 is that this was a recognizable lean in the days of their fathers, when they too were blessed with peaceful habitation and prosperity, before they fell to apostasy, bringing the ruin of Assyria and Babylon upon them. Isaiah had attacked this lean toward empty formalism (1:10-15). Malachi would later have much to say against it as well. The enquiry of this delegation from the people served to point up the same subtle tendency in these people in their good times. Heart departure from continual attention to the Lord in love and fear of Him is the first tip of the decline to ruin. We must, with fear and focus, be willing to listen to God's past words, even during good times (Ps. 107). It was the essence of Christ's rebuke of

the otherwise commendable ministry of the church at Ephesus in Revelation 2. For they had left their first love, and thus had also turned the corner of that downward slant. See here how the Lord does not wait until we approach the bottom of the slide to point out our bearing. He is concerned from the first tip, the first shading of our heart away from love's intensity. For He knows where such rising distractedness ends in time.

Such words of rebuke from their God cut to the heart. But it must be understood that this was more a *positive* than a *negative*. It was the privilege of this returning remnant to be in a place where they could hear such reproof through God's spokesmen. This was the Word of God, through His anointed men, doing its piercing, dividing, cutting, shaping, correcting, preserving work in His people. This is what the modern Diaspora undervalue as well; those among Christians who show little commitment to church services, or move house or emigrate for economic or security reasons without care to insure that there is a good church on the other end, or who put themselves so far away from a sound ministry that the trek is not financially feasible or is too irksome to bother on any kind of regular basis. In their neglect of biblical preaching and teaching they show their low esteem for God's

Zec 7:8 And the word of the LORD came unto Zechariah, saying,
Zec 7:9 Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Execute true judgment, and shew mercy and compassions every man to his brother:

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words and distaste for His rebukes.

7:8-14 – Call to Repentance

Vs. 8-10 – The practical outworking of God's wisdom is that a heart of love for God will play out in sincere love for mankind. God so loves the world, and He displays His own nature in those truly walking with Him. And so the Lord proclaims to Zechariah's generation the same He spoke to the previous through *"the former prophets"*. His counsel of a life lived in love for God is a life lived for the good of man. When such is missing, and the degree to which it is missing, it is evidence of a love for God gone cold.

"Execute true judgment" – Do not ever shade the truth for your own benefit or the benefit of your own against another, an outsider. Show utter impartiality without the least *"respect of persons"*. Show even-handed fairness based strictly upon the truth as you see it, regardless of who is involved. God's children should be known (even despised) for

Zec 7:10 And oppress not the widow, nor the fatherless, the stranger, nor the poor; and let none of you imagine evil against his brother in your heart.

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their rigid adherence to the truth, because truth is the very nature of their heavenly Father. The typically contrasting responses of opposing sides at a rugby match or the routine lying so common in the work place are good evidence that most folks do not live by this rule.

"Show mercy and compassions" – Be generally given to a friendly, neighbourly attitude toward all, being quick to show compassion to others in their times of need. *"He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God"* (Mic. 6:8). Such honourable handling of mankind displays a humble walk with God.

"Oppress not" soft targets, such as widows, orphans, foreigners, and the poor. These all alike are among the more helpless of society, and thus are in need of help and protection. But because of their more limited support base these tend to be targets of abuse by the godless. To seek to take advantage of others in any way of course shows the

Zec 7:11 But they refused to hearken, and pulled away the shoulder, and stopped their ears, that they should not hear.

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very opposite of mercy or compassion, and *"the Lord is the Avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified"* (I Thess. 4:6). God is the Helper of the helpless, against all who help themselves to their assets.

Let none ever plot *"evil against his brother"* in his heart. Consider what this must include;

- Plotting or practicing any cheats against our government or those in authority.
- Pondering the sexual abuse of anyone. Is this not the sin at the heart of pornography's attraction, and much of the film industry as well? Feeding the growing voyeurism of modern society.
- Planning or picturing the hurt of those we hate or with whom we are angry. This is a stairway to depression, anxiety, and stress, with all of their physical offspring.

Vs. 11-12 – The response of the previous generation. It is images of refusal we see here, involving shoulders, ears, and hearts. They had no time for

Zec 7:12 Yea, they made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the law, and the words which the LORD of hosts hath sent in his spirit by the former prophets: therefore came a great wrath from the LORD of hosts.

God's reproofs. It came at last to the point where they stubbornly and deliberately refused to listen. Here is the outright rebellion at the end of the slowly descending drift. When one lives long enough without attention to the detail of God's words and ways he comes to more actively dislike the intrusion of them. Then when the stinging rebuke of God's word comes, as here, the response is open rebellion, for the will to revert back to God's way is just not there anymore, in preference of his own way or counsel.

Vs. 12 – *"They made their hearts as an adamant stone"* – *"Adamant"* describes a stone too hard to break, as diamond. God describes adamant as *"harder than flint"*, when making Ezekiel's forehead hard to endure the *"impudent and hardhearted"* of Israel (Ezek. 3:9). They refused to allow either their hope to be drawn by God's promises or their will to be driven by His threats, until God's visit in *"great wrath"* was the only remaining recourse. Though through God's grace and protection His people had escaped the attacks of many a formidable host or

Zec 7:13 Therefore it is come to pass, that as he cried, and they would not hear; so they cried, and I would not hear, saith the LORD of hosts:

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army over the centuries, yet there was no escaping *"the LORD of hosts"* when once the Almighty with His heavenly hosts had risen up in wrath against them.

Notice that the Lord attributes the hardening to the people themselves here. *"<u>They</u> <u>made</u> their hearts as an adamant stone"*, and quite against the work of *"His Spirit"* in fact. Apparently the softening and hardening of our hearts is within our own capability in some sense. We are responsible.

Vs. 13-14 – The response of their God. When man will not hear God it comes to the point where God in His wrath will not hear man's cry when his calamity comes (Prov. 1:27-28; Isa. 1:15). He responds in kind, paying with the same coin with which man pays Him. So the Lord *"scattered them"* in the same way that a great tornado might scoop up His nation and fling the people throughout the nations of earth like dust. And He scattered them *"among all the nations whom they knew not"*, in fulfilment of the original Deuteronomy 28 warning of God's cursing for disobedience (vs. 36, 46ff). God

Zec 7:14 But I scattered them with a whirlwind among all the nations whom they knew not. Thus the land was desolate after them, that no man passed through nor returned: for they laid the pleasant land desolate.

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scattered the whole for the same reason Jesus spoke the very difficult words He spoke in John 6. He drives away those who are the Diaspora in heart, that He might be left with or receive back only the remnant of those who truly believe.

The counsel of this portion goes in two directions;

- Pitch the perfunctory – Observing such things as formalized fast days or prescribed prayers are a waste and weariness before God.
- Return to God's fear – Obeying God's words with a heart of sincerity and thankfulness is all important.

Compare the Jewish leadership in the days of Christ's earthly ministry. By then they were so back-to-front from this faithful admonition that their manmade institutions had trodden God's words under foot.

Class 9 – Zechariah 8:1-8

Chapters 7 & 8 run together in this book of Zechariah, all given in response to the question of the Jews concerning the yearly fasts. A delegation had come from the people to the priests and prophets with the question of whether they really needed to continue with the yearly fasts that had been on their calendar for decades. These were annual times of self-affliction commemorating the destruction of Jerusalem by Babylon so many years before. It just did not seem necessary anymore with things looking up and the temple on the mend and the Lord's blessing on them in evidence. But in bringing their query they ran right into God's rebuke! For they had not been practicing such "devotions" out of a heart of worship to the Lord, but as a hollow matter of religious duty. This is an abuse of the Lord, a kind of taking of His name in vain, perhaps even a type of idolatry. For the outward form had become the essence of their religion, when sincere worship of God was to be their main concern. So just as Haggai came with sharp rebuke at the first, a strong, surprising negative word, yanking them up straight and riveting their attention, even so chapter 7 of Zechariah came with an unexpected jolt. But then,

as through Haggai and the early chapters of Zechariah, there followed words of encouragement and hope upon their right heart response. Even so this 8th chapter now follows with the more positive pull of comfort and hope. First driving them with warning and rebuke, then drawing them with promise of blessing. This is ever the Lord's way through His prophets.

See again here as well that when the Lord is making solid promises concerning the future, it is *"the LORD of hosts"* making those promises. We find this title of the Lord 18 times in this chapter, 12 of those times in the phrase *"<u>saith</u> the LORD of hosts"*. Again, it is the name of that One who is able do *anything*, who cannot, does not, will not know defeat. The One who is wholly able to bring to pass *all* that He *"saith"*. It is why this name of the Lord features so strongly here, lest any should doubt His ability to do as He has spoken.

Chapter 7 looked back to the failure of the previous generations in making comparisons with current trends. Chapter 8 now looks ahead to the future, to a fully restored and rejoicing Jerusalem. When God would fill the hearts of His people with hope toward the end of leading them to right living, He turns

Zec 8:1 Again the word of the LORD of hosts came to me, saying,
Zec 8:2 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; I was jealous for Zion with great jealousy, and I was jealous for her with great fury.

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their eyes ahead, making promises concerning their future. Again, the priceless result of a study of prophecy is hope, leading to obedience.

8:1-8 – Jews and Jerusalem Restored

Vs. 1 – *"I was jealous for Zion"* – Again, greatest emphasis from the Lord in describing His passion for His people, as we have already seen in Zechariah's 1st vision (1:14). But even more extreme is the emphasis here. Again we see it in the ordering of the sentence in the Hebrew. The phrase here begins with the verb "jealous". The Hebrew word has the idea of redness at the root of it, expressing the colour of the face when this emotion is present with power in the heart. Again, when a word is repeated as here, "jealous with jealousy", it is a Hebrew idiom of emphasis, expressing "very jealous". And then see how the adjective "great" is added as well, "jealous I am for Zion (with) great jealousy". And then the Lord actually rephrases the statement, stressing the point even more strongly. "I am hot (with) great jealousy for her". Clearly the

Lord's concern for His people *knows no bounds!*

Consider this statement of the Lord's most supreme intensity of passion for His people here. If the potency of His passion for them remained at that point in history, even after the previous generation had so treacherously denied Him, and even with the current generation tilting into the same drift, then what can be said of today, even after they have rejected and killed their Messiah? Would the Lord fall from the most extreme, absolute passion, such acute jealousy, to then forsake them utterly, as some claim? Thus is the folly of the Amillennialists, who fail to read a verse like this with the same power with which it was given, applying still to national Israel even now and evermore. The Amillenialist is fundamentally a dishonest interpreter of portions like this. Whereas the Apostle Paul had *"renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not…handling the word of God deceitfully"* (II Cor. 4:2), many Bible teachers simply do not follow in the tradition of God's apostle. How could God have stated more strongly His passion for His chosen people, the actual descendants of Jacob, than He does here? He quite simply will never let them go! It is the commitment He made to them from the beginning, from Abraham. Praise God He will not let Israel go! It speaks volumes on the nature of His loving-

Zec 8:3 Thus saith the LORD; I am returned unto Zion, and will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and Jerusalem shall be called a city of truth; and the mountain of the LORD of hosts the holy mountain.

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kindness. And it speaks to my heart that He will not let *me* go either, having brought me into His fold by faith in Jesus Christ. Compare Jeremiah 33:23-26.

Vs. 3 – *"I am returned unto Zion"* – The nature of God's prophecies often have partial, typical fulfilments before the final, complete fulfilment.

- God had *"returned unto Zion"* here at the point of Zechariah's words, in His restoring of blessing to them.
- He returned again unto Zion in Jesus Christ appearing to His people in His earthly ministry, beginning with His introductory clearing of the temple in John 2.
- He returned to visit her again in judgment in the form of Rome's crushing, scattering blow beginning in 70 A.D.
- He will return to visit her yet again in judgment through the national nightmare of Antichrist in the last days.

- And then at last He will return to stay when Jesus Christ comes again to fully restore the remnant of His people and His crowning city, these never to be dominated by created power ever again.

His earlier comings were not the end, but only the assurance and reminder of the end, answer, and ultimate yet to come. Many want to say that the things spoken in these verses have already come to pass. Have they? The answer is yes and no. Though partial fulfilments may now be history, the end and answer will only be when Jesus comes at last to His earthly kingdom. Only when *"the times of the Gentiles"* have finally come to their prophesied end. The Lord has gone and returned to His place *"till they acknowledge their offence and seek My face: in their affliction they shall seek Me early"* (Hos. 5:15). And when He at last returns He says *"I…will dwell in the midst of Jerusalem"*. He will come to *"dwell"*, to stay. It will be the day of His abiding presence on earth. Hear Him! It is not that He will take His people Israel to dwell with Him in heaven, but He will return to dwell with her *where she is.* Clearly He refers to an *earthly* kingdom.

"And Jerusalem shall be called…" – In that day of God's abiding presence in God the Son (Ezek. 43:2-

5), in that day when *"He shall build the temple of the LORD; and He shall bear the glory"* (6:13), Jesus Christ ruling and ministering from His throne as King and Priest, in that day the city of Jerusalem shall be exalted to a place of highest honour, becoming the civil and religious capital of the world during the kingdom age. Telling titles are given to it here in vs. 3;

- *"City of truth"* – Because He who *is* truth shall be ruling from there. Where one is in a place of responsibility the effect of his character should be felt, or he does not truly lead. When Jesus shall sit as King there, truth shall be the prevailing character of the city. Wherever Jesus is allowed to hold sway His character becomes evident, whether over the world, a city, or a life. He does not allow things to be run by a lesser standard when He is in the place of standard-bearer (nor should we). No longer will mankind *"work iniquity nor speak lies"* (Zeph. 3:13). No business will be run on that basis and survive in that day. All things there will be known for utter faithfulness to truth.

- *"The mountain of the LORD of hosts"* – Because it will be His place ever after. It will be *"the Lord's day"*. He will be showing

Himself as Possessor of heaven and earth without doubt in that day. And Jerusalem will be the very place of His presence on earth, the place where He can be seen and heard and worshipped.

- *"The holy mountain"* – Because He is holy. Again, His nature will be displayed in His place. What is important to a person becomes evident in that place that is theirs. A teenager's bedroom or a man's garage tends to display what is important to them. If evidence of the world is on display there then that is what is important to them. If the world's unrighteous nature is in evidence then that is what is in them. Because Jesus is holy He will rule in holiness, and His place will become known for the same. Everything from horse bells to house pots will be "HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD" in that day (14:20-21). Compare Isaiah 1:26.

Have such titles as these ever really been true of Jerusalem up to this point? When were they fulfilled if fulfilled already? Unless we distort such terms to speak of positional things that do not touch practical reality, then obviously such promised titles of this city refer to another day of a very

Zec 8:4 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; There shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, and every man with his staff in his hand for very age.
Zec 8:5 And the streets of the city shall be full of boys and girls playing in the streets thereof.

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different kind, a day far more characterized by truth and holiness than anything that Promised Land has seen so far.

Vs. 4-5 – *"The streets of Jerusalem"* – The streets of this city are mentioned 3 times here in these 2 verses. The point is the peace and safety that will characterize everyday life in Jerusalem in that day. Even soft targets of the aged and children will be safe in that kingdom age. City streets have a reputation for danger and abuse when the wickedness of man's heart is allowed to run unchecked. Compare events in the streets of Sodom, Gibeah, and Samaria. Remember that the context of this whole discussion was the question of the fasts still practiced in mourning for Babylon's terrible destruction and carnage on the streets of Jerusalem. When man rules, war and brutality, lust and greed are always the eventual result. And this most characteristic aspect of human rule will rise to its absolute historic peak under the dominion of Antichrist. But where and when Jesus Christ the

Zec 8:6 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; If it be marvellous in the eyes of the remnant of this people in these days, should it also be marvellous in mine eyes? saith the LORD of hosts.

Prince of Peace rules, there is peace like a river. It is images here of the long-standing happiness and contentment that will be true of that coming day and age.

Vs. 6 – *"Marvellous in the eyes"* – Though the picture the Lord painted of a future Jerusalem and people may seem an impossibly marvellous thing, must the fulfilment of it be deemed impossible to the Lord? With a touch of irony in His approach, the Lord's point is that in spite of the doubters in any and every age nothing is too hard for Him. His words seem to point back to that time just before Judah was taken into captivity so many decades before. The same word was used when Jeremiah was instructed by the Lord to buy a field in Anathoth (Jer. 32), when Babylon had already taken all of Judah and was even then besieging Jerusalem, thirsting for blood. It was a day when property in that land could not have been more worthless, for all seemed quite lost. Jeremiah's purchase was an act of faith and obedience on the prophet's part, and it was a kind of promise on God's part in telling

Jeremiah to accept the offer. God was officially recording His assurance that His people would be restored to their land. And when Jeremiah later prayed, *"Ah Lord GOD! Behold…there is nothing too hard for thee"*, he used the same verb there translated *"marvellous"* here (Jer. 32:17). The meaning is literally "hidden" or beyond ability. And therefore when such a seemingly impossible thing is accomplished it becomes incredible or *"marvellous"*. The Lord again used the word when later confirming Jeremiah's confidence, *"Behold, I am the LORD, the God of all flesh: is there any thing too hard for Me?"* (32:27). Jeremiah was a man of faith with firmest confidence in what God had said He would do. If He said He would bring His people back to inhabit the land and make good Jeremiah's sale deed, then that is just exactly what He would do. And did the Lord do that? Did He fulfil that promise? Did He bring His people back to inhabit the land? Did He make good on Jeremiah's purchase? Did He do it *actually* rather than only in an allegorical way? Yes, yes, yes to all of the above! Jeremiah's descendant who benefited decades later from that sale was very likely present there with them. And the nature of that deal would have been a well-known thing among them, for it was not done in private. God purposely made it public (Jer. 32:12). God most certainly did do that *"marvellous"*

Zec 8:7 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Behold, I will save my people from the east country, and from the west country;
Zec 8:8 And I will bring them, and they shall dwell in the midst of Jerusalem: and they shall be my people, and I will be their God, in truth and in righteousness.

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thing in their past. They were standing there in Jerusalem even then as living proof of it. And if He showed Himself able to do the impossible back then in the past He can do the impossible in what He was now further speaking concerning that city and people into the future. Past and present realities prove future realities. Just because it seems impossible to you, must it be impossible with God? Does man's assessment dictate to God? Because some scholars cannot fathom how God could actually, literally fulfil His promises to Israel, does that make it impossible? Are they then justified in explaining away the simple meaning of His promises through allegorical shenanigans? How did God fulfil His promise to Jeremiah and the nation through him? He did it actually, literally, according to a normal hearing or reading of it! He will do it the same the next time! Count on it! Live like it! Just wait and see!

Vs. 7-8 – Israel regathered – Again, here is a promise

finding partial fulfilments in history, yet pointing to the ultimate regathering of national Israel in the last days. There was indeed a return of the remnant to Judah then in Zechariah's day, but that was not the complete fulfilment of this prophecy. For they were not saved *"from the east country, and from the west country"*. They were only collected from the east at that point. So there was implied a further scattering yet to come, which would send them even wider than just the area of Mesopotamia. This of course came through the Roman dispersion of the Jews beginning in 70 A.D. to all points of the compass. Compare Isaiah 11:11-12; 43:5-6. Even what we are seeing in more modern times in Israel is again only a partial fulfilment. The Jewish people are not yet dwelling *"in the midst of Jerusalem"* (vs. 8). They share their land and holy city with Muslim "Palestinians", with no access even to their temple site. And are they yet returned to the Lord in intimate relation to Him where God could call them *"My people"* and He could be called *"their God"*? No! They are still Lo-ammi, meaning "not My people". The terms here come from the prophecy of Hosea, who was instructed by the Lord to name his 3rd child *"Lo-ammi: for ye are not My people, and I will not be your God"* (Hos. 1:9). To this day they still stand as a people in rejection of their Messiah. There exists among them a great disillusionment with God.

Because they will not see Jesus Christ for who He is, therefore they see God as having abandoned His ancient promises to them as a nation. They are not His. He is not theirs. Only when at last *"they shall look upon Me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for Him"* (Zech. 12:10), only then at Christ's return will there be a true change in them as a people and this prophecy will at last be fulfilled. Does *"truth and righteousness"* characterize them as a people today? No. Of course not! They continue to live without God and without His righteousness, which can only be found in Jesus Christ, by faith in Him. They *"being ignorant of God's righteousness"* on the whole are still *"going about to establish their own righteousness"*, having *"not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God"*. For they will not yet accept Jesus as *"the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth"* (Rom. 10:3-4). These verses of Zechariah 8 describe a national conversion, which will only come about through the furnace of Antichrist's brutally persecuting regime, and Christ's return to Israel's 11th hour rescue at Armageddon. But it will come, for God has spoken.

Class 10 – Zechariah 8:9-23

Zec 8:9 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; Let your hands be strong, ye that hear in these days these words by the mouth of the prophets, which were in the day that the foundation of the house of the LORD of hosts was laid, that the temple might be built.

The Lord through Zechariah, having presented to His people the distant picture of His return and presence and a fully restored Jerusalem, then gave a word of encouragement to the people of Zechariah's day. This prophet had so very much of a positive, hopeful, refreshing nature to bring to his nation. But we must not lose sight of our God behind the man, He who actually gave the words. How mindful and quick God ever is to shore up every positive move in His people for Him. Where His people choose to sail in the direction of His current, they will have the Spirit wind behind them to speed their way. Where we choose to sail contrary to His will we proceed against both wind and sea, indeed straight into tempest and turmoil.

8:9-17 – Courage for the Present

Vs. 9 – *"Let your hands be strong"* – It is a word of encouragement something like "pluck up your courage" or "be of good cheer" or "apply yourself to

Zec 8:10 For before these days there was no hire for man, nor any hire for beast; neither was there any peace to him that went out or came in because of the affliction: for I set all men every one against his neighbour.

His tasks".

The Lord was concerned for their attitude, that they be encouraged in His efforts on earth. He points back to that time two years prior when Haggai first came with God's demand that the people put first things first and then Zechariah followed up. And *"by the mouth"* of these prophets the Lord effectively moved the people *"that the temple might be built"*. Do yourself a favour and take the time to compare the record of this divine work in Haggai, when the people were effectively turned to the work *"of the house of the LORD of hosts"* (see as well our Reading Companion to the book of Haggai).

Vs. 10 – *"There was no hire"* – As the Lord did two years back through Haggai (2:15-19), so now again through Zechariah He calls the people to consider the way of things back then. Important for their (our) current encouragement is the remembrance of what it was like back when God was running interference. Remember how the economy had so

run down that there was just no work either for man or beast. Commerce was dull, the phones had gone dead, earnings were low, prices were high, little work to be had anywhere! Some were perhaps tempted to follow Elkanah to Moab in hopes of finding work there. As Haggai so effectively called to their attention; they were planting much, but it brought in little; they were eating and drinking, but not satisfied; they were clothed, but not warm; they were earning wages, but it was like it was dribbling away from them before they could even get it home. It was God blowing on their income, wasting it. Because they were leaving His house and His concerns to lay waste in pursuit of their own concerns. Oh it moved them! And now compare the discouragements of that day when the Lord was working against them with this day of the Lord's blessing upon them. With *your* things first it is all a downward trend. With *God's* things first it is all an upward mend. It went from slump to jump, for things were hopping in the land now compared to those past days of spiritual and economic depression.

"Neither was there any peace" – With the pressure of poverty the unlawful element in those without principle came to the surface. And to the anguish of economic hard times was added a rise in criminal

Zec 8:11 But now I will not be unto the residue of this people as in the former days, saith the LORD of hosts.

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activity, robbing society of peace and safety. Travelling the roads became more dangerous for *"him that went out or came in",* giving rise to suspicion and distrust. When a society leaves God out there arises every form of trouble between mankind. *"From whence come wars and fightings among you? Come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your members?"* (James 4:1).

"I set all men every one against his neighbour" – When they set themselves against their God, He in turn set them against each other in seeking to drive them to their need of Him. God Himself had a hand in situations that boiled over into strife and heartache and bitterness among people. Why is South Africa in exactly that same situation today? Strife and bitterness, murder, rape, and thievery all around us. Is it not obvious? It is because God, the only true God of the Bible, has been left out! What else? Why else? Any of our current efforts at solving the problems are merely a plaster over the *symptoms*. The *source* of society's troubles becomes self-evident in a portion like this. Judah was not a

Zec 8:12 For the seed shall be prosperous; the vine shall give her fruit, and the ground shall give her increase, and the heavens shall give their dew; and I will cause the remnant of this people to possess all these things.
Zec 8:13 And it shall come to pass, that as ye were a curse among the heathen, O house of Judah, and house of Israel; so will I save you, and ye shall be a blessing: fear not, but let your hands be strong.

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nice place to live back then, before they got right with God.

Vs. 11 – *"But now…"* – It was a better day to be sure. And that better day had little to do with any secondary economic conditions. It had far more to do with the primary factor that their God was *"not unto the residue of this people as in the former days"*. It had everything to do with what God was allowing. It is all about Him, always! Is He currently with or against, widening our boundaries or whittling our bounty?

Vs. 12 – Like a well-adjusted machine, God works every aspect together for good to them that love Him. Scarcity is scattered. Drought and depression driven away. Field, vineyard, and orchard well-supplied with rain and producing from the ground, with God's blessed people on the receiving end of

His humming conveyer.

Vs. 13 – *"Ye were a curse…ye shall be a blessing"* – He is not speaking only of what they *receive*, but of what they *are*. God has always meant that His people be a blessing to the people of earth. As they walk with Him in the Spirit so He will cause them to be. When His people chose to reject Him He made them a shame and *"a curse among the heathen"* as He had promised; *"And I will deliver them to be removed into all the kingdoms of the earth for their hurt, to be a reproach and a proverb, a taunt and a curse, in all places whither I shall drive them"* (Jer. 24:9). Yet when His people choose to walk with Him He makes them a blessing among the unsaved world. When a believer chooses the way of sin he cannot help but that it eventually becomes a public thing, an open disgrace. He comes to shame, becoming a curse even among the unsaved, giving *"great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme"* (II Sam. 12:14). By the same token when a child of God makes the hard decisions to live for the Lord, allowing all within him to bless God's holy name, the Lord will lift him to honour such that he will have the respect even of the unsaved world around him. These are glaring lessons for us here. Though the nation of Judah was largely pagan in the days of King Josiah, yet how greatly the people

respected that man for his uncompromising reforms, and mourned and honoured him in his death (II Chron. 35:24-25). When David and Solomon walked with God, they held the respect of even the pagan nations around. As pictured in the Queen of Sheba, enthusing over the marvel of King Solomon (I Ki. 10:4-9).

"O house of Judah, and house of Israel" – Though the remnant landed in the province of Judah, the congregation was made up of those from the tribes of both the northern and southern kingdoms of Israel and Judah. It seems there were no "lost tribes" as some suggest, for all the tribes had representation in this returning remnant. Even so a remnant from all the tribes will be raised up for special service during the coming Great Tribulation (Rev. 7). And a remnant of the whole nation, including all the tribes, will have part in Christ's millennial reign as well. Compare Ezekiel 37, where the supernatural restoration of the valley of dry bones includes both Israel and Judah.

"Fear not, but let your hands be strong" – Again God's counsel is to strength and courage in view of their God now with them. "Be encouraged!" You and I have every cause to be. Yet the fact that the Lord has said it, and now says it again, and says

Zec 8:14 For thus saith the LORD of hosts; As I thought to punish you, when your fathers provoked me to wrath, saith the LORD of hosts, and I repented not:

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words to the same effect repeatedly throughout His blessed Book can only mean that He needs to say it. Must be we need to hear it, often! We are too given to forgetting our God's encouragement and command to be encouraged. The negative of the same is given in Paul's command to *"be careful for nothing"*. Let nothing fill or consume your heart with care. Rather be prayerful, be thankful, *be encouraged!* Allow God's message of hope rather to fold its sure, strong, comforting arms around your troubled heart. His motives are pure. His purposes are grace. His promise is good. *BE ENCOURAGED!!* He commands it. Be anxious *for nothing!*

Vs. 14-15 – *"As I thought…"* – As surely as the Lord in His wrath determined to punish Israel for their evil, *and did so*, even so just as surely He will bring them to the good He has yet determined upon them. See again how the name so prominently features when *"the LORD of hosts"* makes known His purpose in His promises. He is the One fully able and committed to carry out both promise and warning. It is a good thing our God does what He

Zec 8:15 So again have I thought in these days to do well unto Jerusalem and to the house of Judah: fear ye not.

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threatens in visiting His judgment upon rejecters, for this in itself is the assurance that He will most certainly bring His promise of good upon every receiver, *and repents not!* Again, His past faithfulness to His words is the assurance of present and future faithfulness.

This promise of cursing turned to blessing is another of those prophecies of God fulfilled on a limited basis in that day, but yet awaiting its ultimate fulfilment in *"the Lord's day".* The Jewish people have of course since become a cursing among the nations again when cast to the world by Rome. One writer likened them in the current era to Jonah in flight from God's will, causing a storm among the Gentiles wherever they are found. So the storm rages around them to this day, though never destroying them. That storm will yet grow *more* tempestuous for the Jewish nation, the threat taking them to the very *"bottoms of the mountains"* at the last, with no earthly hope whatsoever. Until, being so squeezed in the vice of circumstance, as stubborn Jonah in the fish, they with *"the spirit of grace and of supplication"* shall at last speak their

sincere repentance to their God. Compare Jonah 2. And so, as Jonah, the nation of Israel shall finally be spit out onto the shore of Christ's kingdom, restored to obedience and service, and ministering to the Gentile nations there, as Jonah to Nineveh. That makes Antichrist comparable to the great fish that swallowed Jonah, a "beast" (Rev. 13). It will seem like he has at last swallowed that nation down good and properly. But they, like Jesus from the belly of the earth, will be "resurrected" from a seemingly certain end as a nation, and then will be exalted as He.

Vs. 16 – *"These are the things that ye shall do"* – *Doers* and not mere hearers they were to be (James 1:22). Hearing with a heart to heed is the only kind of hearing God receives. Again, prophecy is meant to move us from hope to obedience as a practical expression of love for God and happiness in Him. Note the similar words here to what we have already seen in 7:9-10. As God had spoken to the former generations to no avail, so He now pointedly brings the same to this new generation, indicating that His simple requirements do not change.

Zec 8:17 And let none of you imagine evil in your hearts against his neighbour; and love no false oath: for all these are things that I hate, saith the LORD.

"Speak ye every man the truth" – Look at the great emphasis on truth in this passage (vs. 16, 17, & 19).

"Execute judgment of truth and peace" – Certainly where the well-being or reputation of another is concerned, you be sure you provide fair and true judgment. Compare 7:9. Rulings are far more likely to lead to peace if made in strict fairness based on truth. A ballgame gets out of hand when the umpiring is not done according to truth and fairness. *"Judgment of truth"* is what the Jewish leaders denied the very Son of God, and they have known little peace ever since.

"Let none of you imagine evil" – Do not even use your mind, let alone your tongue or hands, for purposing evil against another. Compare 7:10. Rather *"be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another"* (Eph. 4:32).

Vs. 17 – *"Love no false oath"* – This is opposites to executing true judgment. There must be no falsifying or cover-up or untrue report in court

hearings under an oath of truthfulness before God.

"All these are things that I hate" – The God of truth hates all falsehood (Prov. 6:16-19). And His judgment will indeed search out, find, and abide on every liar (5:3-4). Those who love Him must hate what He hates. One way we can know that others worship a different god than the true God of the Bible is when their "god" allows for deception in furthering their cause.

The Lord's words here are similar to Christ's rebuke of the Pharisees in Matt. 23 (vs. 23). They were so very careful about outward religion, tithing even to the herbs of their garden, and yet they were neglectful of *"the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith"*. They could even excuse themselves from the loving care of their parents through their traditions (Mk. 7:1-13).

8:18-23 – Promise for the Future

The Lord had spoken through Zechariah of;

- The dangerously superficial nature of their fasts (7:4-6).
- Their inattentive ear toward His words (7:7).
- The results of such a trend, both what

Zec 8:18 And the word of the LORD of hosts came unto me, saying,
Zec 8:19 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.

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resulted in the previous generation and the response of God (7:8-14).

- The hope of a fully restored Jerusalem and Jewish nation and blessing (8:1-17).

- The encouragement this should bring to them in their day.

Now picking up somewhat on the original question concerning the yearly fasts, the Lord pointed ahead again to a day when mournful fasting would turn to joyful feasting; a day of hearts full of God and His grace without thought of former losses; a day of praise and comfort, with joy drawing *"water out of the wells of salvation"* (Isa. 12:3). It is the same day Isaiah predicted, when the Lord will *"give unto them…that mourn in Zion…beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness"* (61:3).

Vs. 18-19 – *"Therefore love the truth and peace"* –

Zec 8:20 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; It shall yet come to pass, that there shall come people, and the inhabitants of many cities:
Zec 8:21 And the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the LORD, and to seek the LORD of hosts: I will go also.

Contrast *"love no false oath"* in vs. 17. The Lord would have His people to see what they do today as it fits into the broader panorama of His earthly purposes.

Vs. 20-23 – Gentile inclusion in the kingdom – The attention is now turned to those hated, ravaging Gentiles, who in their murderous pillaging gave rise to the fasts of mourning under question. God's people now hear again that a saved remnant even from the Gentiles would also have part in that coming kingdom (2:11, compare 14:16). This aspect of God's promise is also highly seasoned with the name, *"the LORD of hosts"*, who will surely accomplish it. Every verse of these remaining six includes this name of God. This aspect would have been very difficult for the Jewish people to believe or tolerate. Therefore the underscoring, and sandwiched with the assurance that the words are indeed the Lord's (vs. 20 & 23).

Zec 8:22 Yea, many people and strong nations shall come to seek the LORD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the LORD.
Zec 8:23 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you.

Note the nature of the Millennial Kingdom;

- A pervading, earnest interest in the Lord and His things so entirely out of keeping with the normal experience of men on earth (vs. 21).

- One world religion of the true worship of the true Lord of glory.

- The Lord's actual presence in Jerusalem, making this the centre of world worship (vs. 22). This again indicates an *earthly* kingdom of Christ. Compare again the same in Isaiah 2:2-3.

- An elevated role of the Jewish nation to spiritual leadership (vs. 23).

- A complete absence of pride, readily willing to appeal to the once hated nation for spiritual help.

History has never seen such, thus again indicating a fulfilment yet to come. It was an absolutely incredible (*"marvellous",* vs. 6) picture, particularly in the context of their situation at that time. Though there was so very little in the experience of that returned remnant to suggest any hope of the reality of this, yet the Lord meant it to be for their courage, that their *"hands be strong".* Gentile nations were decidedly over them and on a massive scale then, not in any way under them or with any shred of the hope of change in sight. Israel's power as a nation could not have appeared more miniscule in the formidable sea of the nations of earth. The returning remnant was only a relatively tiny representation of the Jewish people. The majority of the Jews had no interest in even returning to their land. The temple was not yet finished. Jerusalem remained a mess. Smallest interest in the true God could be traced anywhere among the Gentile hoards, only fascination with their pagan gods as in our modern world. How could such a picture presented by the prophet be possible, ever? But again, there was Jeremiah closing a deal for the purchase of a piece of land when all seemed lost. And that loss was most definitely confirmed by the very events they now mourned in their times of fasting; Jerusalem flattened, the people massacred, the temple of God completely spoiled, the nation

razed clean. But here they now were *living* in the impossible, children of the *"marvellous"*, of things "too hard". Here they were now restored to their land, free to worship their God as He required. And as the Lord had asked Jeremiah, and the people through him, *"I am the LORD, the God of all flesh: is there anything too hard for Me?"*, even so He asked again of this new generation. And so He asks of us. The appearance of things on the ground must never matter to us. The study of God's prophecy leads ever to the same hope-filled conclusion, God will do what He has said.

"Thus saith the LORD of hosts; It shall yet come to pass"

"Behold, thy King
cometh unto thee:
He is just,
and having salvation"

(Zech. 9:9)

Class 11 – Zechariah 9

With chapter 9 we enter into the third and last major division of this book of Zechariah. We have considered that string of 8 visions in the first 6 chapters of the book. We have just come through the 2 middle chapters with their great revelations around the question of the fasts. These 6 remaining chapters of Zechariah now consist of 2 burdens, the first in chapters 9-11 with more particular focus on Christ's first coming and rejection and the second in chapters 12-14 with more of a focus on Christ's second coming and reception. So the book is quite symmetrical in its set-up, with chapter themes divided 6-2-6, visions-fasts-burdens. Even this last set of 6 chapters is divisible somewhat evenly with 3 chapters to each of the 2 burdens. Yet all 3 of these major sections point to the same coming kingdom age. The initial 8 visions extended in their revelation to the time of Christ's kingdom of blessing. The 2 middle chapters in response to the question of fasts pointed to the day when fasts of mourning would give way to feasts of rejoicing. Even so these 2 burdens now point ahead to Messiah's comings, both in humility at the first and in power at the last.

Some suggest that there is a different approach in

Zec 9:1 The burden of the word of the LORD in the land of Hadrach, and Damascus shall be the rest thereof: when the eyes of man, as of all the tribes of Israel, shall be toward the LORD.

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these remaining chapters of Zechariah to the previous chapters of the book. In fact some are even so bold as to suggest that there was another Zechariah who finished the book from this point, perhaps coming much later in history, sometime after the nation of Greece arose to world power. I believe us wise to ignore all such notions, as arising from spiritually bankrupt teachers who would rob the Bible of its prophetic power.

9:1-8 – Judgment on Coastal Cities

The attention begins to the north of Israel and moves south through the major cities of the coast, prophetically charting the progress of the next conquering "carpenter" raised up to deal with what was the current "horn" of the Medo-Persian Empire (1:18-21). Zechariah was given a quick preview of the successes of Greece under Alexander the Great.

Vs. 1 – *"The burden of the word of the LORD"* – The heavy word of God's judgment, the flying scroll of His curse (5:1-4), would come to rest upon *"the land of Hadrach and Damascus"*. History records how

Zec 9:2 And Hamath also shall border thereby; Tyrus, and Zidon, though it be very wise.
Zec 9:3 And Tyrus did build herself a strong hold, and heaped up silver as the dust, and fine gold as the mire of the streets.
Zec 9:4 Behold, the Lord will cast her out, and he will smite her power in the sea; and she shall be devoured with fire.

Alexander later took Damascus of Syria early in his campaign. Hadrach is an unknown, but was obviously associated with the area of Damascus northeast of Mt. Hermon, across the mountains of Lebanon from Galilee.

Vs. 2 – Hamath was much farther to the north on the Orontes River, a city considered to be one of the oldest on earth.

Vs. 3-4 – *"Tyrus did build herself a strong hold"* – The prophet Isaiah (chapter 23) records as well the Lord's concern with the city of Tyrus or Tyre because of her pride, generated by her great wealth, prominence, and strong defence. In fact the description of the proud king of Tyre reaches beyond mere man in Ezekiel 28 to describe Satan, the prince of pride behind the man. The wealth and wisdom of that people presented a problem to the followers of God in that day. How could there be such a collection of worldly wealth and wisdom in

people so given to pagan worship and pursuit of the world? How could there be such longstanding security for such as they, while God's people are trodden under the foot of every new world conqueror? Compare Psalm 73.

Tyre was a city half on the mainland and half on an island *"strong hold"* nearly a kilometre out from shore, secured with a great, high wall. It was so strong that Assyria's King Shalmaneser besieged the city as best he could for 5 years and could not take it. Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon seems to have been successful against Tyre, but only after a 13-year siege. Yet God's messenger in Alexander burned the city after only 7 months, by building a causeway out to their formidable island fortress. God was with that Grecian king, fulfilling the words of His prophets. We see it in vs. 4, *"Behold, <u>the</u> <u>Lord</u> will cast her out"*. It was God doing as He said. Human glories are no nail fastened to anything fixed or sure! Only faith fastens to a Rock which cannot move.

See how Satan planted his crowning cities, his bastions of pride (Tyre, Nineveh, Babylon), just on the edges of Emmanuel's land, like dark sentinels guarding the borders of truth. And see how God has long since knocked them all flat and left them for

Zec 9:5 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.
Zec 9:6 And a bastard shall dwell in Ashdod, and I will cut off the pride of the Philistines.
Zec 9:7 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.

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rubble.

Vs. 5 – The cities mentioned here are all Philistine cities, as Alexander makes his way down the coast toward Egypt.

"The king shall perish from Gaza" – History affirms that when Gaza was taken after a 5 month siege their king was tied to a chariot and dragged to death through the streets of the city.

Vs. 6 – *"A bastard shall dwell in Ashdod"* – This apparently refers to an impure mixed race of people who would dwell there. It seems the Greeks repopulated Ashdod with people of all races in an effort to ward off any further patriotic uprising, as Assyria did with Israel.

Vs. 7 – *"I will take away his blood out of his mouth"* – The Lord would remove from that place the filthy practices of pagan idolatry.

"He that remaineth…shall be for our God" – The picture now looks beyond to Christ's kingdom when all pagan sacrifices will be gone and a people shall live there who love the true God. As is so common to God's prophecy, there is often no clear line of distinction between the more immediate fulfilment and the more distant ultimate fulfilment, for God sees it all together. He is able to do what we cannot do, to focus at the same time both on the nearer person and one visible just over his shoulder but much farther away. We must recognize this tendency in God's prophecy to see the near and far together, or we might come to the conclusion that the whole of it was fulfilled in the more immediate events. The truth is that God mingles the two, the near and far fulfilments, partials and complete, in order to clothe the whole in an obvious suggestion. As He brought the more immediate to pass just as He said, so He will bring to pass the ultimate just as He said. As the Lord brought sweeping, needed changes in the cities of the Philistines through Alexander's conquest, so He will do the same and far more so through Christ's final conquest.

Zec 9:8 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 any more: for now have I seen with mine eyes.

Obviously land and cities close to Jerusalem, such as that of the Philistines, will be choicest in the days of Christ's kingdom. For in that day there will be continual need and desire to leave one's work, collect family and friends, and *"go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob"*, to be taught of Him *"and to seek the LORD of hosts"* (8:21; Isa. 2:3).

Vs. 8 – *"No oppressor shall pass through them"* – This was later fulfilled in Alexander's day (partially). Greece went conquering down the Mediterranean coast and subjugated Egypt before heading back north to meet Persia again *"in the fury of his power"* (Dan. 8:6). He passed by and returned without touching Israel because God was encamped about His house. The historian Josephus records how Alexander sent the demand ahead of him to Jerusalem that Judah must pay to him the tribute they would normally give to Persia. It was a question of loyalty, putting the Jewish nation into a very difficult bind. The high priest, Jaddua, chose to refuse Alexander, for they were bound in

Zec 9:9 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.

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agreement with king Darius of Persia at the time. In a rage Alexander proclaimed that when he was finished with the cities of the coast he would be back to sort out Jerusalem as well. Jaddua ordered sacrifices and prayers for deliverance to be made by the people of Jerusalem. It is said that the Lord then instructed the high priest in a dream to boldly go out and meet the Grecian commander. In that meeting Alexander was impressed by the sight of the high priest in his approach with his entourage, for Alexander had been confronted by the very same scene in a dream of his own. So he was moved to deal kindly with the Jews rather than following through on his threat. Apparently Jaddua was able even to impress Alexander with God's prophecies that had gone before, charting his successes. This deliverance was a more immediate fulfilment of Zechariah's words, but the scope of the vision here ranges wider again to a day when *"no oppressor shall pass through them <u>any</u> <u>more</u>".* A coming day of complete deliverance now gives rise to the thought of the coming Deliverer.

9:9-11 – The King's Comings

Vs. 9 – This is a clear prophecy of Christ's first coming in humility, fulfilled and marked so in Matthew 21:4-5. Yet it is interesting to note what Matthew left out in quoting this portion;

- The great rejoicing and shouting.
- The King's *"just"* nature.
- The *"salvation"* He has and brings.

The gospel writer left out these aspects because they relate more to Christ's *second* coming than His first, when He comes as just Judge, when He brings overwhelming joy and deliverance to all the remnant.

So it is the contrast of two conquering kings we see here in Alexander and Jesus. The one, the earthly, so swelled with pride, carrying himself with such pomp, mounted appropriately on the finest horse worthy of a king, and coming to work according to his own whim regardless of rights or wrongs, bringing only terror, death, and destruction, and selling many thousands into the bondage of slavery. The other, the heavenly, comes as the *"just"* One, the *"righteous Branch"*, "THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS" (Jer. 23:5-6). This One comes

Zec 9:10 And I will cut off the chariot from Ephraim, and the horse from Jerusalem, and the battle bow shall be cut off: 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.

Zec 9:11 As for thee also, by the blood of thy covenant I have sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water.

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to *give* rather than to take, *"having salvation"*, bringing deliverance, coming as the *"lowly"* One, riding a donkey rather than a mount worthy of a king. But Jesus, though much less impressive in His coming, proves Himself so much greater the Conqueror than the earthly.

Vs. 10-11 – A picture of peace. The vision again ranges wider to express the peaceful nature of Christ's coming earthly kingdom. The vision of His first coming in vs. 9 is the assurance of His second coming here.

"I will cut off the chariot…the horse…and the battle bow" – All weapons of war shall be turned to purposes of peace in that day. Compare Isaiah 2:4, with swords and spears fashioned into ploughshares and pruning hooks, the business of battle and destruction turned to cattle and production.

Verse 10 seems to describe the effect of Christ's kingdom more particularly upon the warring nations of men. Verse 11 then turns to Israel, those bound to the Lord by covenant, who will at last be delivered in that day from all further bondage to other nations. The imagery of *"the pit"* hales back to the way the righteous have often been handled in days gone by (Gen. 37:24; Prov. 28:10; Jer. 38:6).

The two prospects of Christ's two comings in vs. 9 & 10 were pinched together, as is so common in the prophets, because there is a sense of a might-have-been in vs. 10. What is pictured there *might have been* fulfilled in Christ's first coming, had the nation received Him for who He is. The offer of the kingdom of God at hand, with attendant herald in John the Baptist, was a valid offer. But the Jewish nation would not receive Him. And their rejection established vs. 10 then as a prophecy of Christ's second coming.

9:12-17 – Israel Preserved Through Grecian Rule

We find here a record of the Lord's forever preservation of His people, with special focus on the days of the Maccabees during the time between the Old and New Testaments. Though the scowling world would again turn nasty toward God's people, though the next "carpenter" would turn to become

Zec 9:12 Turn you to the strong hold, ye prisoners of hope: even to day do I declare that I will render double unto thee;
Zec 9:13 When I have bent Judah for me, filled the bow with Ephraim, and raised up thy sons, O Zion, against thy sons, O Greece, and made thee as the sword of a mighty man.

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the third of the four "horns", yet still *"the LORD of hosts shall defend them…and the LORD their God shall save them"*. See again how that remarkable nation of Israel is still with us, confirming again the sure words of God. He said through Jeremiah that they would be back in the land, and there they were in Zechariah's day. He tells them here that they would be preserved through further times of trouble, and there they still were in Christ's day. And lo and behold they are *still* with us. What nation has suffered anything like the national devastation and dispersions to exile of Israel's history, and yet remained still as a distinct national entity? Still with us today. Serving still as the storm centre of the world.

Vs. 12 – *"Turn you to the strong hold"* – In contrast to the confidence of Tyre in their island rock in the sea (vs. 3), God calls His people to put their confident trust in the *"everlasting strength"* of the Rock of Ages. In Him is the only true *"strong hold"*.

Vs. 13 – In graphic imagery depicting the Lord fighting with and for His people, He promises to effectively use His people as a weapon, bending Judah in His hand like a bow and filling that bent bow with the arrow of Ephraim. This "weapon" used against *"thy sons, O Greece"*. These sons of Greece speak now of a time in history when some aspect of the Grecian Empire turned against Israel, requiring the Lord's response and defence. When was that? History records that Alexander went on to crush Darius of Persia. Then that young *"notable horn"* of the Grecian Empire was soon dead due to his excesses. With time the Empire was divided among four of Alexander's generals. This too we find in Daniel's prophecy (chapter 8). The two branches of this later phase of the Grecian Empire having influence over the land of Israel were the Seleucids centred in Syria and the Ptolemys centred in Egypt. The Seleucids of Syria particularly turned against Israel, and especially Antiochus IV Epiphanes, a character spoken of quite extensively in Daniel 8 & 11. This Antiochus receives such extensive prophetic coverage because he, in his vicious, arrogant way of handling God's people, became a type of Antichrist, who will deal with Israel in the last days in a similar fashion. It is for this reason that the prophecy of Daniel 11, while focused on the nature and activities of Antiochus, suddenly shifts at vs. 36 beyond that Grecian king. And into focus

Zec 9:14 And the LORD shall be seen over them, and his arrow shall go forth as the lightning: and the Lord GOD shall blow the trumpet, and shall go with whirlwinds of the south.
Zec 9:15 The LORD of hosts shall defend them; and they shall devour, and subdue with sling stones; and they shall drink, and make a noise as through wine; and they shall be filled like bowls, and as the corners of the altar.

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there comes the final world ruler of these *"times of the Gentiles"*, who will take the brutally blasphemous nature of Antiochus' rule to the absolute max of human treachery. The history of the era of the Maccabees, recorded in the books of Maccabees, was the more immediate fulfilment of these prophecies, when God gave stunning victories to His people under the heroic leadership of Judas Maccabeus and his father and brothers, though the odds against them were overwhelming. As that more immediate fulfilment in their day, so the ultimate fulfilment in *"the Lord's day"*. As it was victory against all odds, so it will be victory for God's people against the world at the last.

Vs. 15 – With the Lord as their defence God's people are able to *"devour and subdue"* though it be as if only *"with sling stones"*. Though the enemy be well armed, belligerent, and *HUGE* as Goliath, yet with the Lord even a young David with sling and stones

Zec 9:16 And the LORD their God shall save them in that day as the flock of his people: for they shall be as the stones of a crown, lifted up as an ensign upon his land.
Zec 9:17 For how great is his goodness, and how great is his beauty! corn shall make the young men cheerful, and new wine the maids.

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can bring him down. With Jesus in His return His conquering people shall be as blood-spattered *"as the corners of the altar"* in defeating their foes (Isa. 63:1-4), coming to fullest victory over all of their seething enemies at the last.

Vs. 16 – *"The LORD their God shall save them"* – We have it on the word of Jehovah that He will keep the nation of Israel from extinction until the day He shall at last restore them as *"the flock of His people"* and the stones of His crown and a banner over His land. His flock, His gems, His banner. And this He will accomplish through His Messiah-King.

Vs. 17 – A very typical picture of the great joy and prosperity of the kingdom age.

Ponder Point

Consider Psalm 100 as a song of the remnant appropriate for that coming, happy day of Christ's

righteous kingdom on earth.

Class 12 – Zechariah 10

Zec 10:1 Ask ye of the LORD rain in the time of the latter rain; so the LORD shall make bright clouds, and give them showers of rain, to every one grass in the field.

We came out the end of chapter 9 with images looking beyond to the kingdom age of Jesus Christ. The victories of the nation of Israel over oppressive Grecian rule during the days of the Maccabees were the more immediate fulfilment, yet looking beyond to the ultimate answer in Christ's return in glory when He will save His people and set them as the stones of His crown (9:16). Chapter 10 continues the picture of blessing for the nation under Messiah in His 2nd coming. There will be physical blessing as well as spiritual deliverance from all error. Though the Lord scatters His people, yet He will ultimately restore them to their land.

10:1-4 – Physical and Spiritual Blessing

Vs. 1 – *"Ask ye of the LORD rain"* – This is a continuation of the previous verse describing happiness in abundance. The *"time of the latter rain"* was the spring season (March-April) in Palestine. The spring rains coming at the right time

and in sufficient quantity were vital in the development of the harvest. Too much or too little and coming too early or too late would be a problem. Concerning these crucial details the Lord bids His people to ask of Him. The Lord speaks of prayer answered when His people walk with Him. The right amount of rain at the right time has always been a sign of the Lord's blessing on His obedient people. *"If ye walk in My statutes, and keep My commandments, and do them; then I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit"* (Lev. 26:3-4). The absence of rain has always been an indication of God's curse upon disobedient people (14:18).

"So the LORD shall…give them showers" – Only the Lord can do this. Only He can *"make"* the clouds that bring the rains *"in due season"*. This is what He so effectively proved in the days of Elijah. The nation of Israel had run to idolatry, largely through the influence of Jezebel. Therefore they were trusting in Baal to bring fruitful seasons to their land. The Lord sent Elijah to make clear and bold announcement to King Ahab that there would be no rain except according to his word, and then Elijah disappeared. For 3½ years God's judgment of drought was upon Israel in spite of the extremes to

which the Baal worshippers went, until at last they began an earnest search for Elijah. They were beginning to collect on the fact that it was God's word that was needed to *"make bright clouds, and give them showers".* But God's prophet could not be found, because God would reveal him in His good time. Then came that fateful confrontation and destruction of the priests of Baal on Carmel. Then Elijah prayed in such an abundance of rain (I Ki. 18:41-45; James 5:17-18). He asked *"of the LORD rain"* and God gave it, proving beyond all doubt that it is the Lord who gives the rain, and who gives it when asked by *"a righteous man".* He knows exactly the best time to send the rains. Yet still He bids the involvement of godly men and women in asking and showing their dependence on Him, that He might build their faith in Him as He works according to their requests.

On the Side

The Lord speaks here of actual rain. There are those who believe the concept of *"latter rain"* has a spiritual significance, referring to a latter day revival of the sign gifts of tongues speaking, interpretation of tongues, healing, and miracles. As if *"the first rain"* was the evidence of the Spirit's presence

through these gifts in the days of the apostles, followed by a long dry season of little manifestation of the Spirit. Then in the mid 1900's these folks suppose a "latter rain" season arrived with a return to manifestations of the Spirit in the sign gifts. True understanding arrives however when we recognize the purpose of those sign gifts;

- The gift of tongues speaking was a sign to the Jewish nation that God's judgment was coming upon them for their rejection and murder of their Messiah, fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem and scattering of Israel (I Cor. 14:20-22; Isa. 28:11-13; Deut. 28:49).

- Tongues speaking was also the outward sign to the Jewish believers that Gentiles were to be included in the church and had received the very same gift of the indwelling Spirit as they (Acts 10:44-46).

- The sign gifts also served as God's stamp of authority to demonstrate who were His apostles and thus the authors through whom He would complete the writing of the Bible (Heb.2:3-4).

All of these purposes have long since been fulfilled. What is happening today under the notion of "latter

Zec 10:2 For the idols have spoken vanity, and the diviners have seen a lie, and have told false dreams; they comfort in vain: therefore they went their way as a flock, they were troubled, because there was no shepherd.

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rain" gifts is far more of man than of God (though God is well able to use His words for blessing in spite of the faulty vehicle carrying them). And because what is happening today in charismatic circles is man-generated (with a great deal of "help" from demonic deception as well) it is for this cause that what results is increasingly the radical, far out, superficial pandemonium so often generated within and out from such circles of Christian clamour. It may very well be that there is some spiritual representation in those latter rains. But it would be as here, referring to the latter day blessing of the Lord upon His people in the coming of Christ's kingdom.

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Vs. 2 – *"The idols have spoken vanity"* – This is now the contrast of the trusting prayer of vs. 1. It speaks of a day when God's people trusted in other things. The one brings answers and blessing in a way only God can do. The other only ever brought a mess! Look at the nasty array of words used in this verse;
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"vanity", "lie", "false", "vain", "troubled". It speaks of empty words, lying diviners, false dreams, and hollow comforts; just generally a troubled way. *"The idols"* here are "teraphim" in the Hebrew. These were household gods or idols, often connected with divination. They were sort of like the tamer lottery that leads some on to the ruin of the casino or racetrack. Perhaps a bit like the "lesser evil" of wine or beer, leading some down to the ruin of drunkenness or drug addiction. Though these teraphim represented a false hope, they were with the people of Israel from the beginning and throughout their history (Gen. 31:19; Judg. 17:5; I Sam.15:23; II Ki. 23:24; Ezek. 21:21; Hos. 3:4), though forbidden by the Lord (I Sam.15:23; II Ki. 23:24). The worship of idols is what led Israel to go *"their way as a flock"*. They learned divination from the same place Christians learn their worldly ways, from the pagan nations around them. Every such dark approach for knowing the unknown or forecasting the future that leaves God out is not only forbidden by the Lord but is an abomination to Him (Deut. 18).

"Because there was no shepherd" – It is a phrase that moves me! Because it is such a fitting epitaph for many a spiritual graveyard, whether individual or national. Why do misguided souls chase after

every new idea shouting down the pavement? Why the trust in lesser "gods"? *"Because there was no shepherd"*. Because the church of Jesus Christ gave up on the role. Because God's people were too busy with their own things, our own earthly leaf pile. Nobody wanted the job. Satan made sure it appeared too difficult, too easy, too discouraging, too poor, or too something else for some to seek the role of a shepherd. God seeks for men among us who will stand in the gap, who are willing to fill the void. What wonders He can accomplish in ways far beyond our ability to perceive through every faithful one called and willing to serve as a shepherd. What wonders God can accomplish through His words sent out through His voices on earth, words He has promised *"will not return void, but will accomplish"*. Oh for a land full of shepherds, for men crying to become such, and for the right reasons. A man with a shepherd's heart will not be able to keep quiet. He will not need "qualification" as the world dictates. He will not need ordination or official appointment before men. He will not need to see his way clear financially. God's words will be like a fire in him. He simply will not be able to refrain. He will just get started right now, right where he is at, and one thing will lead to another as to circumstances and opportunities.

Zec 10:3 Mine anger was kindled against the shepherds, and I punished the goats: for the LORD of hosts hath visited his flock the house of Judah, and hath made them as his goodly horse in the battle.

Vs. 3 – The shepherds and goats drawing God's anger and punishment here seem to refer to the oppressors and haters of God's people over the centuries. As we have recently considered, the successes of the little band of Jewish fighters under Judas Maccabeus against the vastly greater forces of Antiochus IV of Greece are absolutely legendary. It was God, lifting the little playground pony of His beleaguered nation and making *"them as His goodly horse in the battle"*. Lifting them to the power of a battle horse, carrying *"the Battle Bow"* of Israel right over the top of that strong oppressor.

Consider as well the tiny nation of Israel in May 1948, huddled on the little postage stamp of ground allotted to them in Palestine. The day after she was at last declared the new "State of Israel" seven Arab armies combined to attack that little country of some 8,000 sq. kms. The land had been promised to Israel by Britain, but there was such a hue and cry by Arab and Palestinian squatters that Britain came back on their promise, and so the land was at last divided 77% to the Arabs and 23% to Israel.

But it still was not enough for the Arabs! Therefore their attack, with the sole purpose of snuffing that little nation out of existence. But amazingly the Arab aggressors lost, rather soundly! And with the spoils of a war they did not want, Israel's little 8,000 sq. km. patch was now nearly tripled to a land area of 21,000 sq. kms. About 19 years later, in 1967, five surrounding Arab nations again ganged up and began mobilizing their hugely superior armies against God's little nation. Their intentions were quite apparent. Israel did not sit around wringing their hands in anguished indecision. They had a firm grasp on the obvious. They could see what was coming, and decided wisdom was on the side of hitting before the party started. So they moved quickly against their attackers in a "pre-emptive strike". Within the week the Arabs were scattered (6 days). And little Israel again got bigger, their land area *more* than tripled this time to 67,000 sq. kms. Then in October 1973 the Arabs were back. Now flaunting modern Russian and American armaments, determined to deal a decisive blow against those people they so love to hate. This time the Arabs made sure they got the surprise advantage, so bravely pouncing on the holiest day of the Jewish calendar, Yom Kippur. While most of Israel's people and defence force were fasting and in their synagogues the powerful Arab armies began pouring across the borders north, south, and east,

wiping out the few Israeli troops manning the borders. The nation came home from worship to discover they were at war, again. Their little army quickly mustered and struck back, and yet again they crunched the Arab attackers, driving them back across their borders, and far into their own lands in fact. Would to God Israel had just kept right on pushing and taken it all! As it was, God's people again scored with another 30% increase of their borders. They were now well over *10 times* their original land area. Fortunes of war, mate! Wars they did not bring upon themselves. Wars bringing great loss of Israeli lives in their national defence. But oh how it set the Arab leaders to whinging to the world over their losses. And oh how the world danced to their dirge and minded the moaning of those arrogant Arab nations, threatening to pinch the oil pipeline fuelling world industry. 61 nations soon broke off diplomatic relations, *with Israel*, due to the outcome of that 1973 war! Oh those nasty, bullying Jews! I wonder if diplomatic relations would have been broken with the Arab nations if they had finally succeeded in their vicious, pillaging purpose? I wonder when it will finally dawn on those surrounding nations that it is *God* they are fighting, that they are dealing with a *real* God, the only true God, when they touch Israel, the apple of God's eye.

Zec 10:4 Out of him came forth the corner, out of him the nail, out of him the battle bow, out of him every oppressor together.

Vs. 4 – *"Out of him came forth…"* – Out of *"the house of Judah"* came Messiah. We find now a list of descriptive names of Jesus Christ;

- *"The corner"* or cornerstone – Jesus is that foundation stone God Himself laid in Zion, *"a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation"* (Isa. 28:16; Eph. 2:20). This in contrast to the hollow, lying vanity of idols and false gods (vs. 2).

- *"The nail"* – A strong anchoring pin, upon which everything is supported. Compare Ecclesiastes 12:11 where God's words are likened to fastened nails, leashing our hearts to the centre pin of right, preventing our wandering (II Tim. 3:15-16). The living Word is like the written Word of God. Compare Isaiah 22:15-25, where God would fasten faithful Eliakim *"as a nail in a sure place"*. Even so Jesus is the *"Nail that is fastened in a sure place"*, upon whom shall hang *"all the glory of his father's house"* (Isa. 22:24), never to *"be removed"*.

- *"The battle bow"* – The Lord Himself is the

Zec 10:5 And they shall be as mighty men, which tread down their enemies in the mire of the streets in the battle: and they shall fight, because the LORD is with them, and the riders on horses shall be confounded.

Zec 10:6 And I will strengthen the house of Judah, and I will save the house of Joseph, and I will bring them again to place them; for I have mercy upon them: and they shall be as though I had not cast them off: for I am the LORD their God, and will hear them.

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ultimate weapon, in defence of His people and as Conqueror of every enemy in the end (Rev. 19:11).

10:5-12 – Victory and Restoration

Vs. 5-7 – *"They shall be as mighty men"* – There is great emphasis in these verses on the Lord fighting through His nation by raising up and strengthening *"mighty men"*. This has been fulfilled in many of their conflicts over the years with those who hate them. It will prove true in the prophesied invasion from the north of Gog & Magog, wherever this battle fits into the timeline of history (Ezek. 38-39). It will ultimately be fulfilled in the final conflict of the tribulation period. The indications of restored relation to the Lord when *"their heart shall rejoice in the LORD"* (vs. 7) point to a future day of spiritual return to the Lord as well as national return to the

Zec 10:7 And they of Ephraim shall be like a mighty man, and their heart shall rejoice as through wine: yea, their children shall see it, and be glad; their heart shall rejoice in the LORD.
Zec 10:8 I will hiss for them, and gather them; for I have redeemed them: and they shall increase as they have increased.

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land.

Vs. 6 – *"The house of Judah…Joseph"* – Listen to the words here. This is Israel, not the church. The Lord is very specific about that here. Too many interpreters are foolishly given to applying the promises in this context to the church in a mystical, allegorical sense rather than to national Israel in a literal sense. In spite of the obstacles that seem to stand in the way of an actual fulfilment according to a normal reading of His words, God will fulfil them according to their simple meaning. Be not faithless!

Vs. 8-12 – These remaining verses of the chapter picture the full and final restoration of the nation in the last days.

Vs. 8-10 – *"I will hiss for them"* – The Lord speaks of a quiet call for attention, like a "pssst", as the Shepherd of Israel calls His flock to gather them, in

Zec 10:9 And I will sow them among the people: and they shall remember me in far countries; and they shall live with their children, and turn again.
Zec 10:10 I will bring them again also out of the land of Egypt, and gather them out of Assyria; and I will bring them into the land of Gilead and Lebanon; and place shall not be found for them.

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the same way that He so easily called their enemies upon them to their judgment of old (Isa. 5:26; 7:18).

"For I have redeemed them" – Again, speaking of a day of spiritual restoration as well as their complete regathering to the land. A day when they shall be called *"the holy people, the redeemed of the LORD"* (Isa. 62:12).

"They shall increase as they have increased" – In the decades leading up to the Exodus from Egypt the Lord greatly increased the number of His people, giving rise to the policy that put Moses in Pharaoh's house (Ex. 1:7-12). Even so in the days leading up to their final exodus from among the nations they will again see a great increase in their numbers. So great will be their increase in fact that space *"shall not be found for them"* (vs. 10). As they were nurtured into a nation in Egypt, so they are being nurtured into a great host in the nations of earth. Compare the joyful prophetic picture of enlarging in

Zec 10:11 And he shall pass through the sea with affliction, and shall smite the waves in the sea, and all the deeps of the river shall dry up: and the pride of Assyria shall be brought down, and the sceptre of Egypt shall depart away.
Zec 10:12 And I will strengthen them in the LORD; and they shall walk up and down in his name, saith the LORD.

Isaiah 54. Compare Isaiah 49:18-26, where again the population seems too great for the space. And a nation who thought herself desolate will look around and ask "where did all these come from?!" (Isa. 49:20-21). It is as if the Gentile nations have been the guardians or keepers of God's scattered children. The Lord need only call *"to the Gentiles…and they shall bring thy sons in their arms, and thy daughters shall be carried upon their shoulders"* (Isa. 49:22).

Vs. 11-12 – *"He shall pass through the sea"* – No obstacle on earth will hinder the return of Israel to their land when the Lord's time has come, just as no force on earth has ever been able to destroy them, or ever will. Because it is the Lord of heaven and earth standing with them. As Moses struck the waters of the Red Sea and the way was dried up before them, so the Lord is able to *"strike the waves"* of any sea, any time, and bring His people home as if on dry land. Again, this finds some measure of

immediate fulfilment in the late 1900's as Jews returned to the land of Israel by the hundreds of thousands from all over the world. Ultimate fulfilment yet to come. As God *has* done, so He *will* do, and will finish the job. As the lesser in the past, so the greater at the last.

Vs. 12 – *"They shall walk up and down in His name"* – A picture of freedom, walking about unrestricted in the glorious kingdom of Christ.

Class 13 – Zechariah 11

God's prophets are not like false prophets who speak only what is comfortable for people to hear. False prophets avoid what is uncomfortable to the hearer because they are more committed to the pleasing of people than to truth. But when the Lord speaks He allows the sun to shine through in His words, giving the positive elements of hopeful things to come, yet He does not hold back on revealing the darker elements as well. For such revelations are as much for the good of the hearers as are bright words of hope. Though God would have His people filled with hope, true hope must be based on truth and righteousness. He is not given to pleasing man or tickling our ears. He gives the whole picture according to truth. Though He has spoken such *"good words and comfortable words"* of hopeful encouragement through Zechariah in the earlier visions, yet He has not neglected to warn of the flying roll of His sure judgment upon all who are evil in their choices. Though there will be four delivering "carpenters", He has not failed to mention the four oppressive horns arising first. Bad news as well as the good is usually what distinguishes God's message from that sourced in man. The news has largely been bright and victorious in this first of the prophet's two burdens. It is time now for word of

Zec 11:1 Open thy doors, O Lebanon, that the fire may devour thy cedars.
Zec 11:2 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.

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the other side of it. For we learn now in this chapter that Israel would not receive the Good Shepherd when He came. Therefore she would fall to judgment again, and face the later rise of *"a foolish shepherd"*. But God's accuracy in the bad news is as well the assurance of His unerring aim in the good. Though the bright day of Christ's kingdom will come as spoken, it will unfortunately arise only out of the dismal darkness of further apostasy, rejection, and judgment.

11:1-14 – Good Shepherd Rejected by Israel

Vs. 1-3 – Do not miss the similarities between these opening verses and those of chapter 9. Here again is a description of devastation coming to Palestine (a bit more poetic this time), and again coming from the north and moving south, bringing greatest destruction. Mark the many menacing verbs; *"devour…fallen…spoiled…come down…spoiled… spoiled"*. Note the words of anguished response; *"Howl…howl…a voice of the howling"*. It will be a

Zec 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.

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day of greatest sorrow upon the land when all will be ruin and loss. Like an approaching monster, this visitation first touches Lebanon, then reaches south to Bashan to the east of Galilee, then proceeds to the Jordan. This movement seems to follow after the image of Alexander's approach as this 1st burden of Zechariah began in chapter 9. But rather than glancing off the northern point of Israel and turning to the coast due to the Lord's protecting hand, this time the storm rolls right down main street Israel!

Vs. 3 – *"A voice of the howling of the shepherds"* – The judgment having begun upon mountain and trees now falls upon men, upon *"the shepherds"*, the leaders of God's sheep. But look close. It is Jewish leaders with *"glory",* due to be *"spoiled".* The proud shepherds now draw the spoiling judgment of God rather than the nation shielded as before. Whereas in 9:1-7 the movements of Greece were plotted, this time it is the movements of Rome. Whereas before it was the 3rd horn, this time it is the 4th. Whereas

Zec 11:4 Thus saith the LORD my God; Feed the flock of the slaughter;
Zec 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.

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before the aim was particularly the strong cities of the coast and Egypt, this time the target is Israel itself, and especially Israel's *"shepherds"* or leaders it would seem, who will be set to *"howling"* in the hands of God's messengers. Why? Because of their role in leading Israel to reject their Messiah and nail Him to a cross!

Vs. 4-14 – Role-play of the Good Shepherd.

Vs. 4 – *"Feed the flock of the slaughter"* – The Lord now calls upon Zechariah to act out before the people the part of a shepherd tending the flock of His people, people He refers to as *"the flock of the slaughter"* because the nation was lined up for a butchering. It was not a happy message, and not at all appreciated by those in attendance as we shall see.

Vs. 5 – A word now on the nature of the leaders of the people in the day when they will live (or die) out this title, *"flock of slaughter"*. The leaders of that

day;

- Will be more *"possessors"* than servant leaders.
- Will *"hold themselves not guilty"*. They will say it is because *"this people who knoweth not the law are cursed"* (Jn. 7:49). Beware when you find your fingers of blame pointing everywhere but home.
- Will be those who sell out the flock, using the souls of their people as canon fodder in their bitter contention against God, using the people in their fight both against Messiah and Rome.
- Will bless the Lord for their wealth gotten at the expense of others. Fleecing widows of their houses even (Matt. 23:14). The Scribes and Pharisees were among the chief hypocrites of earth in the days of Christ's earthly ministry, yet they practiced their hypocrisy in the name of the Lord.
- Will have no real pity for the flock but will rather only use people for their own gains.

This is a fore-view of the Jewish leadership of Christ's day, who would fleece the flock, robbing them of their own Messiah, their own promised

Zec 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.

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kingdom, and their own soul's salvation (Matt. 23:13), making the people *"twofold more the child of hell than"* themselves (Matt. 23:15).

Vs. 6 – Here is now the Lord's response. Because it is both the leaders who make the people like themselves, and the people who gather around them leaders like themselves, therefore God would judge not only the godless leaders but the people as well. Not only would they not find pity or mercy in their selfish leaders but it would come to the point where they would not find pity in God either. For the nation would again be delivered into the hand of their neighbour and his king. And *"they shall smite the land"*. Israel would suffer a devastating blow. And the Lord would not be there for them as in the past. He would not *"encamp about Mine house because of the army, because of him that passeth by"* (9:8). This time the army would not be "passing by". For after years of Jewish unrest Rome would come in 70 A.D. with their sights set only for troublesome Israel. And the entire land, capital city, and temple

would be devastated. In fact it would be the Lord who *"will deliver the men every one into his neighbour's hand"*. He Himself would play the active role in seeing to the accomplishment of it.

Understand that it would be a replay on the same pattern this nation had suffered through before with Babylon and will suffer again under Antichrist. Would they reject the Lord as their king and demand a human king? Oh how they suffered under King Saul as a result of it. And how they suffered as a result of King Jeroboam's selfish, godless perversions. Would they in their determination to force the crucifixion of Jesus Christ actually claim Rome's king for their own, saying, *"We have no king but Caesar"*? (Jn. 19:15) Oh how God made them swallow those words with the slaughter and scattering that Rome brought upon them. The Jewish people suffered terribly under Rome's conquest beginning in 70 A.D., with some 1.5 million dead as a result of that invasion. And would they reject the true Christ, the Good Shepherd, the Servant of the Lord? Oh how they will yet suffer under Antichrist, Rome's greatest and final king, the servant of Satan. The *"foolish shepherd"* will be received and so regretted in the place of the "Good Shepherd" rejected.

Zec 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.
Zec 11:8 Three shepherds also I cut off in one month; and my soul lothed them, and their soul also abhorred me.

Vs. 7 – *"I will feed the flock of slaughter"* – So Zechariah did as the Lord said, proceeding to act out the role of one feeding or tending the flock, symbolizing the Good Shepherd.

"And I took unto me two staves" – In his role-play, presenting himself to the nation as a good shepherd, Zechariah took up two staves or staffs, labelling one *"Beauty"* and the other *"Bands"*. These two tools of a shepherd represent what the Good Shepherd offered to His people if they would have Him. He would make them a thing of beauty, a people of His grace or lovingkindness, and He would bring His people to union, binding them together as one flock (Jn. 10:16; Eph. 2).

Vs. 8 – *"Three shepherds also I cut off"* – Something has changed now. Whereas the Good Shepherd willingly gave himself to the tending of the flock in vs. 7 something has now gone very wrong, something obviously centring in the leaders of the

Zec 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.

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people, having to do with the shepherds. Some rift has developed between this one appointed as the Good Shepherd, represented by Zechariah, and the human shepherds or guides of the people. The who of these *"three shepherds"* is a point of great intrigue among Bible scholars, with a great many suggestions put forward. Rather than this referring to particular men, perhaps the reference here is to the three guiding roles of prophet, priest, and king, for all of these offices were grossly abused in Christ's day. Those in civil and spiritual leadership over Israel were the main haters of Jesus and therefore the chief catalysts in the shameful death of that Good Shepherd. Compare Jeremiah 2:8, 26. Therefore perhaps God speaks here of cutting off these guiding roles from the land of Israel in their worldwide dispersion.

Vs. 9 – *"I will not feed you"* – The Lord would not only remove the human shepherds but He would remove His own shepherding care as well. With His mercying hand absent altogether the very worst devastation would be the result. Where He would

Zec 11:10 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.

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normally act in behalf of those in need, He would not do so any more. *"Let it die"* or *"be cut off!"* As with the rejecting pagan heart of Romans 1, it would come to the point where the Lord would simply hand His people over to suffer the results of their own foolish choices. And as we saw in Daniel's prophecy, none so brutal as that *"fourth beast, dreadful and terrible, and strong exceedingly"* (7:7-8), depicting Rome. Unlike the stunning victories of the Maccabees against Greece, Israel was utterly helpless before Rome, as they *"devoured and brake in pieces, and stamped the residue with the feet"*. This was for the simple reason that the Lord of hosts was no longer fighting for them, but was rather lined up against them, as here predicted.

"Let the rest eat every one the flesh of another" – It came to just such treachery and cannibalism within the walls of Jerusalem in the final days of Rome's siege of the city, as the historian Josephus describes.

Vs. 10 – The Lord would cut up the staff called Beauty, symbolizing the removal;

Zec 11:11 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.

- Of His lovingkindness toward His people.
- Of His guiding effort to lead them to beauty of character.
- Of all pleasantness in the land.

As history reveals, it was to be the messiest of massacres!

"That I might break My covenant" – It is not that the Lord broke His covenant with Israel in replacing her with the church as His new covenant people. Rather He renounced His protection of His people, handing them over to *"all the people"* or nations of earth to do with them as they please.

Vs. 11 – *"The poor of the flock"* – These are the remnant *"that waited upon Me"*, such as Anna, Simeon, the disciples, and all the 120 praying together in the upper room in Acts 1-2 (Isa. 14:32). Such folks as these *"knew"* and understood, both in Zechariah's and Christ's day, that what happened was not against *"the word of the LORD"*, but according to it. The unsaved seethe while the saved see.

Zec 11:12 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.

Vs. 12 – *"Thirty pieces of silver"* – Zechariah now put it to the crowd gathered before him to give him his hire for his performance, to pay him what they considered him worthy of. But it seems it was a crowd largely buzzing now with anger for the dark prospects suggested by the prophet's words. Yet even there the remnant among them, *"the poor of the flock",* quietly recognized God's voice in Zechariah's hard words. But their small influence was lost in the hubbub of the incensed. And the price determined by those gathered was 30 pieces of silver. This was the same price specified by the law to be paid to the owner of a slave when the slave was killed through the negligence of another (Ex. 21:32). *Only the few coins one would pay for a slave!* The price at which they valued the Good Shepherd represented by Zechariah *was an insult!* Like giving a 5 cent coin to a car guard. He may just throw it back at you with a "No thanks!" It seems the paltry price paid was the result of their angry refusal on the whole to accept Zechariah's words as God's words. They were happy for bright words of hope, but wanted nothing of such dismal words of heartache. Behind their response was their proud

Zec 11:13 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.

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demand for *their* will and refusal of God's will. Only the humble are willing to accept God's will as expressed in His words, difficult though it be.

Vs. 13 – *"Cast it unto the potter"* – It seems the potter was the pauper of their day. In derision the Lord tells Zechariah to fling such a pittance, this price of a slave, to the poor. In sarcasm He refers to the *"goodly price"* by which His servant was valued by His people. So the prophet did as he was told, casting the silver pieces *"to the potter in the house of the LORD".*

As we know the prophecy was fulfilled in the chief priests' payment of the same price to Judas for selling out the Saviour. Though they were anxious to take Jesus, yet in their refusal to acknowledge His surpassing worth they were unwilling to pay more than the price of a slave for Him (Matt. 26:15). Then when Judas came to himself in a measure, realizing what he had done and what he could not undo, he cast the silver pieces down before the chief priests and elders in the temple (Matt. 27:3-7). In their abysmal hypocrisy the Jewish leaders could

not put such stained blood money back into the temple treasury, so they used it to buy *"the potters field"* in which to bury foreigners, a field which came to be known ever after as *"the field of blood"* (Matt. 27:8).

On the Side

Note that in Matthew 27:9 the gospel writer indicates that this prophecy *"was spoken by Jeremy the prophet".* But of course we know it was spoken by Zechariah. The answer to the apparent contradiction seems to be that the Jews tended to keep Zechariah's book together with others of the prophets on the scroll headed by the much more prominent book of Jeremiah, what was commonly referred to as the "Jeremiah Scroll". It seems it was in this sense that Matthew spoke of these words as Jeremiah's. It is one of those many matters which cannot be proven to one who will not be convinced. Imagine attempting to give an answer to this one in a debate with haters of God's words in their demand for a solution to this "Bible error". But if they would just step back and look at what we have here, another prophecy fulfilled around Jesus Christ in such a way that He could not have arranged it Himself, they would be forced to admit that this alone is the Book of God's ancient promises fulfilled.

Zec 11:14 Then I cut asunder mine other staff, even Bands, that I might break the brotherhood between Judah and Israel.
Zec 11:15 And the LORD said unto me, Take unto thee yet the instruments of a foolish shepherd.

Vs. 14 – *"Then I cut asunder mine other staff, even Bands"* – With the departure of the Good Shepherd's mercying care the nation was soon after broken up and scattered from the land. To this day many wonder how the scattered tribal ancestries of the Jewish people could ever be traced, because the unity of the nation was so completely shattered by Rome.

11:15-17 – Foolish Shepherd Rejected by God

Zechariah having been bidden to act out the role of the coming Christ, is now bidden to act out the role of the coming Antichrist. The nation of Israel having rejected the Good Shepherd have in turn been rejected by the Lord for a time. Though they would not have the true Shepherd who came in His Father's name, Jesus warned that they would rather end up receiving another coming *"in his own name"* (Jn. 5:43). Our current church age stands between the coming of the Good Shepherd and the coming of the foolish shepherd.

Vs. 15 – *"A foolish shepherd"* – This is that shadowy figure looming so ominously on Israel's horizon. This is;

- The *"little horn"* of Daniel 7.
- The wilful king of Daniel 11.
- The *"man of sin"* and *"son of perdition"* of II Thessalonians 2.
- The *"beast"* of Revelation 13.

This is that one who will *"confirm a covenant with many* [of Israel] *for one week* [seven]" (Dan. 9:27). This is that *"prince that shall come"* with whom the Jewish people *will* come into agreement, but who will break that agreement at the midpoint of its 7-year term. And whereas the first, the Good Shepherd, would have brought them untold blessing had they been willing to agree with Him, this *"foolish shepherd"* will bring them to unimaginable sorrow (Matt. 24). Though he comes with great promise of peace, he will care nothing about others. He will only *"exalt <u>himself</u>, and magnify <u>himself</u> above every god…he shall magnify <u>himself</u> above all"* (Dan. 11:36-37). It will all be about *"HIMSELF".* The ultimate user and abuser of others.

Zec 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.

Zec 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.

Vs. 16 – *"I will raise up"* – Again, the devastating rise of this one will be through God's doing.

Vs. 17 – Poetic picture of Antichrist's end.

"And I will pour
upon the house of David,
and upon the inhabitants
of Jerusalem,
the spirit of grace
and of supplications:
and they shall look upon me
whom they have pierced, and
they shall mourn for him..."

(Zec 12:10)

Class 14 – Zechariah 12

We turn now to the final section of this wonderful book of prophecy, the second of Zechariah's two burdens in chapters 12-14. In his first burden (chapters 9-11) the attention shaded more to the first coming of Messiah. Chapter 9 describes days of victory for the nation leading up to Messiah's first coming. Chapter 10 then moves on to events preceding Christ's second coming, the partial, nearer fulfilments of chapter 9 pointing beyond to the ultimate fulfilment in chapter 10. And then in chapter 11 it is a prediction of the Messiah rejected by His people Israel, resulting in the rise of the *"foolish shepherd"*, the coming Antichrist, whom the nation will embrace at the end of this age. Having rejected the true they will receive the false. It is the unhappy story of Israel's history.

The deliverance described now in chapter 12 and throughout this final burden must be seen in its context with the days of Antichrist's brief reign (Dan. 11:36ff). These are the forecast of God's deliverances of Israel in the second coming of Messiah, the main thrust of this second burden of Zechariah, when the nation will at last be driven to recognize and receive their true Shepherd. Christ's return will be within the context of those most tragic

days Daniel spoke of, when *"a time of trouble"* will come upon Israel *"such as never was since there was a nation even to that same time"* (Dan. 12:1; Matt. 24:21). Daniel went on to describe the same deliverance we find here in Zechariah; *"At that time thy people shall be delivered, every one that shall be found written in the book"* [the remnant]. That the rise of the *"foolish shepherd"* results from the rejection and murder of the Good Shepherd is confirmed as well here in the national repentance pictured in this chapter. The Good Shepherd will return to the destruction of the foolish shepherd (II Thess. 2), bringing sudden and supernatural rescue to the remnant of the nation of Israel. They will at last be fully restored to and secured in their land, for it is spoken! *"I will gather them out of all countries, whither I have driven them in Mine anger, and in My fury, and in great wrath; and I will bring them again unto this place, and I will cause them to dwell safely…I will plant them in this land assuredly with My whole heart and with My whole soul. For thus saith the LORD; Like as I have brought all this great evil upon this people, so will I bring upon them all the good that I have promised them"* (Jer. 32:37, 41-42). It is not about what men think they are capable of doing. It is all about what God **WILL** most assuredly do!

Zec 12:1 The burden of the word of the LORD for Israel, saith the LORD, which stretcheth forth the heavens, and layeth the foundation of the earth, and formeth the spirit of man within him.
Zec 12:2 Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of trembling unto all the people round about, when they shall be in the siege both against Judah and against Jerusalem.

12:1-9 – Deliverance at Armageddon

Vs. 1 – *"Saith the LORD"* – God begins with clearest identification of who is speaking these words of promise. It is the Creator Himself who formed the heavens, the earth, and the spirit of man. There could be no confusion for there is no other like Him. It is He who is all powerful, all seeing, and all knowing who speaks this weighty message *"for Israel"* and for all people of earth.

Vs. 2 – *"Jerusalem a cup of trembling"* – The picture seems to be a cup of intoxicating drink that sets *"all the people"* of earth to staggering like a drunk man and therefore incapable of controlling themselves or their outcome. It is another common biblical picture, describing God's judgment upon the people of earth (Ps. 75:8; Isa. 51:17, 22-23; Jer. 51:7; Hab. 2:16). Compare God's *"controversy with the nations"* in Jeremiah 25:15-33.

Zec 12:3 And in that day will I make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all people: all that burden themselves with it shall be cut in pieces, though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it.

"Round about, when they shall be in the siege" – It is a vision of all the Gentile nations now come up *"against Judah and against Jerusalem",* the same event described in Revelation 16:13-16 & 19:17-21. The city of Jerusalem features very prominently here in this closing conflict. The city name comes up 11 times in this chapter and 10 times in chapter 14, a total of 22 times throughout this last burden of Zechariah. Jerusalem will be the focal point of world attack, with *"all the people of earth…gathered against it"* (vs. 3), and it will become the place of God's greatest deliverance ever!

Vs. 3 – *"In that day"* – This is a phrase appearing 6 or 7 times in this chapter, relating all events here to the same time period. Compare 13:1,2,4; 14:4,6,8,9,13,20,21. The day is the same elsewhere in the prophets titled *"the day of the Lord"* (14:1), for it will be *"the Lord's day",* when He will show Himself to be real, and alive, and *"the Most High"* who *"ruleth in the kingdom of men".* He will be seen as the One in control after all and well able to defeat

Zec 12:4 In that day, saith the LORD, I will smite every horse with astonishment, and his rider with madness: and I will open mine eyes upon the house of Judah, and will smite every horse of the people with blindness.

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the very greatest power the earth could ever manage to pull together.

I will *"make Jerusalem a burdensome stone"* – God will make the taking of Jerusalem a weight too heavy to carry, so that all who attempt to lift it will *"be cut in pieces"*. They will critically injure themselves in the effort, as if ripping open vital organs, doing themselves irreparable damage. It speaks of a foolish move, a desperate effort, an all-out, last-ditch sort of thing. It will be the proud nations of earth, whipped to determined desperation through Satan's stirring, in their effort to annihilate Israel at last. But the more effort they exert the heavier the Lord will make that stone, to the point where would-be ruiners are themselves ruptured and ruined.

Vs. 4 – *"I will smite every horse…and his rider"* – Twice the Lord says *"<u>every</u> horse"* in this verse, highlighting how complete will be His crippling work. No matter how vast the attacking host,

Zec 12:5 And the governors of Judah shall say in their heart, The inhabitants of Jerusalem shall be my strength in the LORD of hosts their God.

"though all the people of the earth be gathered together against" Jerusalem, still God can so easily disable both horse and rider, and all is lost! He needs only to strike hearts with panic as the Midianites through Gideon and his few (Judges 7). He needs only to strike the eyes with blindness as the attacking Syrians (II Ki. 6:18) and Sodomites (Gen. 19:11). And suddenly the very thing the enemy was trusting, the size of their attacking host, is turned against them, becoming more handicap than help. With horses struck blind and men struck with blind panic in such a vast host we can well imagine the resulting dust cloud of absolute confused pandemonium. This will open the way for the ploy God has often used to melt away an enemy army, turning *"every man's sword against his fellow"* (Judges 7:22; I Sam. 14:20; II Chron. 20:23).

Note that the Lord talks horses and riders here, not jeeps and drivers. Are we to expect a literal fulfilment of this element at Armageddon? Perhaps so, if mechanized armies became untenable for some reason (oil reserves dried up?). Should we

Zec 12:6 In that day will I make the governors of Judah like an hearth of fire among the wood, and like a torch of fire in a sheaf; and they shall devour all the people round about, on the right hand and on the left: and Jerusalem shall be inhabited again in her own place, even in Jerusalem.

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expect a rising development of military cavalry units?

Vs. 5 – *"The governors of Judah"* now voice their faith, not only in *"the inhabitants of Jerusalem"* but *"in the LORD of hosts their God"*. Their calling upon the Lord in that day, as Hezekiah in another day with Assyria fearfully encamped *"round about"* the city, will be much of the reason for Israel's victory. Where else can they look with the magnitude of the threat coming from all sides, and backed against the sea with no place to run? The Lord will use the pressure of impossible threat to drive them to dependence upon Him, from leaders on down. In their hopeless lack in the face of such a vast international host of attackers they will at last turn to *"the LORD of hosts their God"*. In response the Lord will *"open Mine eyes"* to their aid and leave no question of His presence with them.

Vs. 6-8 – Fighting *beside* His people, yet fighting

Zec 12:7 The LORD also shall save the tents of Judah first, that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem do not magnify themselves against Judah.

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through them as well, the Lord will lift His people to supernatural ability. The leaders in their effectiveness against their attackers will be comparable to a fire pot among tinder and a torch among dry sheaves, like a fire placed among things that easily burn to *"devour all the people round about"*. For attack will be coming at them from north, south, and east, *"on the right hand and on the left"*. God's people will win the victory, with the result that Jerusalem will at last come to peaceful habitation.

Even the most *"feeble among them at that day shall be as David"*. God's history first presents David as a young boy, outwardly weak in comparison to grown, armed men and soldiers. Yet in young David's simple confidence in God and jealousy for His name and honour, one so young was strengthened and lifted to impossible exploits. A lion and bear he was able to kill with his hands, and a giant of a man he was able to *"subdue with sling stones"* (9:15). This same sort of individual, supernatural, Samson-like strength for which

Zec 12:8 In that day shall the LORD defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem; and he that is feeble among them at that day shall be as David; and the house of David shall be as God, as the angel of the LORD before them.

David is famous will prevail in that coming day of conflict as well. And such a seemingly weak little pocket of a people will be made <u>unconquerable</u>, *"though all the people of the earth be gathered together against it"!* This is all of God, and comes of confident trust in Him. As mentioned earlier, we have seen a hint of the same in the latter half of the 1900's, with Israel's stunning victories over seemingly impossible odds against her many bitter enemies *"gathered together against"* her and coming at her from all sides. It is God, making clearest suggestion to the angry world of what He can do and will yet do on a very much grander scale.

"The house of David shall be as God" – With the ancient genealogies somehow restored, the house of David will be known in that day and recognized as royal. Not only will they be acknowledged as the ruling clan by the nation, but they as well will be empowered by God to lead to victory as Joshua in the conquest. They will lead as the Angel of the Lord's presence led the way for the nation through the wilderness of old.

Zec 12:9 And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem.

Vs. 9 – *"I will seek to destroy all nations"* – Taking it well beyond just the defence of His people *"in that day",* the Lord will go on the offensive, putting a forever end to the kingdoms of men. For again, it will be *"the Lord's day"*, when *"the God of heaven* [shall] *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"* (Dan. 2:44). It will be Christ's *earthly* kingdom, to replace the kingdoms of men on earth. It is the same earthly kingdom pictured in Daniel 2:35 by the very earthy figures of rock and mountain, a *"great mountain"* in fact that *"filled the whole <u>earth</u>"*.

Such a contrast we see here with the former days when it was the Lord calling in the nations to deal His wrath upon His idolatrous people (Isa. 5:26ff; 7:18ff). This time it will be the Lord calling the rejecting world to the slaughter before His people. Compare Joel 3:9-17.

<u>12:10-14</u> – National Conversion

In this portion we now see the result upon the

Zec 12:10 And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.

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nation of Israel of the visible return of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Vs. 10 – *"I will pour…the Spirit of grace and of supplications"* – The veil of blindness will at last be stripped away (Rom. 11:25-26; II Cor. 3:14). As blindness will be added to Israel's opponents so it will be removed from Israel's believing remnant. This speaks of the Holy Spirit poured out upon the remaining remnant at Christ's return, and of the special effect the Spirit's coming will have upon His once stubborn people. They will be given at last to communication with God, pouring out their hearts in *"supplications"* to Him, and especially concerning their sin of rejecting Him.

Compare Ezekiel 39, where Ezekiel discusses details of the same day. He too speaks in that chapter of;

- The host of the attacking nations of earth fed to the birds and beasts at Armageddon (vs.

17-20).

- The Lord setting His *"glory among the heathen"* of earth (vs. 21).
- The *"house of Israel"* at last knowing *"that I am the LORD their God from that day and forward"* (vs. 22).
- The nations coming to understand that the Lord dealt so hard with Israel not because He was against them but because He was against their sin (vs. 23-24).
- All the remnant of Israel restored from captivity among the nations to their land (vs. 25-28).
- Israel at last restored to their God as well, *"for I have poured out My Spirit upon the house of Israel, saith the Lord GOD"* (vs. 29).

The prophet Joel speaks again of the same day, when God will pour out His Spirit on all flesh (Joel 2:28). In comparing the Revelation account we see that the context of Joel's prophecies (vs. 28-32) is the very same *"day of the LORD"*. Compare Jeremiah 32:38-40 in the context of Israel's promised regathering read earlier.

On the Side

When Peter quoted from Joel 2 at Pentecost (Acts 2:16-21) it was not to suggest a complete fulfilment of Joel's words in that day, but only a partial fulfilment. As well he was making the point that what was happening there in believers was not worthy of mocking, but was rather in accordance with what one of their own prophets had predicted.

In the events described here in Zechariah 12 the words of the Apostle Paul will come to pass, *"and so all Israel will be saved"* (Rom. 11:26). Every determined rejecter among them will be rooted out and removed, and only a believing remnant will enter into Christ's kingdom. To these God will give a new heart from the moment of their repentance and faith. Compare Isaiah 27:9; 59:20-21; Jeremiah 31:31-37.

"They shall look upon Me whom they have pierced" – Though it was Rome who did the actual piercing, *"they"* here refers to Israel. For they were the ones who forced the issue against Pilate's will (Ps. 22:16).

The Apostle John of course quoted these words in

connection with Christ's crucifixion (Jn. 19:37). Again, not to suggest that the crucified Messiah was the complete fulfilment of this word of Zechariah, but to affirm the certainty of Zechariah's words. How could they look upon a pierced, returning Messiah until first He was pierced? Calvary is what made this prophecy of Zechariah possible. As well, Zechariah's prophecy anticipated a rejected and murdered Messiah.

On the Side

Do not miss the fact that in the context of Zechariah's words it is the LORD or Jehovah speaking when He says *"they shall look upon <u>Me</u> whom they have pierced"*. That this pierced One is in fact Jesus there can be no doubt, which serves to confirm again that Jesus is none other than the Jehovah of the O.T. come in the flesh, come to give His life for the world, to redeem mankind from sin, and to lift believers, both Jew and Gentile, to His fellowship and kingdom.

There is an important parallel here in that the verb translated *"look upon"* is the same translated *"beheld"* in Numbers 21:9. Whoever in simple faith

lifted their eyes and *"beheld the serpent of brass"* lifted up on a pole in the wilderness, *"lived"*. Every such trusting one was immediately, miraculously saved from the poisonous snake bite. As we know Jesus made this an analogy of Himself lifted up on the cross in John 3, saying *"even so must the Son of Man be lifted up: that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life"* (vs. 14-15). Even so the remnant of national Israel will *"look upon"* Jesus *"in that day"* in a look of faith, believing Him for who He is, trusting Him at last as the only hope for their sinful condition. In the moment of their doing so they will come to spiritual and eternal life. With doubting Thomas they at last will cry, *"My Lord and My God!"* Oh the joy, and agony of that discovery! For they will realize in that moment;

- The tragedy of what they as a nation did.
- The magnitude of what they lost.
- The opportunities they have missed.
- The true reason for the trouble and loss they have faced through the centuries.
- And the astounding grace of the Lord, who would still seek them and care for them and want them!

"And they shall mourn" – Now it is all about the

Zec 12:11 In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon.
Zec 12:12 And the land shall mourn, every family apart; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart;

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measure of Israel's mourning in that day. Comparisons are given to express the desperate depths of what they will experience. Individually it will be as one would mourn at the death of *"his only son"*. Nationally there will be *"great mourning"* as when Judah mourned the death of godly King Josiah, when he was killed in confronting Pharaoh Neco at Megiddo as the Egyptian army was on its way to the battle of Carchemish (II Chron. 35:20-25).

"All Judah and Jerusalem mourned for Josiah" then, making his death the subject of their ballads of lamentation for many years to follow. It will be a day of such afflicting of their souls, as was to characterize the Day of Atonement (Lev. 16:29). For this will be Yom Kippur fulfilled for the nation of Israel. Surely it must be that this event will actually fall on the 10th day of the 7th month of the Jewish calendar, just as Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed on the actual day of the Passover,

Zec 12:13 The family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart; the family of Shimei apart, and their wives apart;
Zec 12:14 All the families that remain, every family apart, and their wives apart.

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fulfilling all that was pictured in that feast.

Vs. 12-14 – *"Every family apart"* – So overwhelming will be the realizations and sorrow that all will mourn in searching seclusion for a time. Perhaps similar to what Paul went through upon his stunning discovery of the truth of Jesus on the Damascus road.

The four names mentioned in these verses seem to indicate both the kingly (David & Nathan) and the priestly (Levi & Shimei) lines. As at Nineveh the repentance will not be superficial, but will reach right through to every level of society.

"In that day
there shall be
a fountain opened
...for sin and for uncleanness"

(Zech. 13:1)

Class 15 – Zechariah 13

What is God's great proof that He exists, and therefore that man's answers all fall short (atheism, evolution, behaviourism, agnosticism, etc.)? What is God's great proof that *His* Book is true and to be trusted over all other sacred writings (Sanskrit, Koran, Book of Mormon, etc.)? He declares concerning the future and it comes to pass according to His words. This has always been the indisputable test discerning between true and false; *"I am the LORD…behold, the former things are come to pass, and new things do I declare: before they spring forth I tell you of them…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, <u>My</u> counsel shall stand, and I will do all My pleasure"* (Isa. 42:8-9; 46:9-10). Only the true God can say such things, because He alone is able to do all his pleasure. There are hundreds of prophecies concerning the nation of Israel that God has spoken and fulfilled. Only He is able to follow through on His words as precisely as He has done. No other can do this with such complete accuracy. Though some "prophets" may have shown a measure of accuracy through Satan's power over the centuries, their inability for *total* accuracy marks their lack of total power (Deut. 18:22),

Zec 13:1 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.

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exposing their voice as from another spirit other than God's.

In chapter 12 we saw the amazing power that will be given to Israel against their combined enemies at the end of the age as *"the times of the Gentiles"* come to a close. Then we saw the combined repentance and conversion of the remnant of the nation as Jesus Christ bursts upon their sight in His return to earth coming out the end of chapter 12. These events lead naturally to what we now find in chapter 13, the cleansing of the remnant.

13:1-9 – Cleansing of the Nation

Vs. 1 – *"In that day"* – Remember how we saw so much of this phrase in chapter 12. The same heads the events of this chapter, putting the two chapters together in time. The focus remains upon the events around Christ's 2nd coming to earth.

"To the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem" – The Lord is specific and geographic in pinpointing the venue of these events. The place

specified throughout this last burden of Zechariah is the Promised Land, with greatest focus on the city of Jerusalem. Compare God's promise in Hosea 1:10, with the same indication there of the vast host of the saved Jewish remnant at the last (Gen. 13:16; Jer. 33:22; Zech. 10:8). The Lord affirms there as well that *"in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not My people, <u>there</u> it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God"*. Of course *"the place"* where the Lord dismissed them from being called His people was the land of Israel. And *"there"* in that same place they shall be restored to close relation with *"the living God"*.

"A fountain opened…for sin and for uncleanness" – Cleansing of sin from the God of pardons follows the mourning and repentance just pictured in the verses previous. The cleansing of regeneration has always been the great need of God's people. Though so many celebrated Jesus in His Triumphal Entry, hoping for national deliverance, they would not accept the more crucial spiritual deliverance Jesus came to bring. Now at last they will see it and receive. Of course this *"Fountain"* is Jesus Christ, and the cleansing suggested is from sin and unto the righteousness He freely offers. It is a Fountain of opportunity for salvation *"opened"* through Jesus to all who believe in Him. But only when *"they shall look upon"* that pierced One in His return will the

Zec 13:2 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.

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veil be removed and the way of salvation at last opened for Israel on a national scale.

Vs. 2 – *"I will cut off the names of the idols"* – After the manner of godly King Josiah the Lord in His return will conduct a most thorough purge. He will begin with Israel and extend the work to the ends of the earth, ridding His kingdom of every token of false worship. As Jacob at Bethel, the Lord will bury all, with even the remembrance of them. Then, having dealt with the actual tokens or icons, with all of their associated paraphernalia and every book of instruction in their mysteries and worship, the Lord will then turn His attention to the promoters of every false religion. After the manner of Elijah on Carmel, where first the belief system was proven a farce and then the representatives were buried with it, even so the Lord will turn from burying every emblem to burying every source of falsehood. Both the human promoters and the unclean spirits behind them will be purged out. As the Apostle Paul made clear, behind every idol is demon activity,

Zec 13:3 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.

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energizing and promoting the lies represented in the visible tokens (I Cor. 10:20-21). All of Satan's unholy host will be bound with him during Christ's 1000-year earthly reign. The Lord promised through Hosea as well, *"I will take away the names of Baalim out of her mouth, and they shall no more be remembered by their name"* (Hos. 2:17).

Vs. 3-6 – The extent of Christ's kingdom reforms now becomes evident with this window into the nature of His day. Not only will He be utterly thorough in bringing *outward* righteousness, He will just as thoroughly work *inward* righteousness in the hearts of the saved. For all the redeemed entering that kingdom age will be so completely committed to the cause of right that even if it means the death of their own son they will be willing for this, and willing even to have a hand in it. Loyalty and love for God will be greater than family ties, as it should be (Lk. 14:26). When a young person born in that age should choose to remain unsaved, and

Zec 13:4 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:

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then begin even to take up and promote falsehood, doing so even in the Lord's name, they will find their own parents standing in their way and bringing about their execution. It will be a day when God's people respond as they were always meant to, despising error in their supreme love for the God of truth (Deut. 13:6-11; 18:20). So the Lord's inward reforms will be so great that His true children will not listen to, pity, hide, or spare any falsehood or those involved in it. Such should be the nature of the church's uncompromising severity as well (Rev. 2). Remember the Lord's greatest honour upon Phinehas for doing the hard thing in killing the corrupt Israelite and Moabite woman together in Numbers 25:7-8. It will be as the words spoken over Christ's righteous indignation in clearing of the temple, *"the zeal of the Lord hath eaten me up"*. May the Lord consume us in our day with that kind of zeal for Him and His righteous way.

Vs. 4 – Shame and fear will keep false prophets from promoting their wares and from wearing clothing identifying them for what they are.

"Neither shall they wear a rough garment to deceive" – Apparently this refers to the typical clothing of one wishing to be known as a prophet. Perhaps comparable to Elijah's mantle or John the Baptist's rough clothing. The picture is of putting on the uniform of a true prophet *"to deceive"* or for the purpose of deceiving. Even the garments become a lie in suggesting one a true mouthpiece for God.

Understand that there will still be the same sinful tendencies in natural man during the days of Christ's kingdom. Though the Lord Jesus Christ will be reigning in Jerusalem, and though the saved will be loyal to Him above all, yet still all who are born into that near perfect environment will be born unsaved and very much in need of new birth. And in those refusing salvation will be found the same leanings toward all of the various forms of rebellion so evident in the unsaved today. So what will be the difference between then and now? Man is free to practice his rebellion today because Satan is now *"the god of this world"* (II Cor. 4:4), and rebellion is the prevailing principle on earth, with truth held back or suppressed *"in unrighteousness"* as a result (Rom. 1:18). But in that coming age Jesus will be Lord, with Satan's influence removed entirely, and with *righteousness* then the prevailing principle.

Zec 13:5 But he shall say, I am no prophet, I am an husbandman; for man taught me to keep cattle from my youth.

Therefore evil and rebellion will of necessity be suppressed in that day, rather than righteousness as in our current era. Through fear of punishment the unsaved will not have the freedom to openly practice the expression of their evil heart then, nor will they be free to gather together with others of like heart around their perverted purposes. Inward defiance must wear outward compliance in the fear of the Lord and of His *"rod of iron"* rule in that day. Only at the end of Christ's 1000-year reign will suppressed inward rebellion finally be unleashed with Satan's release, free at last to gather together with others of like heart. But alas, gathered only for a short-lived camaraderie and final slaughter as so briefly described in Revelation 20:7-9.

Vs. 5 – The anxious cover-up of one fearful of discovery is pictured here. It will not be a day for discovery in falsehood, for death will be the fate of one so caught. Therefore lie must chase desperate lie. "Who? Me?! No, no, I am not a prophet!" Though it may still be possible to deceive men in that day, the Lord will know, and knows how to

Zec 13:6 And one shall say unto him, What are these wounds in thine hands? Then he shall answer, Those with which I was wounded in the house of my friends.

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arrange circumstances to reveal a man.

Vs. 6 – *"What are these wounds in thine hands?"* – In vs. 7 the attention will turn to Messiah and with a view to His rejection. Some suggest this verse speaks of the same. But this seems rather to be a continuation of the confrontation of false prophets in vs. 3-5, this perhaps leading into discussion of the true Prophet in vs. 7. The question of the *"wounds in thine hands"* here must refer to physical evidences of false religion borne in the flesh of those who practice it, some physical scarring of the hands characteristic of idolaters in that day. Compare the prophets of Baal cutting themselves in their efforts to move their god to action on Carmel (I Ki. 18:28). Compare Jeremiah 16:6, 47:5. Compare the Deuteronomy 14:1 command against such practices. Many false religions of earth are given to such purposeful cuttings or scarring of the flesh. But this one now caught out by these evidences must quickly come up with some excuse to hide his secret. Perhaps while spinning his lies he inwardly wishes for the day when he can at last express his

Zec 13:7 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.

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heart, freely practicing his evil, and frustrated in that kingdom era by the need to hide in the closet due to the prevailing climate of Christ's truth and way of right. The thought leads on then to a true and right kind of scarring of the flesh in that One who was pierced, and in those scarred for Christ's cause (Gal. 5:17), in this current age when unrighteousness prevails, and the redeemed wish they could freely profess and practice righteousness without the menace of hate and persecution. How the table will be turned in that day of Christ's kingdom!

Vs. 7 – *"Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd"* – There is an obvious change in direction at this point. This is now *"the LORD of hosts"* calling for the death of the Good Shepherd. Where that Shepherd was valued by the people at only the price of a slave in chapter 11, now we see the outcome of their low esteem. Where they must look upon the One they have pierced in chapter 12, now we see the Lord's involvement in calling for that piercing.

Where we saw a fountain opened for the cleansing of sin as chapter 13 began, now we see that this fountain of cleansing is through the death and shed blood of the Good Shepherd. Jesus applied the words of this verse to Himself in the upper room at the last supper (Matt. 26:31), referring to His coming death.

Though a sword was not actually used in Christ's death, the sword is a figure of death at the hands of the *"powers that be"* who bear the sword or the power of death over their people (Rom. 13). The ruling power of Rome would rise to this call for the Shepherd's death through the earnest demand of the Jews. It is as if God puts voice to the will of His angry people, and joins in that same cause in providing the only answer, the only fountain for man's sin.

"Him [Jesus] *being delivered by the determinate counsel and foreknowledge of God, ye have taken, and by wicked hands have crucified and slain"* (Acts 2:23).

"The man that is My fellow" – Behind this word *"fellow"* is the notion of association or even relation. Elsewhere the same word is translated "neighbour". There is great warning here to the one who would dare involve himself in the death of God's *"fellow",*

Zec 13:8 And it shall come to pass, that in all the land, saith the LORD, two parts therein shall be cut off and die; but the third shall be left therein.

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one the Lord holds close and dear. Yet every rejecter of Jesus Christ does exactly this, aligning himself with those who hated and killed Him.

"Smite the Shepherd, and the sheep shall be scattered" – This of course found fulfilment in Christ's disciples *"offended because of Me this night"* (Matt. 26:31), scattered in fear from the Shepherd when He was taken. But the same was more broadly fulfilled on the rejecting nation of Israel, crushed and scattered by Rome after their smiting of the Good Shepherd. And the same will be fulfilled again when Israel is crushed and scattered from the land even more brutally under Antichrist's intense persecution of Israel during the coming Tribulation (Rev. 12:13-17).

"And I will turn My hand upon the little ones" – These *"little ones"* seem to be the Lord's own true children, those esteemed of small worth by the unbelieving world, but cherished like a little child of the Father. As God lifted Noah and rescued Lot from His falling judgment, so He would place His protecting hand over His own against the ravages of Rome.

Zec 13:9 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.

Vs. 8-9 – These final verses can only look beyond to the ultimate cruelty brought upon God's people through Antichrist in the Great Tribulation, for the spiritual turning described in vs. 9 has never yet been true of the Jewish people, currently so enclosed in spiritual darkness. Described here is that *"time of Jacob's trouble"* spoken of by Jeremiah the prophet (Jer. 30:5-7). *"Alas! For that day is great, so that none is like it"* Jeremiah said. *"A time of trouble, such as never was since there was a nation"* Daniel added (12:1). Zechariah's words here mark that terrible turning at the mid-point of a future 7-year covenant of agreement between Israel and revived Rome's last great ruler, revealed through Daniel (9:27) and affirmed in Revelation. Here is that point when Satan shall be cast to earth from any further access to heaven *"having great wrath, because he knoweth that he hath but a short time"* (Rev. 12). And for 3½ years he, through his supreme human representative in the *"beast"*, will pour out every effort to annihilate the Jews. It will be Satan's bitter answer to the 3½ years he was

pinned down and powerless in Israel in the drought called down through Elijah in the days of Ahab, and for the 3½ years of Christ's untouchable, supernatural display of Himself in His earthly ministry in Israel. But it will be God giving answer as well, for those 3½ year periods of His most evident display of Himself and His Messiah to His people. And yet for all of it they would not wholly believe and receive. They would not be happy with God, with His choice for them, with the Good Shepherd. But oh how unhappy they will be with their own choice in the *"foolish shepherd"*. So now Israel must be brought through the furnace in that greatest time of trouble and purging before they finally look and mourn, and are then cleansed and restored in the *"fountain opened"*. The Lord in His grace will provide them with a measure of protection so that not all will be killed in those days (Rev. 12:14-16). And those remaining through this time of purging will be found to be the faithful remnant among them, and the rest who reject must perish.

Do not miss the fact that these great events at the end of *"the times of the Gentles"* were pictured at the beginning of it as well. Pictured in the three who refused to bow to Nebuchadnezzar, to the image of that beast of a man, and passed through the burning fiery furnace in display of their faith.

Through God's miraculous power they came through alive, and safe, and freed from their bondage, walking with the Son of Man, and honoured even by that world representative for their faith and courage (Dan. 3).

"They shall call on My name" – AT LAST! And in response the Lord says, *"I will hear them"*. Again, communication between God and His covenant people in the believing remnant will be restored at last.

"I will say, It is My people" – The echo of this same moment rings from other prophets as well. Ezekiel spoke of a day when God's people will be cleansed and saved at last by their God, and he follows with the bright statement of hope, *"so shall they be My people, and I will be their God"* (Ezek. 37:23). In the very same kind of hopeful context Jeremiah said in a similar way, *"And they shall be My people, and I will be their God"* (Jer. 32:38). It was through the prophet Hosea that the Lord branded the rejecting Jewish people "Lo-ammi" or "Not My people", *"for ye are not My people, and I will not be your God"* (Hos. 1:9). Yet in the same context Hosea saw a day coming when *"in the place where it was said unto them, Ye are not My people, there it shall be said unto them, Ye are the sons of the living God"* (Hos. 1:10).

It will be that wonderful day when at last Lo-ammi gives way to Ammi or "My people" (Hos. 2:1), and when Lo-ruhammah gives way to Ruhammah or "having obtained mercy". For then *"the ransomed of the LORD shall return, and come to Zion with songs and everlasting joy upon their heads: they shall obtain joy and gladness, and sorrow and sighing shall flee away"* (Isa. 35:10).

Class 16 – Zechariah 14:1-7

Zechariah's 1st burden (chapters 9-11) related Israel's rejection of Messiah. His 2nd burden (chapters 12-14) highlights their acceptance of their Messiah, giving something of the means by which they will at last be brought to believe on Him. Though there is much of a tendency among scholars to not read this final chapter of Zechariah literally, it is the way we will read it. For it is the way God teaches us to read His book of prophecy, according to a normal understanding. When we read this chapter as an actual prediction of what will yet come to pass it fits with the whole of God's prophecy through Zechariah. To read it as some do, as not referring to particular events relating to Jerusalem but only to a broader description of the whole experience of God's people throughout the ages, one ends up running right into interpretation problems. And of course to read this portion in such a general way then raises the question of how to read any of God's prophecies. When do we read normally and when do we read mystically? How do we know which way to read it when addressing any given prophecy? And whose words are the authority, the plain sense of what our God said or the one who insists on an allegorical interpretation? Jesus actually did ride into the city of Jerusalem on an

actual donkey colt, as Zechariah accurately predicted (and in doing so, Jesus prophesied of the complete destruction of Jerusalem, which actually happened just as He said). Jesus actually was sold out for 30 actual pieces of silver, and a potter's field purchased with it, as the Lord said through this prophet. There actually were 4 oppressive kingdoms or *"horns"* ruling over Israel leading up to Messiah's coming. These aspects of Zechariah's prophecies we *know* were meant to be read quite normally. And are we now to read this chapter mystically? Why? How would the average, sensible bloke know that? What would lead us to suddenly make such a shift, except that we for some reason find it hard to believe what we are reading? Are we not then talking about a faith problem rather than an interpretative enigma? Or perhaps it just does not fit into the system of belief one is determined to uphold? Then fix your belief system my friend! Simple! You see, it is always a question of whether we are willing to allow the facts and details of prophecy to build our belief system, or whether we are going to allow the presumptions of our system to interpret the facts or details of prophecy. Are we going to read our beliefs out of Scripture, or impose our beliefs on Scripture? The Lord talks here in concrete terms, with these events taking place in Israel and Jerusalem. There is nothing *here* to suggest that we must take these things in any

figurative sort of sense. Nothing here indicates that this refers to a church or Christian remnant. A simple approach to this chapter unfolds a prophetic record of Christ's kingdom of peace and righteousness established on earth at the end of the age with the city of Jerusalem at the centre of it. This fits very nicely with the context, for it has been the theme of this prophet throughout.

As the plot develops in this chapter, we find the nation of Israel returned to the land, yet still languishing in spiritual darkness. This is then followed by description of the summit of their very worst trouble since they first became a nation. This then leads into the conversion of the remnant of Israel at Christ's return, followed by the fullest blessing of the nation in their kingdom.

There are parallels here with chapter 12. There we also saw the point where the Lord will step in to help His people with supernatural ability in dealing with their attacking enemies. Here we come into the event at the earlier stages, when all at first seems lost. As well, there in chapter 12 it is from the angle of God's people, with the Lord's work in them the focus, leading them to salvation through repentance and cleansing (12:10-13:1). Here it is from the angle of the world, with their initial victory against

Zec 14:1 Behold, the day of the LORD cometh, and thy spoil shall be divided in the midst of thee.
Zec 14:2 For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city shall be taken, and the houses rifled, and the women ravished; and half of the city shall go forth into captivity, and the residue of the people shall not be cut off from the city.

Jerusalem bringing Christ's physical presence to the aid of His desperate people.

14:1-2 – World vs. Jerusalem

Vs. 1-2 – *"The day of the LORD"* – This again is that day when God publicly, evidently reveals Himself on earth against Satan's kingdom exercised through human power. Where Satan has seemingly snatched from God the dominion of earth through man's fall to sin in siding with the evil one, this earthly dominion will at last be evidently taken back by God and ruled through His saints.

"For I will gather all nations" – The Lord will bring all the armies of earth *"against Jerusalem"* (Joel 3:2, 9ff; Zeph. 3:8). We know *where* this event will take place, and we know *who* the enemies will be. Again we have no fair warrant for reading it any differently than as stated. When the Lord spoke of His return to Jerusalem in 1:16, He referred to the actual

return of His people to that geographical place to build His house there. How should we read that portion? What did He actually do? Does He not refer to the same actual place when speaking of His great jealousy for Jerusalem (1:14) and His determination to choose the same (2:12)? If the events of chapter 14 will not really take place at Jerusalem then what great trouble we bring upon ourselves in understanding the rest of this book.

We have here a description of coming events in briefest summary form, but with enough detail to get the picture;

- *"The city shall be taken"* – Captured or seized. Compare Christ's prophesy of Jerusalem taken by Rome, which proved to be spot-on and quite literal (Lk. 19:43-44). The city will again be taken at the end of *"the times of the Gentile"*, their attackers finding complete success at first.

- *"The houses rifled"* – The city will be plundered from house to house.

- *"The women ravished"* – Raped.

- *"Half of the city…into captivity"* – Captives will be allocated to the various victors involved and prepared for departure.

Zec 14:3 Then shall the LORD go forth, and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle.

- *"Thy spoil…divided in the midst"* – The spoils of Jerusalem will be divided among the conquering host while still in the city. It speaks of confidence or no fear of retaliation from anywhere.

The remnant of Israel will again be brought down to the most hopeless point imaginable when all will seem lost. But this will be the last time the Lord ever allows such abuse to fall upon His people! For then Jesus Christ will respond in a startling supernatural intervention such as the world has never seen.

Consider how the Lord's promise here of a glorious intervention may very well have been the expectation of many when Israel was besieged by Rome in the first century. But this speaks of an event much bigger in scope than only Rome, involving *"all nations"*. It is a warning to us that we not miss the details of God's prophecies.

14:3-4 – Christ vs. World

Vs. 3 – *"Then shall the LORD go forth and fight"* – At

Zec 14:4 And his feet shall stand in that day upon the mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst thereof toward the east and toward the west, and there shall be a very great valley; and half of the mountain shall remove toward the north, and half of it toward the south.

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the very pinnacle of victory for the enemies of God and His people the Lord will at last step in, and with earth-shaking power (Heb. 12:25-29). It will be after the image of Abraham's stunning victory over the confederacy of eastern nations. After they had won the victory and taken their spoil and were on their way home the Lord stepped in through Abraham's little "army" and thoroughly turned their fortunes. Upon his return with the spoils and captives, there Abraham met *"the Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth"* who was strong to give Him the victory (Gen. 14). Even so in the last day pictured here the Lord will gather the entire world to meet the same *"Most High",* when Satan's victory is suddenly snatched from his grasp, and his power and freedom with it (Rev. 19).

Vs. 4 – *"His feet shall stand in that day upon the Mount of Olives"* – The phrase *"in that day"* again ties this *"day of the LORD"* together with all the context of Zechariah's 2nd burden, a time statement

found so commonly in chapters 12-14. It will be the day of which the Apostle Paul spoke, *"when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ…when He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe"* (II Thess. 1:7-10). What we have here is a very physical picture of the Lord Jesus Christ coming down to stand with *"His feet"* on the Mt. of Olives. It is a picture that assumes an incarnation of *"the LORD"*, that He would receive a body and therefore with His feet He would stand. And how could He stand unless He is alive? And how could He come down unless He had gone up? The identity, life, death, resurrection, and ascension of Jesus Christ are assumed in these words. This place of His return, to the Mt. of Olives, is implied as well in the words of the angels who spoke to the disciples as they stood gazing into the sky with Christ's ascension. *"This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as ye have seen Him go into heaven"* (Acts 1:11). As He ascended visibly, bodily, actually, tangibly, so He will return. As He ascended from the Mt. of Olives so He will return to the same place.

"The Mount of Olives" – This is the only time the Mt.

of Olives is mentioned by name in the O.T., yet it has become a place of greatest importance in God's dealings with man;

- It was the way by which *"the glory of the God of Israel"* left the temple in the days of Judah's apostasy (Ez. 11:22-23), bringing on the Babylonian captivity.

- It is the way the glory of God will return (Ez. 43:2-4). Therefore the common idea arose that Israel's salvation, as the sun rising, would come from the east (Mal. 4:2).

- It was the place from which Jesus rode into Jerusalem in His Triumphal Entry, making His final presentation of Himself to the nation in the days of His earthly ministry.

- It was the point of Christ's departure from earth after His rejection, death, and resurrection (Acts 1).

- And now we learn that it will be the point of His return to the final rescue of His helpless people in their last great trauma.

"The Mount of Olives shall cleave in the midst" – With Christ's arrival great geographical changes will take place. That natural barrier will suddenly become the way of escape. The Mount of Olives will be split

with Christ's touch from east to west, with half of the mount shifted to the north and half to the south, as if the curtains are again suddenly ripped apart for the grand entrance onto the stage of world history of the Lord of glory. The mount will so suddenly be turned to *"a very great valley"* running from Jerusalem down to the east. In a moment that which now fully obscures an eastern view will be swept aside, picturing the way opened from the east, with all obstacles removed from before the approaching King. This of course will more strikingly put the city of Jerusalem into a setting of lofty prominence as well, at least in viewing it from the east. Compare in vs. 10, *"It shall be lifted up"*. From this point Jerusalem becomes the capital city of earth, the exalted city of the King of kings. Compare Psalm 48:1-8.

Consider how this incredible opening event trumpets the contrast in attitudes between the Lord's two comings. In His first coming He meekly rode over the top of the Mt. of Olives as He approached Jerusalem in His Triumphal Entry, coming not as Judge or even to break the bruised reed. In His second coming He strides right through the mountain with earth-quaking power! Where His enemies were allowed the upper hand in His first coming, it will not be so in this day, the Lord's Day.

Zec 14:5 And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with thee.

Consider how commonly God's prophecy connects the day of the Lord with great earthquakes, as an expression of His wrath (Rev. 6). Compare Revelation 16:17-20; Micah 1:3-4; Psalm 18:7.

14:5 – Remnant Rescued

"Ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains" – The Lord's coming will provide the way of deliverance, just as His coming to a soul at the moment of salvation is the point of deliverance as well. His coming with earth-shattering force will be the sudden opening of a way of escape for the people to flee from their captors. The captives of Jerusalem, already committed to slavery and lined up for departure, will suddenly find their opportunity for freedom with the terrible quaking and valley ripped open before them. With the armies of the nations stunned into disarray the captive remnant will make good their escape.

"As ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of

Uzziah" – The only other mention of this earthquake of King Uzziah's day is in Amos 1:1. Though no details of the event are recorded in God's words it was memorable enough to still be used for comparison here over 200 years after the fact.

"And the LORD my God shall come" – This is the second time now mention is made of the Lord's coming (vs. 3-4), stressing this factor as the prominent feature. In the midst of other extraordinary effects upon people, earth, and heaven, this is the Lord's return to claim His rightful place over all of His creation, the pinnacle event of all the ages.

Now compare these two mentions of the Lord's coming, and let's settle it in our hearts and heads who Jesus really is. We are told in vs. 3-4 that *"the LORD* [Jehovah] *shall go forth…and His feet shall stand…upon the mount of Olives"*. As we know, this can only be Jesus, both in His deity (*"the LORD"*) and in His humanity (*"His feet shall stand"*). Now we read of the same individual in the same event here in vs. 5, *"And the LORD* [Jehovah] *my God shall come"*. Who is Jesus? *He is none other than Jehovah God!* And the remnant of believing Israel, as doubting Thomas, will at last look upon the One they have pierced, crying, *"My Lord and my God"* (Jn. 20:28). As Thomas came to believe in the risen

Lord a week after the rest of the disciples, so this doubting remnant of Israel will come to believe only after the final "week" of Daniel's prophecy. Thomas refused to believe the testimony of others concerning Jesus. He would only believe when he saw Him with his own eyes. Even so the Jewish people have refused these many centuries to believe the testimony of Jesus, but they will at last believe, upon the sight of Him returning in power and great glory.

"And all the saints with thee" – Behind this word *"saints"* is the idea of "holy ones". In comparing the various passages describing the Lord's coming in glory we find that both believers and angels are included among this army of holy ones. Compare I Thessalonians 3:13; Jude 14; Matthew 24:31. At the Rapture of the church, before the final seven of years when God turns His focus particularly upon the nation of Israel, Christ's bride in the church will be united with Him in His presence (Rev. 19:7-9), and then will return with Him in His coming at the close of *"the time of Jacob's trouble"* (Rev. 19:14).

14:6-7 – Effects in the Heavens

Zec 14:7 But it shall be one day which shall be known to the LORD, not day, nor night: but it shall come to pass, that at evening time it shall be light.

Vs. 6 – Again the phrase *"in that day"* informs us that the things described in these verses occur together with the events prior. Though this is a difficult portion, the thought here seems to be that in the day of Christ's return and rule there will not be day in one part of the earth and night in the other, *"clear"* in one place and *"dark"* on the other side of the globe as in our current experience (vs. 6). It will be day all around the world, rather than day and night (vs. 7). Many other prophetic voices speak of great changes in the heavens at Christ's return. It seems a contrast will be made between the darkness of man's day and the brightness of Christ's day. As man's day of dominion comes to an end at the close of the Great Tribulation, it will be characterized by actual darkening of heavenly bodies, as seen in those many prophetic portions describing irregularities in the heavens with sun, moon, and stars darkened (Isa. 13:9-10; 24:23; Joel 3:15; Rev. 6:13; 8:12). Jesus put the time of darkened heavenly bodies just before His return in Matthew 24:29-30. Then with the visible return of Christ to rule will come the day of continual light. Isaiah was perhaps describing the same day when

sun and moon will be brightened in Isaiah 30:26. This same condition will continue into the eternal state of the new heavens and earth beyond the 1000 years of Christ's earthly kingdom. Following the days of Christ's kingdom His universe will not be illuminated any more by sun and moon or run according to "natural laws" (Isa. 60:19-20; Rev. 20-21). For ever after *"the glory of God"* and the Lamb will be the source of light (Rev. 21:23), and all will revolve entirely around the Lord Himself.

"And the LORD shall be King
over all the earth:
in that day shall there be
one LORD,
and His name one"

(Zech. 14:9)

Class 17 – Zechariah 14:8-21

Zec 14:8 And it shall be in that day, that living waters shall go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the former sea, and half of them toward the hinder sea: in summer and in winter shall it be.

14:1-2 – World vs. Jerusalem

14:3-4 – Christ vs. World

14:5 – Remnant Rescued

14:6-7 – Effects in the Heavens

14:8-11 – Effects on Earth

Vs. 8 – *"In that day"* – Again we are still speaking of the same era, and this focus continues throughout this section (vs. 9, 13, 20, 21). It is *"the day of the LORD"*, the day of Christ's return to rescue, revelation, retribution, revenge, and restoration. It is that era beginning with the final countdown of years leading up to His return, and ever after. It will be the day of God's direct, evident intervention into the experience of men, the day when He deals a devastating blow against every institution of evil, and all behind it, in readying the earth for Christ's kingdom of righteousness and peace.

"Living waters shall go out from Jerusalem" – An actual river is described here, flowing out of Jerusalem. The city will be situated right on the source or spring of this river. Because of the elevated position of the city in that day the river will flow both to the east and to the west. The Mt. of Olives of course having been split with Christ's arrival (vs. 4), this will result in the *"very great valley"* through which the eastern part of this river will flow. It will be something of a return to the Paradise lost, when *"a river went out of Eden to water the garden; and from thence it was parted, and became into four heads"* (Gen. 2:10). These rivers will be *"living waters"* in the sense of actively flowing rivers in contrast to stagnant water. Though this refers to an actual, perennially flowing river it is a picture as well of God's gracious provision for man, available in every season. Jesus described the effect of the indwelling Holy Spirit on a life like *"rivers of living water"* flowing *"out of his belly"* (Jn. 7:38). He spoke to the woman at the well of Himself as the source of *"living water",* such that *"whosoever drinketh…shall never thirst".* In Jeremiah 2 the Lord marvelled over a people who would forsake Him, *"the fountain of living waters",* and rather choose *"broken cisterns, that can hold no water"* (2:13). He marvelled that His people would choose the flat, stale, stagnant "waters" of false gods

Zec 14:9 And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one.

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and religion in contrast to the sweet and refreshingly satisfying waters of relation to Him. That pure, cool pair of rivers parting and flowing from *"the throne of God and of the Lamb"* will ever after be a visible reminder of man's only source of true refreshment. The sights and sounds and taste of it will visibly express the blessing of God flowing out to the refreshment and sustaining of the world. Compare Revelation 22:1; Ezekiel 47:1-12; Joel 3:18.

"There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the Most High" (Ps. 46:4).

Vs. 9 – *"The LORD shall be king over all the earth"* – Some would like to make *"all the earth"* out to be "all the land", as if referring only to the Promised Land. But the context indicates that this is *"all the earth"*. For this is the day when the Lord Jesus Christ shall be *"the Lord of all the earth"* (4:14; 6:5; Mic. 4:13). This will be the day;

- When the hills will melt like wax *"at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth"* (Ps.

97:5).

- When *"He shall judge among the nations"* (Isa. 2:5).
- When *"before Him shall be gathered all nations"* and He shall judge between the sheep and goats (Matt. 25:31-46).
- When He at last shall be *"Lord of lords, and King of kings"* (Rev. 17:14).

This does not refer to a local reign but to the universal reign of Jesus Christ on earth and *"over all the earth"*. Compare Psalm 2.

"There shall be one LORD" – Again, *"in that day"* the Lord *"will cut off the names of the idols* [with the evil spirits behind them] *out of the land, and they shall no more be remembered"* (13:2). The Lord alone will be worshipped as the true God then. With Satan and his demons removed to the abyss, all polytheism, with every form of false religion, idolatry, and occult intrigue will be squashed at last. Only the worship and service of the true God according to the true understanding of Him will be allowed and universally observed.

"And His name one" – Jehovah God revealed in the

Zec 14:10 All the land shall be turned as a plain from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem: and it shall be lifted up, and inhabited in her place, from Benjamin's gate unto the place of the first gate, unto the corner gate, and from the tower of Hananeel unto the king's winepresses.

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flesh as Jesus Christ is that one name above all names. God is jealous concerning His name, for it is the revelation of who He is. We cannot worship Him by any other name (Krishna, Allah, etc.) and expect to please Him.

Vs. 10 – Again it is a return to a description of geographical changes in and around Jerusalem (vs. 4). These changes will be through the great earthquake accompanying Christ's return (vs. 5) and several other earthquakes during that era (Rev. 6:12; 11:13; 16:18ff). The city of Jerusalem will be lifted up to a more eminent place while the surrounding hill country will be *"turned as a plain"*. Geba was in Benjamin, about 10 kms northeast of Jerusalem. Rimmon, as we are told, was *"south of Jerusalem"*, about 60 kms to the southwest. So the entire southern end of the highland region surrounding the city of Jerusalem will be flattened and lowered to a great plain. And *"the city of the great King"* will be *"beautiful for situation, the joy of*

Zec 14:11 And men shall dwell in it, and there shall be no more utter destruction; but Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited.

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the whole earth" (Ps. 48:2), rising majestically above all her surroundings. Compare Isaiah 2:2-3; Micah 4:1.

Vs. 11 – *"Jerusalem shall be safely inhabited"* – Safe and peaceful dwelling are conditions very commonly spoken of Israel and of the whole earth during that coming kingdom age. Compare Jeremiah 23:6; 32:37; 33:16; Ezekiel 28:25-26. Never again will Jerusalem be touched by enemy attack. Never again will a hate-filled destroyer set foot in that city. Even in the final conflict with Satan's release at the end of Christ's 1000-year earthly reign the focal point will again be Jerusalem, but the attacking host will only advance so far as to surround *"the camp of the saints…and the beloved city"*. In John's prophecy that is the point where *"fire came down from God out of heaven, and devoured them"* (Rev. 20:9). Compare Ezekiel 38:8, 11, where the attack of Gog & Magog seems to be placed after Christ's earthly kingdom.

14:12-15 – Effects on Man and Beast

Zec 14:12 And this shall be the plague wherewith the LORD will smite all the people that have fought against Jerusalem; Their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet, and their eyes shall consume away in their holes, and their tongue shall consume away in their mouth.

We are now given description of the way the Lord will deal with the attacking international host in the Battle of Armageddon. As to subject matter we might be more inclined to put this portion just after vs. 5, before the portion describing effects on the heavens and earth. But such a circular approach is a common tendency in God's descriptions through His prophets (Gen. 1-2). He swings around touching on all aspects of the whole picture, and then swings around again filling in more detail. This is actually the 3rd swing on the same subject. The Lord began a discussion of the same in the first half of chapter 12. It may be that some aspects of the tactics given here will be used again in man's final battle at the end of Christ's millennial reign.

Vs. 12 – *"The plague wherewith the LORD will smite all the people"* – The power of life and death is in the Lord's hands. Throughout the history of His dealings with man, God has proven His ability and willingness to strike men with plagues of various kinds when the need arises;

- The Philistines were hit with some type of troubling tumours or sores while holding the ark of God after capturing it in battle (I Sam. 5).

- Some deadly plague was sent upon God's people due to their "no" vote at Kadesh Barnea (Num. 14).

- A deadly pestilence was sent upon the people of Israel as a result of David's sin in numbering the people (I Chron. 21).

- The angel of the Lord immediately struck Herod in his pride and he was *"eaten of worms, and gave up the ghost"* (Acts 12:23).

This final plague upon the attacking nations will be straight from the Lord's hand, and on a scale and with a kind of gruesomeness like the world has never seen. God will be dealing in anger in behalf of His people with an enemy utterly saturated in evil designs. This will be a day when the sin of the entire world will have come to the full, as the Canaanites in Joshua's day (Gen. 15:16), a generation in whom *"is filled up the wrath of God"* (Rev. 15:1).

"Their flesh shall consume away while they stand upon their feet" – *"Consume away"* speaks of rot.

Zec 14:13 And it shall come to pass in that day, that a great tumult from the LORD shall be among them; and they shall lay hold every one on the hand of his neighbour, and his hand shall rise up against the hand of his neighbour.

They will suddenly be hit with some kind of flesh rot, the effects of it so immediate that even while still standing *"upon their feet"* their flesh will begin to decay on their skeletons. Just the kind of flesh vultures can appreciate, as they are then called to the Great Supper of God (Rev. 19:17; Matt. 24:28).

Vs. 13 – *"His hand shall rise up against the hand of his neighbour"* – The Lord will strike the attacking host with blind panic (*"madness"*) stirring *"great"* confusion among them. As we saw in 12:4 He need only bring mass terror upon the whole host, blindness upon horses and madness upon riders is the way He explains it there. In the resulting turmoil the vast army becomes its own worst enemy, melting away in self-destruction, with the hand of each man turned against his neighbour, slaughtering each other in crazed terror. God does not have the least problem with enemy armies, no matter how huge they may be. Again, Gideon and Jonathan were helped to seemingly impossible victories in the same way (Judges 7; I Sam. 14), and probably Abraham against the eastern confederacy

Zec 14:14 And Judah also shall fight at Jerusalem; and the wealth of all the heathen round about shall be gathered together, gold, and silver, and apparel, in great abundance.
Zec 14:15 And so shall be the plague of the horse, of the mule, of the camel, and of the ass, and of all the beasts that shall be in these tents, as this plague.

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as well (Gen. 14).

Vs. 14 – *"Judah also shall fight at Jerusalem"* – As was suggested in chapter 12 as well (vs. 6-8), the leaders and people of Judah will be empowered and will in some way be involved in the destruction of that final Gentile host.

Vs. 15 – *"So shall be the plague…of all beasts"* – All the animals involved in the attack will suffer the same fate. Again, it is horses and mules and camels instead of military vehicles used in this attack. Perhaps we look for a change in the nature of military transport. This of course would be laughable in our current day. But God has a long history of having the last laugh upon doubters of His words. Compare Revelation 11:9-11; II Kings 7:2, 16-20.

14:16-19 – Effects on the Nations

Zec 14:16 And it shall come to pass, that every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles.

In these closing verses of this wonderful book of prophecy we are given a glimpse of kingdom conditions. Things go wider now, ranging out from events around Jerusalem to take in the whole world. It will be a very different kind of world, where only *"the King, the LORD of hosts"* is worshipped and served. It will not be a day of universal salvation. But as we soon discover, it will be a day when the Lord is ruling directly and dealing firmly with any and every threat to the peace and righteousness that must characterize His rule.

Vs. 16 – *"Every one that is left"* – This refers to all who are left of all nations after the Lord has effectively purged out every Christ-rejecting soul (Matt. 25). This is the saved remnant who with hearts full of joy and praise enter into the blessing of Christ's earthly kingdom.

"Of all…which came against Jerusalem" – As becomes evident in Christ's judgment of the sheep and goats in Matthew 25, the deciding factor in that day will be how folks handle the Jewish people. All

who are *"against Jerusalem"*, whether joining in the actual attacking host or united with them in purpose, will be removed and *"shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone"* (Rev. 21:8). And then *"every one that is left"* shall *"come from the east, and from the west, and from the north, and from the south, and shall sit down in the kingdom of God"* (Lk. 13:29).

"Shall even go up from year to year to worship" – Such will be the nature of the day. There will be a ready willingness in all the saved remnant to worship the King, going up to Jerusalem to keep His yearly feasts.

"The feast of tabernacles" – This feast is mentioned three times within these few verses. It seems this will be the only feast celebrated in that coming era. And this for the obvious reason that Tabernacles is the feast fulfilled in Christ's earthly kingdom. Passover and Firstfruits were fulfilled in Christ's death and resurrection. Pentecost was fulfilled in the Spirit's coming to indwell the church. Trumpets will be fulfilled in the full regathering of Israel to the land in the last days. Yom Kippur will be fulfilled in God's final reckoning with sin in Israel's remnant at Christ's return, and in the Judgment Seat of Christ for the church. Then Tabernacles will be fulfilled in

Zec 14:17 And it shall be, that whoso will not come up of all the families of the earth unto Jerusalem to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, even upon them shall be no rain.

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the kingdom age. For this reason it will be the only one celebrated there. That era, as is characteristic of the Feast of Tabernacles, will be a time of ever looking to the joy of what God has brought us from and through and to, ever rejoicing in He who has led us safely through the "wilderness" of life on earth to our Promised Land of rest, rejoicing in our Redeemer whose dwelling in that day will be more directly with men than ever before.

Vs. 17-19 – *"And it shall be, that whoso will not come up"* – Now we discover the possibility of some *"who will not come up"* to worship the Lord in that kingdom era. As we considered around 13:3-6, it will not be a sin-free day, only a day when men will not be free to sin without repercussion under Christ's rule and the prevailing attitude of loyalty to Him. For any to refuse to come up to Jerusalem for a prescribed feast will be a serious violation of the Lord's rule, and will be dealt with directly by Him. In Revelation (12:5; 19:15) we read that Jesus *"shall rule them* [the nations] *with a rod of iron"*. He will allow little leeway or tolerance of rebellion against

Zec 14:18 And if the family of Egypt go not up, and come not, that have no rain; there shall be the plague, wherewith the LORD will smite the heathen that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles.
Zec 14:19 This shall be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all nations that come not up to keep the feast of tabernacles.
Zec 14:20 In that day shall there be upon the bells of the horses, HOLINESS UNTO THE LORD; and the pots in the LORD'S house shall be like the bowls before the altar.

His rule then. He will not move in with troops because it will be a kingdom of peace, with none learning war anymore. Instead He will simply decree that *"upon them shall be no rain"* as in the days of Ahab, forcing compliance like He forced Pharaoh to His will through natural elements.

14:20-21 – No More Sacred and Secular

Vs. 20 - *"In that day"* of Christ's kingdom there will be an end of the notion of things (pots and bowls) reserved or separated for sacred use or service in the temple, as opposed to things in common use by people. The Jewish people would never cook a family meal in a sacred temple pot. Nor would they carry incense into the holy place in the dog's water dish. These would be serious violations of the proper use of things considered sacred or holy. But

Zec 14:21 Yea, every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness unto the LORD of hosts: and all they that sacrifice shall come and take of them, and seethe therein: and in that day there shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the LORD of hosts.

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in that day there will be no distinction between holy and common, because *all things* will be holy!

"Holiness unto the LORD" – Under the old covenant this is what the priest wore engraved upon a golden plate attached to the mitre or turban on his head (Ex. 28:36). For the priest was the one appointed to handle the sacred things of the temple worship, to maintain the holiness of that place and the temple utensils. These things were set apart as distinct from things of common use by the people. But in that coming day of Christ's kingdom even things as common as *"the bells of the horses"* and *"every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah shall be holiness unto the LORD of hosts"*. Everything will be sacred. Every aspect of life will be *"unto the LORD"*, wholly unto Him and holiness unto Him. There will be no separation of sacred, religious activities and secular activities. All will be done as a sacred service of worship in that day. The jingle of the horse's bells will ring out Christ's praise. The use of bowls and pots in cooking and eating will be done unto Him,

in perpetually genuine thanksgiving to Him.

It may be that we are to read these conditions as extending only to Jerusalem and Judah, reflecting the priestly role of the Jewish people in Christ's kingdom. Compare comments around the vision of Joshua the High Priest in chapter 3.

"There shall be no more the Canaanite in the house of the LORD of hosts" – Compare Revelation 21:27; 22:8. It seems the term *"Canaanite"* refers to one who is morally defiled and spiritually bankrupt, as the vile nature of those whose cup of evil had come to the full in the days of the conquest. The day described here is the fulfilment of the conquest, the ultimate conquest. This is now Jesus, the answer to Joshua, the great Antitype of every O.T. type. This is the greatest Conqueror of all, come at last to His conquest. So a contrast is brought out here. Joshua, the fallible, human counterpart left much of a Canaanite representation still in the land, resulting in all of the ruin and captivity and dispersion, death, and destruction Israel has faced through the centuries. It all stemmed from those Canaanites still present. But *never again!* That is the point. Jesus will leave no Canaanites in the land as He enters His kingdom. No pockets of outward resistance and perversion will be allowed

to remain to fester and grow like a cancer. The prevailing direction in that day will be toward perfection rather than toward perversion.

Oh that our King might *"come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe"* (II Thess. 1:10).