

ZECHARIAH

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This book may be the most difficult of the Minor Prophets to understand and opinions vary on some interpretations.

The name Zechariah means remembered of Jehovah. It is thought that Zechariah's father, Berechiah died when his son was very young and so Zechariah is called the son of Iddo, who was his grandfather and a priest. Zechariah was born of a priestly family and was brought up in Babylon around the time of the termination of Judah's exile. He ministered to the Jews who returned to Jerusalem. He is not the Zechariah stoned to death after he prophesied in accordance with the Spirit's revelation to him. This Zechariah was the son of Jehoiada the priest (2 Chronicles 24.20).

The word of the Lord came to Zechariah in the second year of Darius, that is 520BC. The Lord was displeased and indeed angry with the previous generations of Judah and God calls His people to turn to Him and He will turn to them. He is keen to have His people back and He describes Himself as the Lord of Hosts which speaks of His mighty power and resources. Haggai ministered alongside Zechariah. Here in this prophecy, Divine reconciliation is offered. Sin makes fellowship with God impossible. Repentance is the first step to communion with God who is willingly and eager to forgive and welcome sinners and backsliders.

The opening chapters deals with eight night visions 1. The angel horsemen among the myrtle trees 2. The four horns and the four carpenters 3. The man with the measuring line (Chapter 2) 4. The cleansing of Joshua the High Priest (Chapter 3) 5. The golden lampstand (Chapter 4) 6. The flying scroll (Chapter 5) 7. The woman in the ephah (Chapter 5) 8. The four chariots and their horses and the crowning of Joshua (Chapter 6).

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 verse 4 speaks of former prophets who had this message to instruct Judah to turn from their evil ways but they did not take heed. The next verse asks, Where are your fathers now? And prophets do not live for ever. All the punishment that God administered had no lasting effect. But God said that if the people returned to Him He would welcome them. Verse 6 informs us that God's words and statues, which He commanded His servants, the prophets, did not have a lasting hold on the people. The Lord therefore dealt with the people because of their sins, lack of repentance and their ignoring Him and Judah accepted the reasons for Divine judgment.

Three months after this first message of Zechariah, and two months after the messages of Haggai and while the Temple was being rebuilt, came Zechariah's next message in the month Sebat. This period indicates from the new moon of January to the new moon of February and this message was a vision. It was night time and a man was riding a red horse among the myrtle trees that were in blossom and behind him were three other horses coloured red, speckled and white. The first rider was the angel of the Lord (v 11). Red speaks of judgment and warfare and here it is directed against the enemies of God's people. It is said that speckled means reddish brown or chestnut in colour, whereas white is a symbol of victory. The prophet asks for the meaning of this and is promised an answer from the angel of the Lord since He would interpret the eight night visions that Zechariah would have, this being the first.

The rider of the first horse is accompanied by holy angels who say that they have walked throughout the earth which is currently at rest, relaxed and tranquil. He who is on the red horse asks, How long He will have mercy on Jerusalem upon which He had indignation during the 70 years of their captivity in Babylon from 586BC to 516. The Lord spoke a message to the prophet to proclaim that He is jealous

for Jerusalem and with a great jealousy. As we have said elsewhere, jealousy is given a bad press but when you love someone you will not entertain any rival. There must be faithfulness and loyalty. Judah in her sinful state had followed many of the examples of the heathen which nations God was sore displeased with. For the Christian, we must remember that we are in this world but not to be of it. We are to follow the Lord Jesus and not the secular and worldly ways all around us. The Lord says in verse 16 that, in His mercy, He is to return both to Jerusalem and to His House, the Temple, which will be built and a builders line shall be stretched forth upon the city. The city would be clearly defined by boundaries. The Lord said that His cities shall be enlarged and improved. Prosperity was to return throughout the land in the mercy and provision of God. From verse 18, we have the second visions of four horns. The horn in the Scripture is a symbol of power. There are several suggestions as to what powers they might be. It could be the four great empires that were enemies of the Jews namely Egypt, Assyria, Babylon and Medo-Persia or successive Gentile powers. When the prophet asked, What are these? The reply was that they were four great Gentile nations that had scattered Judah, Israel and Jerusalem. In Revelation, we read of the same four world powers and, in this book and also in the book of Daniel, we read of ten horns which are ten kings or rulers. The word scattered is the use of the word winnow, the process of separating the corn from the chaff. From verse 20, we have a vision of four carpenters which I take to be part of the second vision. In those days, carpenters not only worked with wood but with metal and stone. The Revised Version uses the word smiths and Darby uses the word craftsmen. The Lord Jesus was a craftsman and His work would have been excellent. In His humanity, He was a working man and, as with the book of Hosea, God is desirous of mending broken things. The nations that were enemies of Judah would be frayed (v 21) thrown into terror and have cause to tremble and to go into a panic. These Gentile nations had lifted up their heads in pride like an animal about to charge, but all enemies of the Jews would be punished and by God Himself.

Chapter 2

Chapter two begins with the night vision of a man with a measuring rod in his hand, and, at the enquiry of Zechariah, the prophet was told that this man was to measure Jerusalem to determine its size for its rebuilding and expansion. The angel that spoke to Zechariah went forth and another angel went out to meet the interpreting angel. The second angel tells Zechariah, now referred to as the young man, to run and declare the glad tidings that Jerusalem will be inhabited again as will other towns both with many people and livestock and will have strong walls which speaks of security. It will be a time of prosperity. Verse 5 speaks of a wall of fire around the city. At night, campfires were a protection against predatory animals. In the end times of the future, the Lord Himself will protect Jerusalem but now the Lord will be the glory in the midst of the city as well as the protection around the city. In Revelation, we read of the New Jerusalem descending from the heavens and the glory of the Lord lightens it. The Lord shall be its everlasting light (Isaiah 60.19) and the sun and the moon shall not give light.

From verse 6, the Lord urges the rest of His people to flee away from Babylon which is described as the land of the north, the area from which both the Assyrians also came and Jeremiah 4.6, and 25.9 confirms this. The Lord had dispersed His people like the four winds and Matthew 24.31 says, The angels shall gather together his elect from the four winds from one end of the heaven to the other. Verse 7 calls upon the Jewish people to deliver themselves from the daughters (people) of Babylon for various reasons including the fact that judgment God is to bring upon this nation. Revelation 18. 4 states, And I heard another voice from heaven saying ‘Come out of her, my people, that ye be not partakers of her sins, and that ye receive not of her plagues.’ We can apply this to Christians today. While we should not be judgmental of others, we must not be involved with matters that are not suitable for Christians remembering Philippians 4.8. However, we must not set ourselves up as judges and juries but rather have hope that our witness to the Christian faith may help others to find faith in the Lord Jesus

But those who hurt the Lord’s people touches the apple of God’s eye. The eye is a vital organ in the

body and needs care and attention. To touch the eye is symbolic of harming it. The beginning of this verse says, 'After the glory He sent me to the nations which spoiled you.' This is not particularly clear but what is obvious is that the Lord and His glory will be in the midst of Jerusalem and in the nations who desired glory for themselves. In verse 9, the Lord says that He will shake His hand upon the nations and they shall be a spoil to their servants and they shall know that the Lord of hosts sent Zechariah. The shaking of the hand was a sign both of anger and sore displeasure and the nations would be a spoil refers to the plunder of goods. Verses 10 to 13 speaks of the singing of rejoicing since the Lord was to dwell with His people in Jerusalem.

The expression O daughter of Zion is viewed as a beautiful young woman says Unger. The fact that the Temple would be completed some four years later meant that the worship of God would be resumed in Zion and when, in the future, the new Temple in Jerusalem will be where the Lord shall have the glory and shall sit and rule upon His throne (Zechariah 6.13). And, later still, in the New Jerusalem there will be no Temple for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it (Revelation 21.22). In the time of the millennium, many nations shall be joined to the Lord and receive a Divine welcome and all people will know that Almighty God has sent the Lord Jesus to dwell in the midst of the people. The blessed Lord shall be in Judah and choose Jerusalem for His dwelling and here is the only mention in Scripture of the holy land. All mankind will, one day, be silent before the Lord seeing Him in all His majesty, glory and power. John, on the island of Patmos, was so overwhelmed by the Lord's glory that he fell at His feet as if dead. In a day to come, the Lord will act to vindicate His people such is His love for them.

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 deals with the cleansing of Joshua the High Priest who has Satan standing beside him to resist him. The High Priest also has the angel of the Lord with him. Satan is the adversary who was once an anointed cherub but whose heart was lifted with pride against God. When he sinned, he took a third of the angels with him. These are demon spirits for which there is no redemption. Satan constantly opposes God and His will. Here he is trying to nullify Joshua's service which is representing the people. There is always opposition to the work of the Lord and attempts to discredit His servants. The Lord rebukes Satan. The Lord has chosen to bless Jerusalem. Judah is the brand plucked out of the fire. Joshua clothed in filthy garments was unfit to perform his sacred ministry. But the defilement upon Joshua was a picture of the sins and defilement of all the people but, nonetheless, this is a very telling symbol of the pardon and forgiveness of sin due to the mercy of God. The change of raiment is significant. The filthy garments representing sin were to go, which would be a relief to Joshua himself, who would now be clothed in clean festal garments. This is a fine picture of the cleansing from sin and the creation of a new life. The fair mitre was a turban-like head covering. Fastened to the front of this was a gold plate engraved Holiness unto the Lord. The angel of the Lord stands by to ensure that all is done well and properly. When we read that the angel of the Lord protested unto Joshua we must realise that the word protested means solemnly affirmed and was confirmation that Joshua was to be the representative of the people.

Today, the world is full of people who claim to represent the people unto the Lord and assert that they are doing God's work with His approval but some are merely making names for themselves. Some such self-appointed leaders are astray from the Bible and pursuing false teachings and some are even making denominations of their own. Congregations are choosing people who they like to take offices in their places of worship, some of these offices are modern concepts and not scriptural, such as worship leader. Verse 7 sets out God's requirements for His people. They are to walk in His ways and the word walk means to live. We are to live according to His ways and keep His charge, commission and ordinances.

The High Priest had to administer justice in God's House and also to keep the courts clean. As a result, there were places to walk with God in blessed fellowship. While Joshua had the highest position, that

is to say the official position of representing the people, it would be shared by ministering angels. Taken literally, this cannot refer to Joshua but to the Millennial Reign of Christ with His angels. Here the Lord is referred to as the Branch, the Messiah. He is referred to as the Branch in Isaiah 11.13 and Jeremiah 23.5ff. In Jeremiah, He is the righteous Branch and the Lord our righteousness. What is the stone laid before Joshua in verse? Some see it as a symbol of the covenant people themselves but this is untenable as is the suggestion that it is the foundation stone of the Temple

Dr F A Tatford says it is most likely to be the headstone (Zachariah 4. 7 and 9) which would be the final stone to complete the Temple. The stone is used to describe the Messiah as the chief corner stone (Matthew 21.42). Upon the stone are seven eyes. Seven in Scripture is the number of completion and perfection and the eyes indicate the ever watchfulness of the Lord. In a day to come, iniquity will be removed in one day which reminds of the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16), the Jew's national day of cleansing, when the Lord returns in glory, there will be peace and neighbourliness. He will reign (Isaiah 9.6) and therefore there will be peace and prosperity (Micah 4.4.).

Chapter 4

And so to Chapter 4. The angel of the Lord, the interpreting angel, awakens the prophet and asks Zechariah what he sees. The prophet replies a golden candlestick with a bowl at the top with seven lamps on it with seven pipes to the lamps. This is a golden lampstand as used in the tabernacle (Exodus 25. 31-40). The item that Zechariah saw had an olive tree on each side of the lampstand which discharged oil into the bowl on top of the lampstand. Zechariah asks what this means and the angel seems surprised at the question. The reply is for Zerubbabel with a well known verse, 'Not by might, nor by power, but by My spirit, saith the Lord of hosts.' Zerubbabel was the governor of Judah and here reference is to a Divine agency not a human one but a spiritual energy from the Lord. This recalls Haggai 2. 4ff, 'Yet be strong, O Zerubbabel, saith the Lord, for I am with you and My spirit remaineth with you, fear ye not.'

Verse 7 speaks of a great mountain that shall become a plain and the Lord shall bring forth the headstone with rejoicing and the words, 'Grace be unto it.' The mountain symbolises every resisting power, anything that is in opposition to God but this hindrance will become a plain, a level even place. Paul speaks of a strong faith that could remove mountains and mountains denote opposition. Zerubbabel has laid the foundation of the Temple and he will see that the final headstone will also be laid and the people will know that this is the Lord's doing.

Verse 10 is a comfort. We must not despise the day of small things, or the small things themselves, but rejoice and be encouraged by them. A day of small things might suggest insignificant things but this day in mind was the laying of the foundation of the Temple. The plummet, the measuring line had been used and the seven eyes speaks of the complete overseeing of the Lord and we are reminded that He sees everything that takes place on the earth. He sees all the nations and each individual and knows what is the heart of everyone. He knows all our thoughts and motives and He resisteth the proud. The prophet asks for the meaning of the two olive trees each side of the golden lampstand and, again, the angel seems surprised at the question (verse 13). The reply is that they are anointed ones, the two sons of oil, ready to serve the Lord. They are there for God's purpose. There are some who feel this symbolism needing interpretation would benefit from plainer speech. But it takes little thought to discover its message.

Chapter 5

The fifth chapter deals with the sixth and seventh visions. The first is of a flying roll or scroll moving through the air. It measured twenty cubits in length and the breadth was ten cubits which is 30 foot by 15 foot. Its dimension were exactly the same length and breadth of the holy place in the tabernacle (Exodus 26.15). The flying roll represented a curse (verse 3) over all the earth and everyone that steals or swears shall be cut off. This would primarily refer to the eighth commandment since stealing is a sin against a fellow man and swearing is against the third commandment which is a sin against God.

Thou shalt not take the Name of the Lord thy God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that taketh His Name in Vain. (Exodus 20 7).

We live in days where some churches do not seem to respect God's name. The Lord Jesus is sometimes referred to as Jesus as if He were the man next door. I have heard Him referred to as a good bloke and a modern Sunday School in Manchester has a song My God is a big guy. The ghastly musical Godspell refers to the Lord as just a man. A pretty charismatic girl refers to the Lord as her mate. Those who take the name of the Lord in vain shall be cut off. This may refer to punishment or cleansing. The two sides of the scroll deal with stealing and the other deals with swearing. If anyone swears falsely, the curse will enter the house of the guilty party and the timber and stones will be infected with some plague or fungus that could destroy the property. Such a condition had to be referred to the priest for remedial treatment (Leviticus 14. 36-45). If this was unsuccessful then the damaged stones and timber would have to be taken outside to an unclean place and if this failed the whole house would have to be broken down.

The seventh vision was of an ephah going forth. An ephah was a large measure used by the Jews for dry substances such as flour and barley. It was a wooden receptacle large enough to accommodate a woman (verse 7). The interpreting angel refers to its resemblance through all the earth and refers to the lawlessness in trade and commerce and/or the intent of the woman to corrupt commerce. Throughout the earth probably means throughout the land as in the previous incident. A talent of lead was the heaviest measure of weight used by the Jews estimated to be about 125 pounds. The talent was lifted up so the prophet could see into the ephah. It would appear that the woman representing lawlessness attempts to emerge from the ephah. The lead was cast into the ephah and hit the mouth of the woman. This probably refers to the illegal trade practices that the Jews saw in Babylon and, in Revelation, Babylon the great harlot is referred to as a woman. As Christians, we are called to be honest in business. This account now speaks of two women with huge wings like those of a stork, an unclean bird (Leviticus 11.19), who seized the ephah and its evil occupant and flew away with it. It was carried away by the wind and wind is often referred to as judgment (Job 27.20 etc.). The two women have been interpreted in two ways. Firstly as agents of God's judgment and, secondly, as evil agents to take the ephah away from impending judgment. They were to carry the ephah to Shinar in Babylon the country of an enemy. Shinar was known for its open rebellion against God and has also been taken as a symbol of Satan's wickedness. Rebellion against God will not be tolerated by the Lord.

Chapter 6

Chapter 6 has the most unusual vision, vision number 8. Four chariots appear from between two mountains of brass. Four is the symbol of universality. The colours of the horses drawing the chariots are red, black, white and grizzled grey. Red speaks of warfare, black symbolises famine, white both triumph and victory and grizzled grey active and strong. The prophet again asks what does this mean and the interpreting angel describes the chariots as the four spirits of the heavens which proceed from the presence of the Lord and go for the throughout the earth or throughout the land. These must be angelic beings on a mission for the Lord. The black horse goes into the north country followed by the white horse. This refers to Babylon, north east of Jerusalem. The grizzled horse goes towards the south country which is Egypt. The horses are to fulfil the purposes of God and the angels travelled to and fro throughout the area carefully scrutinising what was going on and to determine the judgment that was to follow.

Verse 8 indicates that the angelic judgment had caused the wrath of God to diminish. Three men of the captivity of Babylon are named. They are Heldai, Tobijah and Jedaiah who are to be received and taken to Josiah, the son of Zephaniah, where hospitality would be given. These three men had brought with them silver and gold which was to be used to make crowns to be set up the head of Joshua the High Priest. Some say that the word should be crown (singular) and the pluralisation indicates excellence. A Levitical priest was never crowned as such, but a crown is used to indicate part of the

priest's clothing. The head piece was a turban like item with a holy crown thereon (Exodus 28. 1). The crown was the plate of pure gold engraved with the words Holiness unto the Lord. Verse 12 refers to the Lord Jesus as the Branch who will build the Temple of the Lord. In 9.9 we read, ' Behold the King cometh unto thee.' Pilate uttered such words, as in chapter 6. 7, ' Behold the man.' The Lord will build the Temple in the sense that the Lord Himself will be the Temple (Revelations 21.22).

In Zechariah's time, Zerubbabel would lay the foundation of the Temple and his hands would also finish it (Zechariah 4.9). He would be the High Priest and take the throne in the Temple and there would be peace. In the Millennium Reign of Christ, there will be peace since the Lord will reign from Jerusalem. The Lord shall bear the glory. Psalm 8. 1 talks of His glory which has been set above the heavens. The Kingship of the Messiah will, in days to come, be active and autocratic and, as a priest, He will represent His people. An autocratic rule is usually associated with fear and the suppression of the people but not so with the Lord Jesus. Psalm 2 says that the kings of the earth will serve the Lord with fear, a reverential fear. In much Christian worship today, there is no reverence and respect. There is a lack of attention to the study of the Bible, an over emphasis on 1 Corinthians 12 and 14 in which the dreadful conduct of the church at Corinth is overlooked. The main features of modern worship are self and entertainment as well as worldly methods such as dance and a type of pop music to lyrics that are often misleading and wrong, It is Look at Me rather than Look at Christ. Heldai mentioned earlier is now called Helem (verse 14) and the crowns, or crown, shall be in the Temple as a memorial or reminder to these three men and to Josiah's hospitality. I believe that what we do for the Lord is not forgotten and, at the Judgment Seat of Christ, we shall receive awards for our faithful stewardship. This hearing will not be concerned with our sin for that has been dealt with at the Cross but we shall give an account of ourselves. Verse 15 talks of those who are afar off who will come back to the holy land. Most of these will travel the long distance from Babylon and they will be interested in both the rebuilding of the Temple and the revival of spiritual things.

Oh that today people, even Christians, would be interested in the Word of God and its study since it is this enhances fellowship with God and nearness to Christ. Some commentators introduce the idea that those who afar off foretell of Gentiles who will come into the benefit of being saved and quote Acts 2.39 For the promise is to you and to your children and to them that are afar off, and Ephesians 2. 13 But now ye who sometimes were afar off are made nigh by the blood of Christ. The people of Judah would know that God sent Zechariah. The people were to obey the voice of the Lord God and that would show in their participation of the revival in the land.

Chapter 7

Chapter 7 is important since it is relevant to us today. It begins with the matter of fasting and leads to matters of hypocrisy. A deputation from Bethel had come to Jerusalem to ask of the priest and prophets in the Temple which was in the course of being rebuilt. The question was should they continue to fast and mourn in the fifth month. And the answer came via the Lord through the prophet Zechariah that the fasting of this month and every other month must be joy and gladness and cheerful feasts (8.9). This event took place about two years after Zechariah had received the eight night visions and therefore half way through the rebuilding of the Temple. The deputation consisted of two men, Sherezer and Regemmelech, and their companions. To pray before the Lord meant to intreat the favour of the Lord. It would appear that these people from Bethel had been commemorating the leading incidents in the Babylon catastrophe. The Lord also mentions the seventh month. Abstaining from food and drink was regarded as an act of sanctification as inferred from verse 6 but it was also to indicate consecration. The question is asked by the Lord, Did you fast for yourselves or for Me in those seventy years of captivity? The Lord found their fasting to be hollow and merely a ritual, therefore hypocritical.

As we have said, there is so much hollowness in churches today, particularly the modern ones, in which self is promoted and the Lord is not given the place He deserves. Colossians states that in all things He is to have the pre-eminence, not the music group, the individuals talking about themselves (2

Corinthians 4. 5), the praise team, whatever that is, the dancers, the important guests, or self expression. God is not worshipped with men's hands (Acts 17.25) and worship in the Scripture is more the bending of the knee and reverence and certainly not noisy exuberance. Worship is for God alone and not to be a recital of what mere men and women have done and their standing up and talking about their sinful lives and all the wrong they did before they met the Lord. What God has forgiven should be remembered no more and must not come up again. If anyone be in Christ they are a new creation; all old things are passed away... that is to say dead and buried and not to be exhumed (2 Corinthians 5.17, Galatians 6.15) We do not go to church to do things our way but to be obedient to the Lord and revere Him. Fasting was in the Law of Moses for one occasion only, the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16. 29ff).

It was known as fasting day (Jeremiah 36.6) and also known as the fast (Acts 27.9).

In times of war, there were voluntary groups fasting (Judges 20.26, 1 Samuel 7.6). In times of great grief, there was fasting with the tearing of robes, sackcloth and ashes and in the time of Esther, when faced with the destructions at the hands of Haman, there was fasting (Esther 4. 3 etc.).

Former teaching is recommended in verse 7. It should never be forgotten or ignored. Here is a plea for the traditional ways, not modern or trendy ways but the old paths and to remember the unchangeability of God and His will. Listen to the words of the prophets of old, says verse 7 since what they uttered was from the Lord. Today people want to move with the times and reject the old ways established by the Lord. There is no authority in the Bible for modern worship. God is immutable. He does not change nor does the Lord Jesus (Hebrews 13.8) and in the next verse we are told not to be carried about with differing and strange doctrines. Psalm 102.27 talks about God being the same and unchangeable. Malachi 3.6 could not be plainer. I am the Lord, I change not. James 1.17 states that there is no variableness with God. In Isaiah 43. 18, the man of God complains that people do not remember the former things or consider the established ways of old. Jeremiah 6.16 recommends the old and established ways and, as we have said, God does not change.

We must come to God on His terms, not ours. At conversion, God forgives our sins and they are to be remembered no more (Hebrews 10.17) and certainly not to be made public as in a testimony. Sadly, people will dismiss this teaching but it is Scriptural. Before Jerusalem was laid desolate, it was prosperous and was defined by three areas namely the southern district, that is to say the Negeb as far as Beersheba. Then there was the lowland, the plain to the west on the Mediterranean coast and, finally, the hill country of Jerusalem and the cities nearby. The next message to Zechariah was to execute judgment and show mercy and compassion to everyone. Judgments had to be without bias or partiality. We are not think evil, even in our heart, towards a brother but to care for the widows, the orphans, the poor and strangers. Note we are to care for them.

One of the most intrusive and despicable things that happens in some churches is when a stranger or visitor comes along for the first time and they are jumped on by an existing member who may invite them to a meal and pump them with questions to find out all about them. And they dare to call this fellowship. It is not; it is nosiness. 1 John 1 tells us clearly that fellowship is sharing the things of God and of Christ. As in Zechariah's time, people refuse to listen and some people of Judah are stubborn pulling away with the shoulder as an act of defiance and stopping their ears as they are adamant with a heart of stone not wanting to hear or obey the law of God and what He said to the former prophets and this incurs God's wrath. Graham Scroggie was right when he said, "There are no better Christians but there are more obedient ones." As verse 13 states there are people who will not hear or heed the word of God. The seventy years captivity in Babylon was a punishment for the sins of Judah and still the attitude of some was disobedience to the Lord.

Chapter 8

Chapter 8 is a continuation of the previous chapter and begins with the Lord admitting His jealousy

for Zion that is to say Jerusalem. As we have said jealousy is given a bad press but it is understandable and commendable since if you love someone you will not tolerate any rival. Here the Lord displays His deep passion for His people and He is furious at Babylon for their mistreatment of the people of Judah. The Lord was returned to Zion and will spiritually dwell in Jerusalem which shall be called a city of truth and Zion would be holy and even the old people with their staffs will be content in the city streets. The streets will be full of boys and girls playing. There will be no threats or danger, certainty not uncertainty, safety and peace not the ravages of war. It will be marvellous in the eyes of the people and also in the eyes of the Lord. Wherever His people are scattered they will be regathered ultimately and universally. They shall all dwell in the safety of Jerusalem and truth will prevail. God will be acknowledged by all the people and be their God and God will own them as His people. In days to come of the millennial reign of Christ and of the eternal state this will be so. But this has always been God's will.

in the current days before us in the book of Zecharaia, the Lord tells His people to be strong and these are the days of the rebuilding of the Temple and attention must be paid to the voices of the prophets namely Haggai and Zechariah even though the harvests were poor and there was little money in these hard times. Consequently there had been conflicts everyone against his neighbour (verse 11) but the remnant would now be occupied with the building of the Temple and prosperity would follow and the harvests would be successful. Days of economic depression would give way to Edenic days. The people had sown little (Haggai 1.9) but now the vine would give its fruit, the ground give her increase and the heavens give its dew (Haggai 1.10 and 11). Both Israel and Judah had become a symbol of curses among the heathen nations who had observed how God had punished them but in a day to come the manifold blessings of God would become evident. In the meantime the people had to be strong and dedicated to the building of God's House. God would help them and save them and they would become a blessing. The word bless or blessing is not always understood or appreciated. It means conducive to happiness or welfare, or to praise, congratulate or salute.

Verse 14 speaks of God punishing His people and His not repenting of this, that is to say not changing His mind. He did not change His mind because they did not repent and change their ways. Now things are different and as Wycliffe said, God now delights to bless. God adds, Fear not. The Almighty then tells the people what they must do, namely speak the truth to everyone execute peace and judgment within your city not to imagine evil against any neighbour make no false oaths or promises since these are things that God hates. The nineteenth verse again calls for all fasting to be joyful and cheerful occasions and note that God now calls them feasts. Verses 20 and 21 seem to indicate Gentiles visiting Jerusalem or perhaps other Jewish cities in response to their hearing of the prosperity of Jerusalem and wanting to speedily visit. This will also be in days to come in the Millennial reign of Christ. Verse 22 makes note of many nations. Ten men will take hold of the skirt of a Jew suggests urgency and to see the joy of the Jews in their days of both restoration and blessing and these ten men are examples of other nations with their own languages. As Dr Tatford said, There are great days coming for the Israelis.

Chapter 9

Chapter 9 presents problems. It seems isolated from all that has gone before and the language and style is different causing some to think that there is a second Zechariah just as some think that there are two Isaiah's in that prophetic book. The first eight chapters of Zechariah was written during the rule of the Medo-Persian Empire and chapters 9 to 14 speaks of Israel and her enemies and not of Judah and her release from exile. It has been said that chapters 9 and 10 speak of the oppression of Israel during the oppression by the Greeks and chapter 11 speaks of Israel under the Roman Empire when Israel would reject the Messiah and chapters 12 to 14 are entirely future concerning the military forces in the time of the Antichrist and the return of the Lord Jesus to set up His millennial reign in Jerusalem. Chapter 9 deals with the judgment of Israel's enemies and I may not need to deal with this in detail as the principles have already been dealt with earlier. In verse 1 and 2 it is the Syrians where Hadrach, Hamath and Damascus will be judged. Verses 3 to 4 there is judgment on the Phoenicians

where Tyre and Sidon will be judged and verses 5 to 7 has judgment upon the Philistines naming the cities Ashkelon which shall see fear, Gaza will become very sorrowful, Ekron will be shamed and Ashdod will be inhabited by strangers. Jehovah will cut off the pride of the Philistines (verse 6) and Jerusalem will be preserved.

Verse 9 refers to the Lord Jesus entering Jerusalem in what we call Palm Sunday, the beginning of Holy Week. From verse 10 we read of Ephraim, denoting the twelve tribes of Israel, and Jerusalem denoting the tribes of Judah and Benjamin and the battle will be cut off for the Lord shall speak peace from the Red Sea to the Mediterranean. The Lord will release His people who are imprisoned and will extract vengeance twofold from those who have oppressed His people. The enemies of the Lord and His people will not prosper but will be defeated.

The reference to Greece in verse 13 has been said to refer to the time of Alexander the Great (356BC-323 BC) at the time of the Maccabees in the second century. Israel did not war against Alexander but remained safe when he visited Jerusalem. Later, Israel was victorious over Antiochus Epiphanes I, Alexander's successor. There was a bitter conflict with the Syrian Greeks and the Maccabees gained a convincing victory. The following verse speaks of the Lord's judgment going forth as lightning, swift, unstoppable and irresistible. The Lord shall defend the Maccabees and history has proved this. The Maccabees were a Jewish army that took control of Judah and reasserted the Jewish religion. They fought against the Seleucid Empire of Syria after the death of Alexander the Great and they also fought against the Hellenistic empire of Greece. The Lord shall defend His people and the enemies will be devoured and subdued and they shall be filled like the bowls of the altar which were filled with the blood of the sacrificed animals. The suggestion is of the blood of their conquered enemies. The noise of battle gives way to a scene of tranquillity as the Lord will lead His flock who will dwell in safety and security. The stones in the slings of the enemy achieved nothing but the nation of Israel will be like precious stones to the Lord (verse 16) and His people will appreciate the greatness of God and the attractiveness of His goodness and generosity and the people will be cheerful (See Isaiah 62 verse 1 to 3).

Chapter 10

If chapter 9 deals with the enemies of Israel, then chapter 10 deals with the glory of Israel's Messiah. The opening verse deals with prayer and God promises showers of rain to produce a good harvest. The latter rain was in April and May. There follows a condemnation of idols. It was usually idolatry that caused to God punish His people and send them into captivity. The idols referred to here were busts or full length figures some even life size who were said to be able to speak through mediums. Throughout Scripture all forms of witchcraft, sorcery and mediumship was condemned.

Idolatry includes necromancy the alleged communication with the dead sometimes through a medium, or psychic, hence spiritualism (Deuteronomy 18. 11) divination to foresee being inspired by some god or other; it could also refer to superstition (Deuteronomy 18.14) magic which are tricks, delusions, illusions and astrology (Exodus 7.11 etc.) soothsayers which includes fortune telling Tarot cards (Acts 16.16ff etc.) sorcery anything that is paranormal and the control of the supernatural (Deuteronomy 18.10) witchcraft includes spells and potions, nudity among adherents as the spirits can get through to people if they are nude, dancing naked around fires, consider Moloch in the Old Testament, (Leviticus 18.21 etc.) sexual freedom where no sex is condemned and even paedophilia is allowed. Some black witchcraft is decidedly evil, lying wonders. Satan is the greatest liar and deceiver and Satanic powers and Satanism is evil and anti-God (2 Thessalonians 2.9) Idols in verse 2 are usually referred to as Teraphim which is interpreted as domestic gods and family idols and they speak falsehoods and other lies and vanities and the nation of Israel followed the ways of the idols not knowing where they went being like lost sheep without a shepherd. The shepherds specifically referred to here as those who should have discouraged the use of idols or those of other nations encouraging idolatry. They will be visited in punishment but the goodly horse speaks of Israel battling against the idolaters. From Jehovah

or Judah, or both, will come the corner stone that which unites two walls, the nail, really a tent peg, the means of fixing securely. The Messiah will equip Judah completely to destroy the oppressor.

And so verses 3 to 12 talk about the supremacy of God. It laid low the Assyrian army (Isaiah 37.36) and it was God who terminated the power of Babylon and other empires have come and gone as have all the enemies of God and His people. Verse 5 talks of the mighty men of Judah who will trample underfoot their enemies and they will be victorious because the Lord is with them and the cavalry of the enemy will be confounded. The following verse speaks of God strengthening Judah and showing mercy so that they are not cast off and God will listen to them. And the chapter begins with prayer. The reference to the house of Joseph is interesting. Ephraim was the youngest of the sons of Joseph and Ephraim is often put forward as representative of the ten tribes of Israel. Isaiah 7.17 mentions the time when Ephraim departed from Judah but the day will come when Israel and Judah will be united as one. Ephraim will be mighty again and they and their descendants shall see this and rejoice (verse 7).

The Lord says, I will hiss for them. The word hiss means a signal, to make a sign or to communicate. The Eastern shepherd make signs to his sheep by a signal or a whistle perhaps with a bamboo pipe, in a day to come the Lord will issue a signal for all His flock, all of Israel to be united and come together. He will bless them and they will increase and be prosperous. They were scattered no more but even when they are in far countries they will remember the Lord and be in contented families (verse 9). God will draw them for all lands and they will increase and there may not be enough land for them but that will be a temporary situation. Verse 11 may be difficult but it may mean that anyone or any nation that resists the return of God's people will suffer affliction and even the might of Assyria and Egypt shall not thwart God and His plans for His people. Herein is explained the supremacy of God for His earthly people. Does this not also apply to we Gentiles who have been saved through the supreme sacrifice of the Lord Jesus upon the Cross?

Chapter 11

Chapter 11 begins with a forest fire in Lebanon which has the lofty mountain range in Syria, a long time enemy of the Jews. Fire is the agent of destruction used upon the oppressors of Israel. The mighty cedars were Lebanon's glory. In colourful language, the fir trees are called upon to howl which word means to mourn and this would be in a loud voice. If the mighty cedars are consumed what chance has the humbler fir tree? And what of the oaks of Bashan in a rich tract of land east of Jordan between Mount Hermon in the north and Gilead in the south. Note in verse 10, Lebanon and Gilead are linked where the Lord says He will bring His people into the lands of Gilead and Lebanon. Bashan was the portion of the half-tribe of Manasseh and is now known as the Golan Heights. Isaiah 2. 13 speaks of the cedars of Lebanon that are high and lifted up and all the oaks of Bashan but Zechariah states that they are to be spoiled. Once the vintage forest but soon to be a smouldering pile of ash but the oaks are felled as they provided wood for necessary domestic use such as oars for boats (Ezekiel 27. 5 ff.) The firestorm causes the shepherds great distress (verse 3) and the lions who sheltered under the shade of the tress from the heat of the day as it would affect domestic livestock. The pride of Jordan is spoiled, all 65 miles of the Valley of Jordan just below the Sea of Galilee to the Dead Sea. In verse 4 the Lord says, Feed the flock of the slaughter that is to say the flocks destined for slaughter. The Jewish people were no strangers to persecution and destruction and in 70AD a million died at the hands of the Romans who destroyed Jerusalem.

The following verse talks about the nations who took possession of God's people and put them at a disadvantage and do not feel guilty or any pang of conscience and even the shepherds did not care about these slaves. E B Pusey refers to these shepherds as high priests, priests, scribes, lawyers, Pharisees and Sadducees who were corrupt and played into the hands of the enemy. As a result, the Lord will no longer have pity for His people and the land and allow the people to be delivered into the hands of these nations and their kings and the land will also suffer. Many believe this refers to the time

when Messiah comes and the Holy Land is occupied by the Romans when the Jews rejected Christ the Messiah. As a consequence, Jerusalem was destroyed in AD70 by the Romans when the prophet describes the Jews as the poor of the flock rendered sometimes as the miserable flock. In verse 7, we read of the shepherds of the East who had two staves which could be called Beauty and Bands. Beauty stands for graciousness and favour and Bands speaks of connection and this foreshadows the Good Shepherd who will feed His flock. Three other shepherds or types of shepherds will be cut off and Dennett refers to these as Pharisees Sadducees and Herodians, religious heads of the people.

God's shepherd care for His earthly has been rejected and so God will not bother with them any more and this is often interpreted as being at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70. Beauty, the symbol of Divine protection, will be cut asunder and the Divine covenant with the Gentile nations will be broken as they were intent on destroying the Jews. However, in verse 14, God says He will cut asunder the other band, called Bands, which will break the brotherhood between Israel and Judah. This has been called the saddest prophecy regarding the Jews. Persecution by men is regrettable but abandonment by God is utter desolation.

Verse 11 further indicates the breaking of the covenant God had with the Gentiles which covenant lasted until they began their persecution of the Jews. A few of the Jewish flock still waited on the Lord and it has been said that there will always be a godly remnant.

The following verse is a reference to the betrayal of Christ for thirty pieces of silver. One could ask, Is that all He was worth? In the UK, Christ and Christianity is despised and even Christians have services and worship over-tainted with the secular and worldly which has become trendy, modern and a social institution. We live in a society that only cares for the things of the world, not of Christ or of others. Who have we in politics that honours the Lord and is true to the faith once and for all delivered to the saints? The Labour party is largely made up of left wingers and atheists and some who hate the Jews. But the question should be asked of us, What think we of Christ? Is He really precious to us? Do we give Him the pre eminence? Graham Scroggie was right when he said, If He is not Lord of all, he is not Lord at all.

Verse 13 instructs that the silver be cast into the potter in the House of the Lord. Of course, this is an ironic statement and the throwing was to be in the most holy place, the Temple itself. Judas cast the silver pieces before the high priests before he killed himself in the potters' field.

The second staff, Bands, was to be cut asunder breaking the brotherhood between Judah and Israel. These nations were destined for severance and this by a false and foolish shepherd (verse 15). These nations were disintegrated when Rehoboam, the son of wicked Solomon, forsook the counsel of the older men and the house of Judah separated from the house of Israel. As a consequence, Israel rebelled against the house of Judah (2 Chronicles 10.19).

The ignoring of the counsel of older men (2 Chronicles 10.13) has a significance today. Most modern Christians do not want the old ways, the traditional and proven paths but what is modern, 'with it' and 'cool.' The Bible teaches us to walk in the old ways.

God will raise up a foolish shepherd with all the accoutrements of a real shepherd and this He will do because the Good Shepherd has been rejected. This new shepherd will be careless and reckless who not only rejects his flock but is cruel to it. He will not heal the injured of the flock but uses the flock for his own benefit. The flock would suffer with torn claws because they are mercilessly overdriven.

Verse 17 produces woes upon this shepherd and describes him as an idol. Is he the Antichrist who will be destroyed by the brightness of the coming of the True Shepherd, the Lawless one who will be cast alive into the lake of fire (2 Thessalonians 2.8).

Chapter 12

The burden concerning Israel says the Lord who stretched forth the heavens and laid the foundation of the earth and formed the spirit of man within him. All of this shows the power of God and that He is the Creator of the heavens and the earth. He is also the creator of man and this denies science and evolution. Dr F A Tatford and many many others said, "I cannot believe in evolution because I am a scientist!"

The second verse refers to Jerusalem becoming a fearsome place as all the nations of the world war against this city led by the Antichrist who we encountered at the end of the previous chapter. Even today, we acknowledge the hatred of the Jews because they are God's people and this hate is building up as is the hatred towards Christians. There will be a siege of Jerusalem and this period is known as the time of Jacob's trouble (Jeremiah 30.7). This is future, of course. Jerusalem will become as a burdensome stone, too heavy to hold and, as it slips from grasp, will result painful lacerations and injury. It all very well the powerful nations taking on Jerusalem, but it will be a greater task than expected.

This is the day of the Lord (verse 4). The horsemen will be smitten with madness and the horses astonished and confused. Of course, in these days to come, the means of transport will be mechanical and the riders will be soldiers, although one cannot rule out the use of horses. They and their riders will be rendered useless for battle since the curse will be upon Gentiles who rise up against God's people. Verse 5 refers to the Lord's support for Judah since they are His people. Even the inhabitants of Jerusalem shall trust in the strength of the Lord and with conviction.

Verse 6 speaks of the governors of Judah being like fire in a sheaf which will devour the enemies. Fire speaks of God's judgment upon the enemies of His people. The Lord shall save the dwellings of Judah, the glory of the Temple, and the glory of those who live in Jerusalem. The nations will not magnify themselves over Judah who will boast in the Lord and not in themselves.

It is a cause of consternation that many churches boast in themselves and in their leaders who lap it up. They have the attitude Look at me and consider what I have done, which is the antithesis of the Bible position, Look at Christ and what He has done. The glory in self is absolutely forbidden in Scripture.

The future of Judah will be secure in accordance with the Lord's will and His deliverance. Even those weak with fear shall be strong like the warrior king David. All nations against Jerusalem will be destroyed (verse 9), and the people of God shall receive the spirit of grace in abundance and look upon the One whom they pierced and be in mourning for their sin against their Messiah, as one would be for their dead firstborn. It will not be a casual glance but a fixed look. How sad they will be, how mournful and how glad. The emotions will be great and, even as I say this, I can feel these sentiments. Today, we must fix our eyes upon the Lord Jesus and no one and nothing else.

The Lord was wounded in the house of His friends. Do we do that? If we do not give Him the pre-eminence, are we wounding him? If we are taken up with self, what we have done, and our entertainment Christianity with its pop music, worship hymns, dancing and social events, are we wounding Him?

Verse 11 speaks of the great mourning in Jerusalem as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddo. Hadadrimmon is derived from Hadad and Rimmon, two Syrian gods. Megiddo was the place where the last and greatest king of Judah, Josiah, was fatally wounded by the army of Pharaoh Necho. Pusey writes that the death of Josiah was the last gleam of the sunset of Judah who faded in the blackness of night.

He will be mourned and, at the defeat of Antichrist, there will be national mourning by the Jews as to how they treated the Lord Jesus. Every family and every person will be devastated because of the

crucifixion of the Son of God. Person by person will mourn and that, in itself, is repentance accompanied by genuine humility. We all need to be humble and, remember, humility is not underestimating self but forgetting self.

Make this poor self grow less and less
And all things else recede
My heart be daily nearer Thee
From sin be daily freed.

Chapter 13

Chapter 12 deals with national remorse of the Jews who were responsible for the crucifixion of the Messiah. Chapter 13 deals with the cleansing and refining of the nation of Israel after the defeat of the Antichrist.

Jehovah now restores Himself to His people. A fountain will be opened for all. It is probably a well with water and this is symbolic, of course.

Repentance is followed by cleansing and this repentance is for the sin of judicial guilt and moral impurity.

The second verse speaks of the Lord destroying all idols and also of the exile of all false prophets and teachers and every unclean spirit or influence.

Even their names shall be banished. All demons, which are the products of Satan, will go. Parents of a false prophet shall berate him and thrust him through. False prophets must not live. Matthew 10 verses 34-36 speaks of foes within one's own household. Some false prophets will apparently be ashamed but will wear sackcloth but this will be to deceive. He may protest that he is not a prophet but a husbandman working with cattle or, in simple terms, a farm labourer and was brought up to be this.

While we have suggested that the Lord was wounded by His friends who inflicted wounds in His hands, false prophets in Israel would often mutilate their hands in order to procure answers from their gods.

Nonetheless, the message here is the condemnation of false prophets and the reminder of the Good Shepherd who was not only the Messiah but the Great Prophet. He is contrasted again with false shepherds who care not for their flock.

It may not be profitable to dwell on the subject of false prophets and false teachers today, but what is lamentable is that there are many variations of Christian teaching and the confusion it causes makes unbelievers not wish to believe in the truth as there are some many lies and falsehoods in denominations as well as cults.

The reason for the Jews repentance and cleansing is because they smote the Good Shepherd and reference is made of the sword, the emblem of death. This quotation comes from Matthew 26.31. At the Last Supper, the Lord, with the agony of the Cross hours away, said that His disciples would be offended and stumbled that night and His flock would be scattered. One is reminded of Leviticus 26.33, And I will scatter you among the heathen and draw out a sword after you and your land shall be desolate, and you cities waste.

Verse 7 appears strange where it says that the Lord will turn His hands upon the little ones. It does not speak of Divine cruelty but means that the Lord will keep His hands on the little ones. The Lord Jesus was kind and loving to children. He said, Suffer the children (little ones) to come unto Me and forbid them not for of such is the Kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 19.14).

These final verses also are in the days of Jacob's trouble, the Tribulation, of which the last three and half years which is the Great Tribulation as set out in Matthew 24.21. Two thirds of the land will be cut off but a third will be left. It should not be taken that two thirds of the population will die since this seems to refer to those in the land, and not the towns and cities, hence the word therein. The land is the location of the Antichrist, the Lawless One, before his defeat. The other third will be refined as gold and the Lord will embrace them as His people. These have been referred to as the godly remnant.

Chapter14

This chapter deals with the day of the Lord, an expression usually used to denote God's judgment upon the Antichrist when heathen nations shall gather against Jerusalem in battle. The invaders will divide the spoil among themselves and, after a siege, the city will be captured, the houses will be looted and the woman raped. Half of the population shall be taken into captivity but the rest shall remain in this awful plight. Antichrist, the Lawless One, will believe that he has the victory.

But then, the Lord intervenes (verse 3) who will fight for His people against the Gentile nations.

This is the second part of His Second Coming. The first, referred to as the rapture, is set out in 1 Thessalonians 4 when the Lord shall descend from heaven with a great shout and the voice as of a trumpet and all the dead believers and those believers alive at the time of His Coming shall be caught up into heaven and forever be with the Lord. These believers are called saints as does the apostle Paul in some of his epistles. Later, at the end of the Great Tribulation, the Lord will come to the earth physically and His feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives which shall split into a great valley. It will be a terrifying experience and people will panic and run away as they did in the dreadful earthquake in the days of Uzziah, king of Judah.

It is important to note that His saints accompany Him. They are called an army in the corresponding passage in Revelation 19 at verse 14.

This day of the Lord will not be dark or light, not like day or night but, at evening time, it will be light. Antichrist and his armies will be defeated and a fountain of living waters shall flow from Jerusalem speaking of cleansing and purification. The destruction of the enemies of the Lord are detailed in Revelation 19 and later in this chapter.

Verse 9 speaks of the Lord being King over all the earth and setting up His millennial reign when Satan is bound for a thousand years (Revelation 20. 1).

In those days, the Lord will be the only Ruler and reign over all the earth from America to Australia, from Africa to China. The government will be His, not Republicans, Conservatives, Communists and other left wingers. Consider Isaiah 9. 7 and Philippians 2 where it states that every knee shall bow to the Lord and confess that He is Lord. All those who deny Him now, and have done, will realise how wrong they were and own up and confess that the Lord Jesus is the Son of God and as everyone is raised to stand before the Lord in judgment. How devastating it will be for atheists, idolaters, those into witchcraft and spiritualism, that is to say sorcery, murderers and liars and those who had added or subtracted for the Word of God (Revelation 22. 15 to 18). Surely, it behoves us all to keep true to the Word of God and not add to it or subtract from it and to beware of false teaching.

Those who live in Jerusalem will now live in safety and Jerusalem will not be destroyed again.

Then in verse 12, we read of the plague or destruction of the enemies of God. They will be consumed and, while I am not being dogmatic, some have referred to their injuries as if caused by radiation. It will be a time of great tumult, neighbour against neighbour and Judah shall fight and take the spoils of

wars. The victory will draw people to come to worship the Lord and those who do not honour the Lord shall suffer from the withdrawal of rain and no harvest. Egypt is singled out for punishment.

In those days, Holiness unto the Lord will be apparent everywhere, in every household, on every kitchen utensil and there will not be anymore threat of the Canaanite which I take to refer generally to any nation.

If there is one thing missing today in some churches, it is holiness, the respect, reverence and exclusive promotion of the Lord Jesus, as we have stated before. There is too much self on the throne whereas the Lord must be the only One on the throne of our hearts.

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