

God's Promises and Protection of His People

A study in the prophecy of Zechariah

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Prophecy of Zechariah - Introduction

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AUTHOR

Zechariah. He may have not written his name in the book, which would have been added by an editor, but there is no dispute that the prophet who spoke or wrote all of this down was named Zechariah son of Berechiah son of Iddo.

Iddo was probably someone of significance. Josephus (Antiquities, book 8, chapter 8, paragraph 5) and Jerome (Hebrew Questions, on 2Chr 12:15) say that this is the same Iddo who lived and prophesied during Jeroboam I where is often called Iddo the Seer. If this is the same Iddo, he wrote a lost book on Judah's history (2Chr 9:29, 12:15, 13:22).

DATE

Unlike most prophecies, Zechariah's prophecies are specific in their dates. He prophesied for about two years and two months. They are as follows:

1:1-6.	520, Oct-Nov.
1:7-3:31.	519, Jan-Feb.
4-6.	519, Apr - 518, Dec.
7-14.	518, Nov-Dec.

AUDIENCE

Zechariah speaks to Zerubbabel, the Persian governor of Judah, and Jeshua, the high priest, specifically; and all the Jews generally.

STYLE

Zechariah's style is apocalyptic. He may have taken a lot of his style from Ezekiel, or God forced him to write in an apocalyptic style because of the visions God gave him.

THIS CLASS

Style

Though the prophecy contains many harsh rebukes and many terrifying images, the overall theme of God's protection for His people. Among all the things that we may never fully understand about the prophecy of Zechariah, the key to properly studying is to focus on the indescribable protection God gives those who are obedient to Him and to focus on what kind of people we should be in order to be God's people.

Theme: Protection

The theme of Zechariah's prophecy is about the future of God's people through God's promises (Zech 8:14-15).
"The Lord of Hosts says this: As I resolved to treat you badly when your fathers provoked Me to anger, and I did not relent, so I have resolved again in these days to do what is good to Jerusalem and the house of Judah. Don't be afraid."

Prophecy of Zechariah - Outline

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[The Jews return from exile, rebuild the altar, and resume the sacrifices (Ezra 3:1-7).]

- 1:1-6** Remember how the prophets spoke to your ancestors.
 - 1:7-6:8** Eight visions.
 - 1:7-17 First vision, the rider of a red horse and the Angel of the Lord.
 - 1:18-21 Second vision, four horns and four craftsmen.
 - 2:1-13 Third vision, a surveyor and the coming of the Lord.
 - 3:1-10 Fourth vision, Jeshua (Joshua) the high priest, Satan, and the coming of the Lord.
 - 4:1-14 Fifth vision, a lampstand and two olive trees.
 - 5:1-4 Sixth vision, a flying scroll and its curses.
 - 5:5-11 Seventh vision, a woman of wickedness in a basket.
 - 6:1-8 Eighth vision, four chariots from the Lord.
 - 6:9-15** Crowning of Jeshua (Joshua) and prophecy about the Branch.
- [The Jews finish laying the foundation of the temple (Ezra 3:8-13).]
- 7:1-8:23** Fasting, obedience, and God's promises.
 - 7:1-3 Question about traditional fasting.
 - 7:4-7 They were fasting in vain.
 - 7:8-10 True obedience.
 - 7:11-14 Bad example of their ancestors.
 - 8:1-8 Promises about Jerusalem.
 - 8:9-13 Promises about prosperity.
 - 8:14-17 Call to obedience.
 - 8:18-19 From fasting to celebration.
 - 8:20-23 Promises about the future.
 - 9:1-12** First oracle.
 - 9:1-8 Prophecy against Judah's surrounding enemies.
 - 9:9-10 Prophecy of the King on a donkey.
 - 9:11-17 Prophecy about Zion against the Greeks.
 - 10:1-3 Prophecy against Judah's shepherds.
 - 10:4-12 Prophecy about Israel's redemption.
 - 11:1-17** God and Zechariah against the evil shepherds.
 - 11:1-3 Lament of destruction.
 - 11:4-6 God commands Zechariah to shepherd the people.
 - 11:7-14 Zechariah's experiences as a shepherd of the people.
 - 11:15-17 Prophecy of a very evil shepherd's coming.
 - 12:1-13:9** Second oracle.
 - 12:1-9 God will protect Jerusalem and Judah.
 - 12:10-14 Prophecy of the only Child who was pierced.
 - 13:1-9 God's fountain will purify the house of David, God's sheep.
 - 14:1-21** Judgment Day; God saves His people and curses His enemies.
 - 14:1-7 Final battle at Jerusalem.
 - 14:8-11 God protects His people in Jerusalem.
 - 14:12-15 God brings a plague of rot to all His enemies.
 - 14:16-19 Survivors of God's enemies will worship the Lord.
 - 14:20-21 The splendor of living with the Lord.

For a more detailed chronology of Ezra, Haggai, and Zechariah, see the chronology in *The Jews Under Persia*.

Prophecy of Zechariah - Suggested 15-Week Schedule

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<u>Week</u>	<u>Scriptures</u>
1	Introduction, 1:1-6
2	1:7-21
3	2:1-13
4	3:1-10
5	4:1-5:11
6	6:1-15
7	7:1-14
8	8:1-23
9	9:1-17
10	10:1-11:6
11	11:7-14
12	12:1-14
13	13:1-9
14	14:1-11
15	14:12-21

Prophecy of Zechariah - Commentary

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The theme of Zechariah's prophecy is protection (Zech 8:14-15). "The Lord of Hosts says this: As I resolved to treat you badly when your fathers provoked Me to anger, and I did not relent, so I have resolved again in these days to do what is good to Jerusalem and the house of Judah. Don't be afraid."

The style of Zechariah's prophecy is on God's guaranteed promises and the protected future of God's people.

The translation I mostly use is the Holman Christian Standard Bible (HCSB).

1:1-6 Remember how the prophets spoke to your ancestors.

Eighth month in the second year of Darius. This is the month Marcheshvan. This is October or November 520 BC.

Zechariah. For information about the prophet himself, see the introduction.

This is what the Lord of Hosts says... this is the declaration of the Lord. With the exception of chapter 5, chapters 1 through 8 consistently and repetitively remind the reader that THIS IS FROM THE LORD!

Zechariah wants to be abundantly clear that this message is not his own, but God's, and that he is God's prophet.

Return to Me. (1) By this time, the altar is built and the sacrifices have resumed. True worship of God has returned, but the people have not been perfected. Let this be clear: worshiping God--even worshiping Him exactly how He has commanded--does not guarantee that we are in full communion with God. As God says here, He wants them to continue returning to Him. There isn't many things greater than worshiping God, but worship is not all there is. As we see from the teachings of Jesus, we also have a godly duty to everyone around us. (2) God's call is very similar to the instruction James gives (Jam 4:8).

Remember your ancestors. God didn't do all that work of sending the Assyrians and Babylonians to destroy the Jews for nothing. God didn't put all the Jews into captivity because He wanted to try it. Because of the Jews' open rebellion against and disobedience towards God and His prophets, God taught the Jews a lesson they would never forget. At this time, God has restored them and reminds them never to forget. All of the Jews' disobedient kings and people will stand until Judgment Day as an example of what God does to those rebel against Him or are freely disobedient to Him.

Earlier prophets. (1) God had sent Israel and Judah many, many prophets to tell them to stop their evil ways. When God destroyed the two kingdoms, He was completely justified in doing so. Did God enjoy doing it? God told us that He does not (Ezk 33:11)! To get the full picture of how God was justified in destroying Israel and Judah, this is explained in 2Kings 17:7-20. (2) Zechariah's message is that if God did not spare them but killed them because of all their sins, then He can also do that to anyone.

Where are the prophets; do the prophets live forever? God is calling the people to look back on everything He has done to them. Their ancestors? They were destroyed--just as the prophets said. Did the prophets live on to make sure God's prophecies came true? No, they died too. Everything that overcame their ancestors was caused by God Himself. He is the one who makes His prophecies come to pass, and all His prophecies will come to pass.

So He has dealt with us. Here, God points out that the people recognize all this. God has caused them to suffer destruction and then captivity. Everything God said came true. All of God's warnings were not to be taken lightly. God not only means what He says, but He always completes what He promises. He is the most consistent parent mankind could ever have.

1:7-17 First vision, rider of a red horse and the Angel of the Lord.

A man riding, standing. I get the picture that this man is standing, having dismounted his red horse. I could be wrong, but perhaps a better reading it "a man, rider of a red horse."

Red horse. What is the significance of red? Well, a red horse is also mentioned in Rev 6:4. There, the horse is a symbol for murder. Perhaps these red horses had the job of patrolling the earth looking for the spilling of good, that is, killings.

Myrtle trees. The Septuagint has "he stood between the shady mountains." In verse 10 and 11, "myrtle-trees" is "mountains."

Sorrel. Sorrel is one of the most common colors for horses. The color is brownish, or copper-red, much like a chestnut.

White. In relation to horses, white is not a symbol of purity. Instead, a white horse is a symbol of a high-ranking conqueror. This is most clearly seen in Rev 6:2. Jesus is pictured on a white horse in Revelation. After all,

He is the Conqueror of conquerors (Rev 19:11-16). As we are about to see, this is the Angel of the Lord, another name for Jesus Himself.

Patrol the earth. (1) There is similar wording in Job as the sons of God (angels) would present themselves before the Lord along with Satan himself (Job 1:6, 2:1). In those passages, Satan arrives there after he had been roaming through and walking around the earth, a very similar phrase to what is found here in Zechariah (Job 1:7, 2:2). Just as Satan prowls around on the earth looking for someone to devour (1Pet 5:8), these angels patrol the earth but they do it to watch after and care for God's creation. Zechariah paints the picture that the duty of these angels is to constantly travel the world in order to observe everything that goes on. Then they report back to God, though it is not that God needs anything reported to Him because He is omniscient, but that is the duty of these angels nonetheless. Perhaps their reporting to God is not for God's sake but for the sake of the rest of the heavenly creatures who hear the report. (2) These horses are mentioned again in Zech 6:1-8.

Angel of the Lord. (1) This is the first time Zechariah mentions the Angel of the Lord in his prophecy. If one would study what the Bible has to say about the Angel of the Lord, one would find that this Angel is more than an mere angel. In fact, there are many places in the Scriptures that give divine attributes to the Angel of the Lord, including times when the Angel of the Lord calls Himself God. The short answer to the Angel of the Lord is that He is none other than Jesus Christ pre-incarnate. For example, notice how the angels in Job report to God and the angels here report to the Angel of the Lord. (2) The Angel of the Lord is mentioned in this chapter, many times in chapter 3, and once in chapter 12. (3) For more information on the Angel of the Lord, see my study on Who is the Angel of the Lord. (At the time of writing this commentary, I have not yet completed this study.)

Calm and quiet. This is significant to the Jews because it is a fulfillment of one of Isaiah's prophecies (Is 14:1-21). In that prophecy, Isaiah prophecies that the Jews will receive rest and the king of Babylon will be no more. This occurred when Media and Persia conquered Babylon in 539 BC, 19 years before this vision of Zechariah. God through Zechariah is reminding the Jews that they can sing Isaiah's song now because they have rest and know that Babylon is no more.

Withhold mercy. We have already seen that God has shown great mercy. After all, two months earlier, Haggai prophesied that God will no longer punish the people for leaving His temple in ruins. God's mercy has already begun. These words from the Angel of the Lord show us that the amount of mercy already shown is nothing in comparison to what could be shown. In other words, the Angel knows that there is much more mercy that can come from God and is asking why such abundant mercy hasn't come. If the Jews are feeling really good about their work on the temple and how God is blessing them, then this is an encouraging promise that "they haven't seen anything yet."

The Lord replied. It seems that Zechariah couldn't hear it or couldn't understand it, but he knew that the angel with him heard it. He tells us that God's answer was kind and comforting. Do we really need more than that? If the God of the entire universe and all of time responds in kindness and comfort and that is all we know, then that should be enough to satisfy us. God doesn't have to reveal to us how He will protect us or comfort us, but to know that He does by His infinite power, that is sufficient.

Angel who was speaking with me. Interesting that the Lord replies to the common angel that is speaking with Zechariah and not the Angel of the Lord. There could be many reasons for this, but one is that the Angel of the Lord doesn't need to hear it because He is God the Son.

The Lord of Hosts says. How blessed we are to have this angel share with us the message that God gave to him!

Angry with the nations. (1) As God was making promises to the Jews that they would go into captivity by the hands of the nations and that these nations were God's servants in this, God didn't leave the nations uncondemned. Many times, both in Isaiah and Jeremiah to name two, God pronounced judgments against them just as He did against the Jews. Now, God's wrath against the Jews has pacified because the 70 years have passed. Now God's purpose has returned to what it once was: protecting His physical people from all the surrounding nations. In this passage, God is telling them that He is no longer angry with them but will turn His anger solely on the surrounding nations. (2) This verse is different in the Septuagint, reading, "I am very angry with the heathen that combine to attack her: forasmuch as I indeed was a little angry, but they combined to attack her for evil."

[Verse 17]. In the Septuagint this verse begins like verse 14, reminding us that this angel is speaking.

Jerusalem. (1) God says He has returned to Jerusalem. Just as the Jews were away from Jerusalem for 70 years, in a spiritual sense, so was God. Not only has God restored the people to Judah and is blessing them, God is also going to bless Jerusalem itself. He makes this promise to Jerusalem and Zion. If He does this to the capital of Judah, then that blessing will fall to the lands of Judah and to the people that live there also. (2) This is a fulfillment of God's prophecy through Isaiah about the pardoning of Jerusalem (Is 40:1-2).

1:18-21 Second vision, four horns and four craftsmen.

Four horns. Horns have symbolized power, usually powerful nations (see Ps 75:4).

Horns that scattered Judah. (1) In the case here, the angel says that these nations scattered the Jews. (2) Of course, the Babylonians directly did this. Daniel lists the four kingdoms in chapter 2 and 7. These are: Babylon, Persia (and Media), Greeks (Macedonians), and Romans. Until the time of Christ, when the rock will strike the nations and engulf the earth, these four nations caused the Jews to be scattered abroad. Babylonia started it, things were mostly peaceful during Persia, the Greeks--specifically Antiochus IV Epiphanes--brutally attacked the Jews, and Rome ended many Jewish revolts, namely the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. (3) Another theory is that the countries are: Assyria, Babylonia, Persia, and Greece. Assyria, of course, because this nation scattered the Ten Lost Tribes. Ever since the kingdom of Assyria, history records nothing about the Ten Lost Tribes. And because all literature following the exile follows only Judah and Benjamin, I believe this theory isn't as strong. In a sense, the Ten Lost Tribes, who partially existed on as the "half-breeds" of the Samaritans, are returned to God's good favor in the book of Acts.

Four craftsmen. I do not know what these represent--if they represent anything specific at all. They could represent the kingdoms that conquered the horn-kingdoms. That is, Persia conquered Babylonia, Greece conquered Persia, Rome conquered the four divisions of Greece, and Jesus' Kingdom of Heaven conquered Rome. If the craftsmen represent nothing specific, they merely and powerfully represent God's power to overthrow such powerful nations.

[Broke Israel in pieces]. In the Septuagint, the phrase, "and they broke Israel in pieces," is found between "scattered Judah" and "none of them lifted."

2:1-13 Third vision, a surveyor and the coming of the Lord.

Man with a measuring line. Zech 4:10 says that Zerubbabel will have a plumb line in his hand. I believe this is Zerubbabel here. As Haggai inspired Zerubbabel to start building the temple (Hag 1:14, Ezra 3:1-7), this is an image of Zerubbabel working hard. The context indicates that he is preparing to build a wall around Jerusalem.

Angels. It is a bit confusing as to what is going on here. It appears that some commentators try to connect one of these angels with the Angel of the Lord from 1:11. I can see how one can believe this because of verses 10-13 in this chapter, but I believe verse 6-12 is mostly separate from this vision and is a message directly from God. Therefore, we have the angel who is speaking with Zechariah and a second angel who brings extra instructions that the first angel should tell the man with the measuring line.

People and livestock. (1) This is the first reason why this man should not build a wall around Jerusalem. The reason is that there are too many people and possessions for Jerusalem to hold them all. Whether this abundant wealth was currently owned or will be owned in the near future (which I believe), when the people seek for protection, God responded with a message of greater prosperity. (2) Of course, as prosperity increases, so man increases their desire to protect their possessions. As Jesus taught us, the more we hold onto our possessions, the more God will rip them from us ([Matt 6:19-24](#), [19:21-24](#), [Luke 12:15-21](#), [Jam 5:1-6](#)).

I will be a wall of fire. (1) God Himself will be their protection. Just like when the Israelites demanded Samuel for a king, the picture here is that the Jews want to protect themselves with a wall. God had told them that they don't need a king--He is their King. Here, God is telling them that they do not need protection--He is their protection. His protection is better than a wall of stone around a city. God's protection is more like a wall of fire. (2) And the same is true for us. There is no place on earth that guarantees security. However, the only place that is guaranteed secure is in the hands of God. Now God has told us that he will not protect our physical bodies. But He can protect something much more valuable. I ask you: have you put your soul into the protective hands of God?

Leave the land of the north. (1) Verse 6 and 7 is a call for the scattered Jews to return home. The people are back in the "Holy Land" and now they have a holy attitude toward God and His temple! It's time for the Jews who are still scattered among the Persian Empire to come home. In a little bit less than two years from now, Ezra and the third wave of captives will return! (2) Not all Jews return. Since the destruction of Jerusalem to the events in Acts, there will be Jews all over the world. Around this time, we know that Mordecai and Esther are two Jews that never obeyed God's call to return from exile. To me, this means that God's call was not a demand. As God wanted the Jews to do, many Jews lived in other nations and shared God's covenant with those who would listen. Of course, with Esther, God used her to save all the Jews within the Persian Empire! In short, God called the Jews to return, but no matter where Jews were found and loved God, He used them.

He has sent Me. In verse 8-9, the speaker is not God but speaks in first person. He seems to have the same power as God. Who is this? It could be an archangel, perhaps Michael, who is angel set over the nation of Israel. But verses 10-13 give us better clues to who this is.

Plunder. This is a prophecy. So when did the Jews plunder the other nations? I believe this prophecy is already partially fulfilled. When Cyrus gave his decree and the first wave of Jews returned, the Persian people willingly gave the Jews many, many gifts. As far as in the future, Ezra chapters 4-6 give good examples of how the Jews plundered the nations. The Jews received blessings from Darius I (example: Tatteni) and Artaxerxes I during the time of Nehemiah.

Dwell among you. This mysterious person with the power of God continues to speak. In verses 10-13, this person says (1) he will dwell among the Jews, (2) many nations will join the Lord and (3) they will become His people, (4) people will know that God sent him, (5) God will restore Judah and Jerusalem, and (6) he will come from God's dwelling place, heaven. All this point to one person: Jesus Christ. (1) He became a human and dwelled among the Jews (Php 2:7), (2) the Gentiles were joined to the Lord (Acts 10:34-35, Eph 3:6), (3) the Gentiles became God's people (Rom 9:24-26, 1Pet 2:9-10), (4) Jesus did things that proved that the Father sent him (John 5:31-40, 11:41-44, 17:6-8, 17:20-23), (5) God has brought the heavenly Jerusalem (Heb 12:22-24, Gal 4:26-29), and (6) Jesus did come from Heaven (Php 2:6-7, John 3:12-15, 16:28).

Holy dwelling. In the Septuagint, this reads "holy clouds."

3:1-10 Fourth vision, Jeshua (Joshua) the high priest, Satan, and the coming of the Lord.

Joshua the high priest. In Ezra and Nehemiah, he is called Jeshua. In Haggai and Zechariah, he is called Joshua. These are the same person.

Angel of the Lord. See my comments at 1:11.

Satan. This is third time Satan is ever mentioned by name in the Old Testament. First is Job, of course.

Second is in 1Chr 21:1 when Satan persuaded David to take a national census. Remember that Satan means "adversary." Whether Satan gave himself this name or God gave it to him, it doesn't matter. Satan's only purpose isn't a secret. It is to oppose and be an adversary to God.

The Lord said. Who is really speaking here? It says the Lord in the Masoretic Hebrew and the Greek Septuagint. But in the Aramaic Peshitta, it says the "Angel of the Lord" is speaking here. Really, this is the only thing that makes sense. Why would the Lord speak about Himself in the third person? Instead, it makes much more sense that the Angel of the Lord is having the Lord rebuke Satan.

Burning stick. This figure of speech was previously used by Amos (Amos 4:11). It means that Joshua was in a situation where he was doomed in some way, but something rescued him from it.

He spoke. Who really spoke here? The Masoretic Hebrew says, "He," and the Greek Septuagint says, "the Lord." The Masoretic could go either way while the Septuagint is specific that it is the Lord, that is, God the Father. In English, "He" should refer to the last person mentioned, which means this is God the Father. But of course, this isn't the case if the Peshitta is correct here. On the other hand, for beings to stand before Him, it seems that the Angel of the Lord is more likely. It is my belief that the Angel of the Lord does all the talking in this vision.

Removed your guilt. (1) English translations do not agree on what this word means. Some say guilt and some say sin or iniquity. In the Hebrew, it means "evil." In the Greek, it means "wickedness." The word carries more than just the feelings of guilt and the actions of sin. It is more about the quality of something evil or wicked. I believe this is more along the lines of what Paul calls the flesh, or sinful nature. It is the wickedness in us that keep us from being perfect in God's sight. (2) In Joshua's case, God is removing his wickedness from him--like one who takes off dirty clothes and puts on nice, clean clothes. What does removing someone's wickedness feel like? According to this vision, it feels like taking off filthy clothes that you have had on and changing into clean clothes. For me, that is a really good feeling! (3) What happens to Joshua here can also be said about the forgiveness that is given to us by God when we become Christians (see Rev 3:1-6, 3:18, Matt 22:1-13). And there is a more glorious future clothing Christians will wear at the resurrection (see 1Cor 15:50-55, 2Cor 5:1-5). (4) What wickedness was removed from Joshua? From what fire did Joshua get snatched? We aren't told. But who in the world does not have some wickedness that has caused them to be separated from God? Of course, there is no one. Satan is there next to Joshua. I'm sure Satan is accusing him of all kinds of things that Joshua did wrong. This vision is a comforting vision for Joshua. God is obviously telling Joshua that He approves of him. Joshua becomes the first high priest after the captivity. And in exactly four years, Joshua will be the high priest at the finished temple.

I said. Zechariah speaks here. There must be something amazing about Joshua the high priest for him to say this. I get the impression that splendid robes aren't enough splendor for Joshua because he is so great. Not only should Joshua be clothed with well but his head should be honored as well.

[Prophecy of Jesus]. Verses 8-10 are a prophecy about the coming Christ, Jesus. It's ironic, that Jesus' name turned out to be the very same name as Joshua, the high priest. For in the Greek, Joshua's name is Iesous, same as Jesus' name. When the church was beginning, they didn't read Joshua, the high priest, and Jesus, the Christ. They would immediately see Iesous, the high priest, and Iesous, the Christ. Beyond any doubt in their minds, this prophecy would prove that Jesus was the Christ because he had the same name as Joshua the high priest.

Turban. There is significance to the turban. It was the hat of the high priest (Ex 28:36-38). The connection between Joshua's turban here and Aaron's turban in Exodus is that both passages have to do with wickedness; they use the same word. In Exodus, it says that Aaron bore the wickedness of the people's sacrifices. To explain, the turban was a symbol that the high priest was not made wicked by the sacrifices of the people which were because of their wickedness.

Branch. (1) More accurately, this Hebrew word is Sprout or Shoot because it carries the idea of growth. (2) In the Septuagint, this is a very different word. In the Greek, it means East, or perhaps Dawn. If this was Zechariah's original rendering, then it would closely relate to Luke 1:78 where the same word is used. There, Zechariah, the father of John the Baptist, prophesied about John, "Child, you will be called a prophet of the Most High, for you will go before the Lord to prepare His ways, to give His people knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of their sins. Because of God's merciful compassion, the Dawn from on high will visit us." The early Christians used the Septuagint. They would have seen the connection between the prophecies of both Zechariahs and know that Jesus is the Dawn. (3) Zechariah uses this word again in 6:12. But he is just building on what has already been said by previous prophets. Isaiah (Is 4:2, 11:1-2ff) and Jeremiah (Jer 23:5-6, 33:14-16) have already called the Christ by "the Branch."

Stone. Of course, the New Testament writers call this the Cornerstone. But Zechariah was first. He prophesied in 10:4, "The Cornerstone will come from Judah." And we know that this is true with Jesus! (See also Ps 118:22-23, Luke 20:17-18, Acts 4:11-12, Eph 2:19-21.) In the same way, Christians are given a stone with a name inscribed on it that only that person knows (Rev 2:17).

Seven eyes. Zechariah mentions the seven eyes again in 4:10. He says that the eyes "scan throughout the whole earth." This is imagery for God's omnipresence. God is all-seeing. Nothing in this world escapes His notice. These eyes will be on the stone. Indeed, when Jesus came, He was all-seeing (Luke 9:46-48, Mark 2:5-8, Luke 5:20-22). Rev 5:6 says that Jesus has seven horns (all-power) and seven eyes (all-seeing) and that these eyes are the seven spirits of God sent into all the earth.

Inscription. What is the inscription? I believe it is the name of God, that is, His seal of approval. Jesus preached that God is His father, thus, They would have the same name: God. Using a modern-day figure of speech, the fact is that Jesus had "God" written all over Him.

Take away the guilt in a single day. This day can be none other but the day Jesus was crucified and died. His blood bought forgiveness to all mankind. The word used here is the same word that is in verse 4. Indeed, the wickedness of the whole earth was removed in one day!

Invite his neighbor. This prophecy is about how God's people will one day bring others into a right relationship with God. No longer is the promise given to Abraham and his physical seed. It is really given to Abraham and his spiritual seed. And who is the spiritual seed of Abraham? Anyone who comes to God with the faith that saves. And this call is to be given to everyone. Jesus told us to go into all creation. What does this prophecy have to tell about how this works? God's people will invite others to join them under God's Vine and fig tree. We know Jesus is the true Vine. I believe the fig tree represents God's blessings toward His children. Zechariah says that God's people will invite others to sit with them in spiritual bliss. How do we do that? Friends invite friends to things like this. So, be a spiritual friend to someone. Invite them to sit with you and see what Jesus and God's blessings are all about. (Mic 4:1-5.)

4:1-14 Fifth vision, a lampstand and two olive trees.

Gold lampstand. In Revelation 1, John sees Jesus walking among seven gold lampstands. Jesus tells him that the lampstands represent the seven churches, the seven churches to whom John writes. We can infer that a gold lampstand represents a group of God's people. The one gold lampstand here represents all the Jews under Zerubbabel the governor (king) and Joshua the high priest.

Olive trees. In verse 14, the angel says that the two olive trees are the two anointed ones who stand by the Lord. In the previous chapter, we just read how Joshua stood before the Angel of the Lord. In this chapter, the Lord of Hosts declares Zerubbabel to be His minister (just like in Hag 2:21-23). Most scholars believe the two olive trees represent Zerubbabel and Joshua. Both king and priest were anointed, so this is a safe assumption. (However, John Wesley believed that the two anointed ones were Christ and the Holy Spirit.)

By My Spirit. (1) If mountains could be turned into plains, it could not happen by anyone's strength or might. Only by God's Spirit. Zerubbabel will move mountains, but it's not going to happen through any physical power, but by God's infinite power. This isn't really about the mountains of this world at all, is it (see also

Matt 16:5-12)? Through Zerubbabel, God will make a name for Himself. But there are some things in this world--many of which we cannot see--that are just as hard to change as it is to move a mountain. (2) Wouldn't it be nice if God said the same thing about us? Oh, wait, He did (Matt 17:20, 21:21-22)! Notice that Jesus said that you will be able to move mountains by your great strength. No, Jesus said that you move mountains with faith and prayer! Why? Because it's by God's Spirit! ...not ourselves. How can we trust God's Spirit today? (3) To go further, does just having faith and a prayer life that can move mountains enough to prove that you are Christ-like? Paul takes faith and prayer and goes even further saying, "If I have all faith so that I can move mountains but do not have love, I am nothing." If there is anything we can get out of this passage, then it's for us to strive to grow in our faith and prayer life to the point that we can move mountains and to go beyond that to have a love that is even more powerful! Just the thought of having faith, a prayer life, and love to this degree makes me feel so very, very small. So what is the answer? Why wait!? Let's get commit ourselves to that now! And perhaps we will see mountains move in our lifetime by God's Spirit. (4) "By God's Spirit." Now that would make a great catchphrase about our work for the Kingdom of God. Because that is exactly how our work in the Kingdom is built up: by God's Spirit!

Capstone. In Hebrew, this means headstone. In Greek, this means stone of inheritance. This is the only place these words are found. What is the capstone? Many have said this is a synonym for cornerstone, that piece of the foundation or building that starts it all. And that certainly fits in the context. Though the cornerstone is what begins a structure, the capstone is what ends a structure. Jesus would certainly come to end the need for this temple they are building. Another explanation would be that this has more to do with inheritance. As genealogies were written on stones so that they would survive the passing of time, that is what this stone is. As we know, Zerubbabel is a direct ancestor to Jesus (He is listed in both Matthew's and Luke's genealogies). Jesus is the capstone that Zerubbabel will "bring out" through genealogy. Regardless if the meaning is cornerstone, capstone, or inheritance stone, it all points to one person: Jesus Christ. All the more reason to shout "grace, grace" to Him!

Grace. The Hebrew says, "Grace, grace, unto it." The LXX says, "The grace of it [is] the equal of my grace." Now if this capstone is Jesus, then the Septuagint's reading brings a stronger prophecy about Jesus being God, that is, divine. Jesus is in no way a lesser God than the Father when it comes to their divine nature. Jesus' divine nature is equal to the Fathers, just as Paul said, Jesus "who, existing in the form of God, did not consider equality with God as something to be used for His own advantage..." (Php 2:6). Jesus' grace is equal to the Father's grace!

Laid foundation. This wording is just like in Ezra 5:16 which probably occurred around the same time as this vision. Sheshbazzar didn't complete the foundation during Cyrus' day. And Zerubbabel has not quite finished it at this time.

Seven eyes rejoice. God is everywhere; He is all-seeing. Seven eyes represent this. But even God's omnipresence and all-seeing nature will rejoice as this temple is being built and will one day be finished. In other words, God is everywhere, but this place is very special to him.

Golden oil. Take a close look at what is happening in this vision. You've got this one golden lampstand. All lamps need fuel to burn, and in ancient times, that was oil. Here, Zechariah says there are gold pipes that carry the oil from the branches of the tree directly into this lamp. In other words, this lamp is plugged directly into a never-ending and ever-constant source of fuel. Here is the meaning: you have Zerubbabel and Joshua who have been approved by the Lord; they stand by Him. And they are the ones fueling the fires of all God's people, the Jews.

Anointed ones. (1) Zerubbabel is governor over the Persian province of Judah. Joshua is the high priest. Though the governor is not the same thing as a king, both kings and high priests were anointed. Again, without much evidence to the contrary, these branches represent Zerubbabel and Joshua. Zechariah wants to make that clear. (2) The images of two olive trees appear again in John's Revelation (11:4). It is nearly impossible to say what the olive trees and lampstands mean here until this prophecy is revealed at the end of all things. I am curious if the trees represent the leaders of God's people, one tree for before Christ and one tree for after Christ; and the lampstands represent God's people, one lampstand for those who lived before Christ, and one lampstand for those who lived after Christ. If there are any other ideas out there, they can also be meditated upon.

5:1-4 Sixth vision, a flying scroll and its curses.

Flying scroll. (1) The LXX says this object is a flying sickle. Because verse 3 talks about this object having two sides, "scroll" is probably the correct object. (2) There is a picture of a scroll that appears to be written against the rebellious nation of Israel in Ezekiel. Ezekiel is told to eat it and it tastes like honey to him (Ezk 2:8-3:3). There is another scroll in Revelation of which only the Lion of Judah, Root of David, and Lamb of God can break its seals (Rev 5:1-7). As Jesus breaks the seals, terrible judgments come forth such as war, murder, death, and the final judgment (Rev 6). There is a third scroll in Revelation which is given to John by

an angel and he is told to eat it. When he eats it, it tastes like honey in his mouth, like Ezekiel, but it became bitter in his stomach (Rev 10:8-11). Of these three scrolls, Zechariah's scroll seems to be most like the first scroll in Revelation, regarding God's judgments. In light of all three scrolls (and especially the first one in Revelation), the image in Zechariah's vision represents God's judgments against those who steal and those who lie. Of course, we don't need the other three scrolls to understand this vision because the vision clearly says that the scroll represents the curse against these people.

30 feet long and 15 feet wide. This is the exact measurements of the portico which was in front of the sanctuary of Solomon's temple (1King 6:2-3). I don't know what connection there might be between this vision and the temple's portico. It did serve as the entrance way from the altar to the sanctuary. Perhaps these dimensions are a reminder to the thieves and liars that there will be no entrance into God's presence; instead, there will be a scroll of cursing.

Thieves and liars. Why does God target thieves and liars in this vision? When you read through the Scriptures chronologically, there is a verse that would have occurred around the same time that might give us an answer. Stealing and lying would both describe the Jewish officials who took bribes from Judah's enemies and frustrated the construction of the temple (Ezra 4:4-5). (We would have never seen any connection here if it wasn't for my chronology of this time period.)

Stay inside and destroy it. Notice all the phrases in this vision about how no thief and no liar can escape this scroll: it is a flying scroll, it will enter their house, it will stay there, and it will destroy the house (even the stones!). There is no escape from God's judgments!

5:5-11 Seventh vision, a woman of wickedness in a basket.

Basket. (1) HCSB tries to find a contemporary word for this. It literally is "ephah" was is a measurement equal to a bushel (about 35 or 36 liters). Of course, because the context explains that this ephah had a lid, basket isn't a terrible translation. (2) Though a bushel is a measurement of volume, if there were basic dry goods in it such as grain, it would weigh about 60 pounds.

Iniquity. Hebrew says "eye." Greek says "injustice." Aramaic says "transgressions." Based on the context of this vision, I believe the Aramaic and the HCSB has this word correct: sins. After all, when Zechariah looks inside, he sees Wickedness.

Wickedness. (1) The meaning of the woman in the basket with the name Wickedness is nothing more than what is given to us. Wickedness itself is personified by this woman in a basket. A woman could hardly fit inside a covered bushel (since a bushel can hold up to about 60 pounds). The picture this vision wants to show us has two possibilities. Either this woman is extremely, extremely sickly... or the reader should recognize the bushel as the means of bringing in the crops, meaning that people are harvesting wickedness into their lives. (2) In Revelation, John gives us the image of a woman, probably representing the wickedness on which Rome had indulged itself (Rev 17).

Two women with wings. (1) Are these angels of God? Perhaps, but they more appear to be helpers of Wickedness because they plan to build Wickedness a house for her in Shinar. (2) This vision must be a prophecy. It seems to say that wickedness will soon have a home and be honored in this place called Shinar.

Shinar. (1) The Hebrew has "Shinar." The Septuagint and Aramaic have "Babylon." We see Shinar spoken of at another other place in the Bible: Gen 11:1-9. There, Shinar has another name that you have heard of: Babel. Where was Babel? In the land of Babylon, as the Septuagint and the Aramaic has already explained to us. Additionally, Daniel 1:2 has Shinar (in the Hebrew, Greek and in that context, it is clear that it was Babylon). (2) But the Babylonian Empire is gone. Media and Persia conquered it. This basket containing Wickedness is going to a place where its house is not yet built. When we look back to history given to us in Scripture, what other Babylon was there? Babylon is the ruling Empire when John wrote Revelation (Rev 14:8, 16:19, 17:5 (which also includes John's image of the wicked woman), 18:1-24). Peter wrote from there in his first letter (1Pet 5:13). This woman named Wickedness is being carried to Rome and will wait for her house to be built by the polytheistic and very wicked Romans.

6:1-8 Eighth vision, four chariots from the Lord.

Horses. The colors of these horses are different from the colors of the horses in the first vision in chapter 1.

These horses more closely match the horses in John vision in Revelation 6 about the breaking of the seals.

Strong horses. Instead of saying all the horses were strong (as the Hebrew says), the Greek says that the dappled horses were joined by ash-colored horses. In verse 8 in the Greek, it implies that the ash-colored horses followed the dappled horses to the south (as the white horses followed the black to the north).

Four spirits. This reference gives us the biggest clue as to the purpose of these four kinds of horses. The four spirits of God are mentioned in Revelation 7:1-3. In verse 2, it says that they "were empowered to harm the earth and the sea." Based on what powers are given to the horses in Revelation 6, it appears that the four

spirits and the four kinds of horses are two images for the same thing. They represent God's power over creation, foremost, and over people's lives (war(white), murder(red), economies(black), and death(pale)) also.

Pacified My Spirit. (1) Unlike the four horses and the four spirits in Revelation, it is interesting that the horses that go north (black and white) pacify God's Spirit there. Unlike Revelation, this vision is one of comfort. (2) Notice that the angel says "My" Spirit. The chapter doesn't use that phrase of "the Angel of the Lord" (see notes on Zech 1:11). But this angel is probably the famous Angel of the Lord.

Northern land. What northern land? Chronologically, the events of Ezra 4:24-6:14 occur around this time. Since Tattenai's name (governor of another Persian province nearby) is Aramiac which was commonly found in Syria, Tattenai's province was probably to the north of the province of Judah. As we see in Ezra, Tattenai questions the Jews about their building of the temple. And we see that, because of Darius finding Cyrus' decree, Tattenai ends up giving the Jews much wealth. Could Tattenai's province be this northern land where God pacified His Spirit? Could this vision have been given to Zechariah while the Jews were waiting to hear back from Darius in order to comfort the Jews? I would like to think so.

6:9-15 Crowning of Jeshua (Joshua) and prophecy about the Branch.

Heldi, Tobijah, Jedaiah. (1) We do not know who these men are, though Jedaiah might be the same person in Ezra 2:36. If so, he would be a priest and possibly a child or grandchild of Jeshua. (2) It's possible that the original text didn't have any proper names here. In the Greek, these names are not there. Instead, the first half of this verse reads, "Take the things of the captivity from the chief men, and from the useful men of it, and from them that have understood it." This might be the original text, but we do not know. Similarly, verse 10 reads different also. (See below.)

Josiah son of Zephaniah. This was not Josiah the king nor Zephaniah the prophet. It is unknown who this is. His name is not in Zerubbabel's roll, so as the text implies, Josiah and his family seem to be newcomers to Judah from the exile.

Crowns, head. How many crowns does a king wear? Usually: one. But this person will be given many crowns. As we will see, this person is called the Branch, which means this prophecy is really about the coming Messiah. The meaning of the crowns is that the coming Messiah will be very, very kingly. (2) In Revelation, John uses the same image to describe Jesus (19:11-13).

Branch. See my notes at Zech 3:8. Since this word has already been established (mainly by Isaiah) to be the Messiah, Zechariah's prophecy is being clear that this is about the coming Messiah.

Branch out from this place and build the Lord's temple. Jesus certainly came and built the church, which is now God's temple (Matt 16:18). And the church did spread from this place, Jerusalem (Acts 1:8, 9:31).

Sit on His throne. Jesus did come and sit on His throne. In fact, He invites anyone to come and sit on His throne with Him (Rev 3:19-21)!

Priest on His throne. The writer of Hebrews has lots to say about Jesus being our high priest (example: Heb 4:14-16). The writer also explains how Jesus was both priest and king because He was not a priest in the order of Aaron (the first priest) but a priest in the order of Melchizedek who was both priest and king. He explains all the details in Heb 7 (See also Gen 14:18-20, Ps 110).

Peaceful council between the two. It is not clear at all who this is. (1) Perhaps it is the Lord and His Branch, that is, the Father and His Son. There are beautiful pictures in the Scriptures about the love between the Father and the Son, and of course, both would have great counsel between them because of their perfect unity as well as great counsel from both of them to mankind through the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit. One such beautiful picture is found in Ps 45:7 and explained in Heb 1:1-9. There are more beautiful pictures in Ps 110, Dan 7:13-14, John 5:30, and John 14:8-10. (2) Jerome said that the peaceful counsel is between king and priest. These roles were complete separate under the old Law. But they have come together under Christ just as they were together in Melchizedek. In human governments, king and priest probably don't get along very well. In Jesus Christ, He has become the perfect king and priest.

Hen son of Zephaniah. In the Greek, this whole verse reads, "And the crown shall be to them that wait patiently, and to the useful men of the captivity, and to them that have known it, and for the favor of the son of Zephaniah, and for a psalm in the house of the Lord."

People will come and build the Lord's temple. This phrase may have not meant a whole lot to the Jews who heard it, but this sure means a lot to Gentile Christians! (See Acts 2:39, Eph 2:12-15).

Fully obey. This should have reminded the Jews of Deut 28:1 and the whole chapter. What was said then by Moses is certainly applicable to them now. Moses and Joshua were leading the people from captivity to a brand new way of life. Here, Zerubbabel and Joshua (Jeshua) were leading the people from captivity to a brand new way of life.

7:1-3 Question about traditional fasting.

Fourth year of Darius, fourth day, ninth month. This is the month Kislev. This is October or November 518 BC.

Since it is the fourth day, the month would be October.

Sharezer, Regem-melech. It is unknown who these men are, but they probably had a very high rank in Bethel. Plead for the Lord's favor. This phrase is mentioned again in Zech 8:22. It appears that the question these men bring is pure in heart, that is, they really do want to know what the Lord said about this.

Weep the fifth month. (1) The Septuagint reads very different, "...the holy offering has come in here in the fifth month...." This is very strange and is probably not the original meaning because it does not make sense and does not fit the context. (2) Apparently, this mourning and fasting (see verse 5) had begun at the beginning of captivity. Now that they Jews were back in Judah and the temple is nearly complete, the people are wondering if they should still mourn and fast. This was a tradition that the Jewish elders in captivity started, and it had been the practice for so long, the Jews in Zerubbabel's day are not sure if they should do it or not. In the case of these men mourning and fasting twice a year, for those of us who know that God did not command such practices, we know the answer to their question: it doesn't matter if they should or should not do these things, that is, since God did not command it, this practice should be guided by their consciences. (3) The same is true for us. We could be practicing a lot of things that are actually tradition and are not found in Scripture. For someone who has practiced the same thing their whole life may not realize that what they are doing wasn't even given by God. As Christians living centuries after the apostles, we should always be looking at the things we are doing in the name of Christ and really analyze whether God told us to do that or not. (4) These months were significant to the Jews. It was in the fifth month that Jerusalem was burned by Nebuchadnezzar (2King 25:8-12). It was in the seventh month that Gedaliah, the first governor appointed by Nebuchadnezzar, was killed (2King 25:22-26).

7:4-7 They were fasting in vain.

Fasted and lamented. (1) What is the definition of fasting? Fasting simply means to abstain. Technically, one can abstain from whatever they choose, but fasting is almost always understood as abstaining from food.

(2) Verses 4-7 seem to tie with Isaiah 58 very, very closely. I believe this is exactly what Zechariah is referring to about the prophets when Jerusalem had security. In Is 58, God makes it clear that fasting is not exactly what you think it is: merely fasting from food. It is far less about you abstaining from things. It is much more about abstaining from unrighteousness and doing more righteousness!

For Me. What might fasting for God look like? Would look like Is 58:1-2, 58:5? Fasting for God might have the purpose of drawing nearer to God (Is 58:1-2). Fasting for God might look like self-inflicted suffering (such as putting on sackcloth and ashes) (Is 58:5).

For yourselves. What does fasting for ourselves look like? It looks like Is 58:3-4. Fasting for yourselves is when there is self-inflicted suffering without the purpose of drawing near to God (Is 58:3-4).

Earlier prophets. (1) These men from Bethel are asking if they should still fast. God's reply isn't concerned with IF they fast, but instead, HOW they fast. And He had already told the people through Isaiah the purest way to fast: fasting from unrighteousness (Is 58:6-12). (2) The Jews had prophets; Christians have apostles. What did the apostles tell us about our eating and fasting? Just as Isaiah told the Jews to fast from unrighteousness, Paul told Christians to make everything they do glorify God—whether eating or fasting (1Cor 10:31). We can eat to glorify God by not wasting food (part of gluttony). We can fast from food to draw nearer to God!

7:8-10 True obedience.

Zechariah. Notice that in verse 4 it says that the word of the Lord came to "me." Then here in verse 8 it says that the word of the Lord came to "Zechariah." Did Zechariah write down verses 4-7 himself while a scribe or later historian write verses 8-14 saying that these also were the genuine words of Zechariah? Even if verses 8-14 were added later, that doesn't mean that these words from the Lord to Zechariah were not genuine.

[Core of the Old Testament]. Verses 8-10 is one of many places in the OT that delivers what was really important to God under the OT. As it says in Hos 6:6, "I desire compassion, not sacrifice." We think the OT was all about the sacrifices and all the laws of books such as Leviticus. But Zechariah reminds the people that this is what God really cares about. Other significant passages that show this are Deut 14:28-29, Jer 7:5-7, Mic 6:6-8. When Jesus was asked what the greatest commands of the OT were, He did not list one of the Ten Commandments. Instead, Jesus gave them: Love God and love others (Deut 6:5, Lev 19:18, Matt 22:34-40). Zechariah reminds the people of the same thing here.

7:11-14 Bad example of their ancestors.

They. Who are “they”? It must be referring verse 7 about the Jews who lived securely in Jerusalem. Zechariah is once again talking about their ancestors, as he did in 1:1-6, and how his listeners should not make the same mistakes they did. There is the famous passage in Isaiah about their stubborn ancestors (Is 6:9-10). Earlier prophets. To what earlier prophets would this not apply? All the prophets had to deal with a stubborn people would not listen to God message that they delivered. Since Jer 7:5-7 is also about the core of the Old Testament (see previous section), the context shows how the people would not listen so that God had to punish them (Jer 7:3-11). (Really, all of Jer 7 is about the stubbornness of the Jews that caused the destruction of Jerusalem.)

8:1-8 Promises about Jerusalem.

Jealous with great wrath. God often says that He is a jealous God. (1) He says He is jealous with great wrath. Wrath against who? It’s not Jerusalem because that’s who God is protecting. God is saying that He is jealous of Jerusalem with great wrath against anyone who would attack Jerusalem. Jerusalem is like God’s child. If you try to hurt God’s child (of whom He is jealous), God’s great wrath will be on that person! God is so jealous of Jerusalem that He isn’t afraid to punish anyone who hurts His people. God already proved this through Isaiah and Jeremiah when they prophesied that, yes, Babylon was coming to punish the wickedness of Jerusalem, but Babylon would also be punished for hurting them. And just as God said, Babylon became no more after about only three generations. (2) Or, perhaps “wrath” is not the best word here. In both the Hebrew and Greek, the word is warmth or heat. “Passion” or “passionately” might be a better translation here.

Return and live in Zion. I am not sure how this was fulfilled. The meaning to the Jews at this time might have been that God would come and dwell in the temple just as He did as a cloud in Solomon’s temple. This may be the case, but there is no record of God entering the Second Temple as He did with Solomon’s temple. The meaning might be fulfilled in Jesus Christ, who returned to Zion and very briefly lived in Jerusalem. If Jesus is the fulfillment of this prophecy, then the church is the Faithful City, the mountain of the Lord of Hosts, and the Holy Mountain. After all, God bestows the Spirit to live in our bodies. It would be in this way that we are God’s Holy Place.

Staff in hand because of advanced age, children playing. The primary theme of Zechariah’s prophecy is God’s promises to protect His people. This is one the great pictures God paints about what that protection will look like. People will be able to grow old and lean on their staves. Children will be free to play in the streets. God certainly has a peaceful and joyful future in store!

Incredible. (1) Many translations have “marvelous” here which isn’t the best translation. The Hebrew can imply something difficult and the Greek means something impossible. (2) The promise of protection that God is giving the people may seem impossible to them now. But would such a thing be impossible with Almighty God? God is reminding them who He is! (3) This situation is very similar to what Jesus said right after the rich young ruler went home sad because he would not give up his possessions to gain eternal life. Jesus said, “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God” (Matt 19:24). Because everyone possesses something in this world, the disciples asked who could be saved. Jesus said, “With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible” (Matt 19:26). The disciples believed Jesus words in that possessions keep people from entering the kingdom of God. Yet, Jesus reminds them that God is the doer of the impossible. Remember when Zacchaeus gave half his possessions to the poor and paid back people 4 times as much? Right there, God just caused a camel to pass through the eye of a needle. If something seems incredible or impossible to us, why should we keep thinking that way if God has His hand in it?

Land of the east and west. Does God have something specific in mind here? Is he referring to Persia to the east and Greece to the west? Or possibly Rome to the west? Since this is a work of prophecy, perhaps. Or does God have in mind how far the east is from the west, meaning that from infinite places, God will restore His people? In any case, God’s point is that geography means nothing to Him when it comes to drawing people back to God’s salvation.

Faithful and righteous God. This phrase about being God’s people and He being their God is found in many places in Scripture: Gen 17:7-8, Lev 26:12 (2Cor 6:16), Jer 31:33 (Heb 8:10), Jer 32:38, Rev 21:3. But this is the only passage that includes the adjectives of “faithful and righteous” to God. Zech 8 is a chapter of encouragement and praise! (These adjectives are used together in 1John 1:9 for the reasons why God will forgive us our sins if we confess them. But this passage is not the familiar phrase of we being God’s people and He being our God.)

8:9-13 Promises about prosperity.

Foundations were laid. In the Hebrew, it clearly says that this is after the foundations of the temple were laid. In the Greek, it clearly says that this is after the temple was founded and the temple was built. According to

my chronology, the Hebrew is correct. However, Zechariah is a little hard to place chronologically because it contains so few dates. It's possible that chapters 7-14 may have occurred after the finished temple. But there is more evidence to the earlier time before the temple was finished (the last date is Zech 7:1 which is two years away from the finished temple. On the other hand, chapter 8 may have occurred more than two years after chapter 7. There is just no way to know for sure. I would prefer to keep Zech 8-14 with chapter 7, so I believe the Hebrew is correct here (about the finished foundation) and not the Greek (about the finished temple).

Prophets. What prophets is Zechariah talking about? The only prophets during the building of the second temple were Haggai and Zechariah himself. Is he referring to himself? He must be. But if not, then this implies that there were more prophets during this time, and the other prophets' words from God were not recorded.

Former days. The whole section, especially verse 11, is so much like Haggai 2. (1) And so Zechariah delivers a very similar message as Haggai did. God really wants them to know that things will be different from now on. The difference between the people's apathy in Hag 1 and the people's motivation in Hag 2 and Zechariah must have been more significant than what we could imagine. (2) This another reason why I believe this is after the foundation of the temple and before the finished temple.

Curse among the nations. Indeed, the Jews were a curse among the nations. Though some Jews caused others to be blessed such what Daniel did for Babylon, Media, and Persia, the Jews were looked down upon by everyone else. They believed that if the God of the Jews couldn't save them from Babylon and its gods, then the God of the Jews and the Jews themselves must have been weak. After having your once super-prosperous nation conquered and the people taken, it really damages your reputation! But now, God says that their bad reputation among the nations will be fixed. When the temple is rebuilt, the Jews will have no more reason to feel like they have been cursed by God and the surrounding nations will see that God did everything He said He would do. Now, they will be a blessing to everyone around them.

8:14-17 Call to obedience.

Resolved. God had resolved to punish Jerusalem for its wickedness. Just as God was angry against His own people and would not change His mind about punishing them with captivity, now, God has the same fervor to bless the Jews with good things. God does not want to punish evil, but He will if He must. But now that the Jews have learned their lesson, God wants to do what is more in-line with His loving nature: bless people. God's not sorry for what He put the Jews through in their discipline. But now God is doing what He wants to do: do good to Jerusalem.

I hate all this. God is blessing the people, something more true to His nature. Yet, He is asking the same of the people: for them to do what is true to God's nature: love goodness (speaking truth, making true and sound judgments) and hate wickedness (plotting evil, loving perjury).

8:18-19 From fasting to celebration.

Fourth, fifth, seventh, tenth. (1) When the men from Bethel came to Zechariah, they discussed only the fifth and seventh months of fasting. Here, Zechariah lists double the amount of fasts. Or, perhaps there were even more fasts that were not discussed in the last chapter. Regardless, God seems to be saying that not only will fasts of sadness be changed to fasts of joy, but whatever other times of sadness you chose to observe will be changed also. In short, all observances of sadness will be changed into holidays of joy! (2)

According to my chronology, this occurred before the second temple was finished, which would happen in two years or less. I believe that the finished temple will be what changes their observances of fasting and mourning to holidays of celebration.

Festivals. The main message of this section is that God will change their fasts into feasts. It reminds me of the contemporary song taken from one of David's Psalms, "You turned my lament into dancing; You removed my sackcloth and clothed me with gladness, so that I can sing to You and not be silent. Lord my God, I will praise You forever" (Ps 30:11-12).

Love truth and peace. This seems like such an unrelated teaching to the text around it. But remember that fasting and celebration is not what is most important to God. Zechariah had a lot to say about true obedience in 7:8-10. The Old Testament constantly tells us that there is more to pleasing God than just fulfilling the external commandments of God. There is the core of the Old Testament that should not be forgotten, because everything we do should flow from it (see my notes at 7:8-10).

8:20-23 Promises about the future.

Many cities. (1) In the LXX, verse 21 begins, "The inhabitants of five cities will come together to one city..." It's really not much of a difference of the meaning between the Greek and Hebrew. But here, the idea is more like: the people of other major cities (such as five of them) will leave their major cities and come to the one

city that has the temple. (2) I believe in the implication is talking about the many cities in the province of Judah. Jews from their various cities will talk and plan to go to the temple and find the Lord. Let's go. Go where? It must be to the temple, which isn't completed yet, but will be in two years or less. I am also going. I love this imagery. Jews do not have to persuade other Jews to go with them. Everyone will have the single-minded desire to visit the new temple and find the Lord there.

Many peoples and strong nations. Unlike Jews from many cities, this is certainly talking about Gentiles and pagan nations from all around. Obviously, Persians from all across the Empire will want to come and see the new temple to a God they do not know. But this does not necessary apply to Persians only. Who knows how far people traveled from other strong nations to visit the temple.

Grab the robe. (1) Foreigners would ask a Jewish man to be their guide at the temple because they wouldn't know the Jewish customs. God will allow the Jews be a light to the world as people come to the temple to find God. (2) Notice that they will grab their robe tightly. They desperately need someone to show them the way. It is as if they want to hold on to someone to beg them for help. It may be similar to Jacob holding on to the man he wrestled with and would not let go until the man gave him a blessing. The nations will be doing that to the Jews in their effort to find the one, true God.

God is with you. God has really put the Jews through a lot. First was the destruction of Jerusalem. Then there were 70 years of captivity. Then there are the enemies the Jews face as they are building the temple. God has caused the Jews to suffer so much for His name's sake. But all of that is concluded here. The purpose to everything the Jews went through was to prove God's prophecies and perfect nature. All that suffering was worth it so that the pagan nations would now look at the Jews and say, "We have heard that God is with you." Jeremiah wrote a statement that one of these foreigners might say ([Jer 16:19](#)).

[Christians]. Being on the New Testament side of the cross, we can also look at this passage in a new way. Isaiah and Micah make a prophecy very similar to Zechariah's which applies more to the Christian than it does to the Jew ([Is 2:1-4](#), [Mic 4:1-5](#)).

9:1-8 Prophecy against Judah's surrounding enemies.

Oracle. (1) In Greek, this word means "proof" in the sense that what will follow proves something. (2) Most translations say "burden," and this is the true meaning of the Hebrew at face value. But this burden is not God's burden. The word of the Lord is describing the burdens of all these places.

Hadrach. This is an unknown place named after the Syrian god, Chadrak. Because all the known places listed in verses 1-4 are north of Israel, Hadrach probably was also. Many say it is the same city as Hatarikka (today called Tell Afis in north west Syria) which would have been part of the Assyrian Empire.

Damascus. (1) The Hebrew says, "Damascus will be its resting-place." The Greek says, "His sacrifice will be in Damascus." Either way, it seems that Hadrach might more describe the god, Chadrak, instead of the city named after him. In other words, either Damascus is Chadrak's resting-place or Damascus is where Chadrak sacrifices. (2) This isn't a huge difference between the Hebrew and the Greek. They both mean that the people or the god of Hadrach look to Damascus as their holy place. But the people of Israel, however, look to the Lord Himself.

Hamath. This was believed to be a fortified city because its name means "walled." This was located south of Hadrach and north of Damascus. The city was established by Canaan, the son of Ham, the son of Noah ([Gen 10:15-18](#)). Zechariah's mention of this place is its last mention in the Bible.

Cast her wealth into the sea. (1) This prophecy against Tyre is different from Ezekiel's prophecy against Tyre ([Ezk 26-27](#)). Ezekiel states what Nebuchadnezzar will do to the city. Apparently, Tyre didn't quite learn their lesson, so God says through Zechariah that they will be destroyed again. (2) I cannot find any historical reference to Tyre being set on fire. But as for casting the city's wealth into the sea, this might have been fulfilled with Alexander the Great. It appears that Tyre was mostly on an island ([Ezk 26:6](#)). When Alexander came to Tyre, they resisted him. In order for his troops to take the island part of the city, Alexander threw things into the sea in order to build a causeway out to the island. He eventually succeeded, allowing him and his troops to walk to the island and conquer it. (See [ISBE 2.6](#).)

Ashkelon, Gaza, Ekron, Ashdod. (1) These cities were four of the five capitols of the Philistines ([Josh 13:3](#) and other places). (The fifth was Gath.) Today, it is a city in Israel on the coast of the Mediterranean. (2) [Amos 1:6-8](#) and [Zeph 2:4-6](#) are really clear that the Philistines would finally be wiped out for good. History shows that Nebuchadnezzar did this. Here, it seems there are some Philistines still around. Either their country is gone and they are a scattered people like the Jews previously were or their country is gone but their culture is still prominent. God's message to them is double-sided. God still plans to crush their pride and their practices. But God has also given them hope in that there will be a remnant of the Philistines that God will save.

Blood from their mouths, detestable from their teeth. It appears that the Philistine religion practices drinking blood and eating unclean things that they probably sacrificed. (Though some scholars believe the blood is

an image for all the blood shed in their wars.) What things might have been detestable, I do not know. It doesn't appear to be human sacrifices. It might be the unclean foods that the Jews were not allowed to eat. It could have been something else.

Remnant, Jebusites. Whenever God talks about a remnant of the Jews, it usually means a minority of the people would survive and also go through many trials. As far as the remnants with the destruction of Jerusalem, they either were taken captive by Babylon or remained in Judah because they were poor farmers. Take the Jebusites for example. When they were conquered by David, by Solomon's time, they were forced to become farm workers for the Jews (2Sam 5:6-10, 1King 9:20-21). For the Philistines to become a remnant like the Jebusites, yes, God is promising them survival, but the people would not be given any honorable place. Whoever decided to dedicate themselves to God and survive as a remnant, they would become servants to the Jews.

I have seen with My own eyes. (1) What has God seen? Has something already happened? Now, the places mentioned in verses 1-4 were in Assyria. The places mentioned in verses 5-7 were in Philistine. The Philistines and the Assyrians were wiped out by Babylon around 600 BC. Why would God say these places will still be destroyed when their empires have been gone for about 85 years? (2a) Is God reminding EVERYONE that the enemies of Israel will be destroyed, just as the Philistines and Assyrians were? Is this what God has seen with His own eyes? Is God using the past to prove the future? (2b) Or is this a specific prophecy about what Alexander the Great will do? Alexander not only triumphed over these lands but also triumphed over people's cultures. In other words, is God prophesying that they may not be empires anymore but what is left of their cultures will also be destroyed?

9:9-10 Prophecy of the King on a donkey.

King, righteous, victorious, humble, donkey. Let's take a look at these descriptions of the coming king. (1) First, it says he is king. This is a true quality of him. Regardless of what kind of person the rest of these things describe, this person is certainly a king as well as the other things. This person will come with the same authority as David had. (2) He is righteous. This word (in Hebrew and Greek) is better translated "just." This person is just and makes just judgments. Like Solomon, this person will bring justice as king. (3) Your translation may say something different here. Most say "having salvation" or "Savior." The Hebrew could mean various things. The Greek is more clear saying, "Salvation Himself." This person will not only bring salvation, but He is salvation! There is a similar passage to this in Is 62:11 which says, "Say to Daughter Zion: Look, your salvation is coming." I believe it should be Salvation is a capital "S." Like Joshua, whose name means salvation, this person will deliver the people. Deliver them from what? We will see when He arrives. (4) This person will be humble. Wait, this isn't a good description of a king. Kings are supposed to be strong and intimidating. This person will be humble? What kind of a king will this be? Like Moses who was like a king to the people but also the most humble man on earth (Num 12:3), this king will be a humble king. (5) This person will ride a young donkey. No, kings are supposed to ride horses, the symbol of war. Donkeys stand for peace. Verse 10 says that his person will proclaim peace to the nations. What kind of a king is this? How can one King of one Kingdom proclaim a kind of peace that would be accepted by other nations? The donkey shows that this person must be a king that will bring peace, and he will not do it using the methods of war. What person would the Jews know as a peaceful person to compare this to? What great person from the Old Testament did not know war but only peace? Like the priests who were told to pronounce God's blessing over the people, they said to the people, "My the Lord bless you and protect you; may the Lord make His face shine on you and be gracious to you; may the Lord look with favor on you and give you peace" (Num 6:22-27). This blessing was said by the priests but granted by God. This king will come in peace and not war. That kind of peace can only come from a priest or from God Himself or both! (6) Jesus fulfilled all these things when he entered Jerusalem just as Matthew and John wrote (Matt 21:1-11, John 12:12-16).

Donkey, colt, foal. The Hebrew reads, "Riding a donkey, upon a young donkey, the offspring of a donkey." The Greek reads, "? Upon a donkey, even a young, youthful donkey."

Proclaim peace to the nations. In the Septuagint, Is 9:6 is a parallel passage, saying, "His name is called the Messenger of great counsel: for I will bring peace upon the princes, and health to him." (Hebrew says, "His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.") (Greg Swango connects this with Eph 2:17.)

Sea to sea, to the ends of the earth. In Mic 7:12, this phrase is used as an all-encompassing area of the world. It is also used in a psalm that Solomon wrote about asking God to bless the coming kings. That psalm seems to be intended for the king of Israel because of verse 1. However, verses 2-14 can certainly describe King Jesus (Ps 72:1-14).

9:11-17 Prophecy about Zion against the Greeks.

[Prophecy about Zion]. Greg Swango believes these blessings are a continuation of verses 9-10, future blessings through Christ. I believe this passage is specifically for the Jews under Persia.

Waterless cistern. These were commonly used as unofficial prisons (Gen 37:23-24, Jer 38:6).

Prisoners who have hope. In the Greek, this phrase reads, "You prisoners of the congregation."

Against your sons. In history, this actually happened. After Alexander died and his empire was split into four parts, the part that ruled over Jerusalem were the Seleucids. The wicked king Antiochus IV Epiphanes warred against the Jews in horrible ways and desecrated the temple by sacrificing unclean animals on the altar. In response, the Jews, under Mattathias Maccabee, revolted against the Greeks and miraculously won! When they rededicated the temple, this began the Jewish festival called Hanukkah. I believe Zechariah is prophesying this future victory over the Greeks.

Greece. In Hebrew, this is a proper name: Javan. Javan was one of the sons of Jepheth, the son of Noah (Gen 10:1-2). It is believed by Biblical scholars that Javan became one of the four original tribes of the Greeks, called the Ionians. In the Greek, this word is Hellen, which means Greek. So either way, it appears that "Greeks" is the best translation here.

Southern storms. (1) The Greek says, "tumult of His threatening." I do not know what the Hebrew is referring to with these whirlwinds from the south. The Greek, though it's prophecy is more generic, makes more sense. (2) Either way, verse 14's message is clear: God and His armies will be fighting the Greeks.

They will drink and be rowdy as if with wine. The Greek says, "They will swallow them down as wine." All the phrases in this verse are about what the Jews will do to the Greeks. Same is true with in the Greek, but with the Hebrew, it is inconsistent. It only refers to their enemies getting drunk on wine. I believe the Greek is correct here.

Flock of His people. This seems to be a parallel prophecy to Ezk 36:37-38.

Jewels in a crown. The Hebrew says, "Stones of holiness." The Greek says, "Holy stones." Both are correct. Anything different means it was mistranslated.

10:1-3 Prophecy against Judah's shepherds.

Ask the Lord for rain. The first verse is a verse of praise and a verse of truth. The Lord is to be praised for the rain, and it is only the Lord who hears prayers for rain. He is the true source of both rain and crops. This verse is in contrast to verse two.

Empty comfort. This verse is in contrast to verse one. The second verse is a verse of idolatry and a verse of deception. Idols cannot promise rain or crops. They cannot speak truth, but instead are false. Those who hold idols up are deceived by illusions. The big deception is that idols give people a false feeling of comfort.

Wander like sheep. This is what idols do. Each person can define an idol in their own way. God, on the other hand, has revealed who He is and what He wants. But the followers of idols wander like sheep because idols are not divine and truly offer nothing!

There is no shepherd. (1) This is the reading of the Hebrew. In Greek it is "there was no healing." The Greek makes more sense when considering the flow of God's message. Regarding shepherds under idols, there would still be shepherds, but they would be false shepherds. Regarding healing under idols, there would be none since idols have no power because they are not divine. God is angry with the shepherds (10:3) because it was they who allowed their flock to use idols (Jer 50:6). (2) We know that the Jews were under a shepherd, Jeshua the high priest. God put His full approval on Jeshua as a leader of the people (Zech 3). So I don't believe Jeshua would allow idols to find a place. Perhaps there were other leaders of the people that allowed idols to return. This is similar to when Judah had a good king but there were still some people who worshiped idols. (Jeshua's high priesthood is another reason why I believe "healing" is the original wording.)

Anger burns. Again, it's not that the Jews are leaderless or without shepherds. It is that their leaders are allowing idols to exist. No wonder God is angry with them!

Tended His flock. Regardless whether the shepherds or the leaders are doing their God-given job or not, there will be people who will be devoted to following the Lord Himself. If the shepherds and leaders are doing a bad job, the Lord will always be a Good Shepherd to the faithful. And this is even more true for Christians (John 10:7-18, 1Pet 2:25, Heb 13:20-21)!

His majestic steed. When when shepherds and leaders bring idols, God can still cause His faithful flock to be people of greatness in Him.

10:4-12 Prophecy about Israel's redemption.

[Verse 4]. (1) In Greek, verse four reads, "From Him He looked, and from Him He set the battle in order, and from Him came the bow in anger, and from Him shall come forth every oppressor together." (2) When looking at verse four and knowing it is about Jesus, we can read it as though it shares many more titles or Messianic descriptions of Jesus.

Cornerstone from Judah. Anyone having studied the “cornerstone” in the Old and New Testaments will know that this is a reference to Jesus. Here, Zechariah is prophesying the coming of Jesus Christ. (See notes at Zech 3:9.)

House of Judah, Joseph. The things that God is promising in verses four through twelve never come true for the Jews, neither under the Persians nor the Greeks nor the Romans. (The closest events that resemble this prophecy were the events explained in 1 Maccabees under Matthias Maccabee. But this prophecy doesn't really describe those events.) This prophecy also mentions the house of Joseph, also called Ephraim (10:7), and Assyria (10:10). Yet the Ten Tribes were not heard from again after the Assyrian exile. Because this prophecy mentions the cornerstone, a prophecy of Jesus being the Christ, the rest of this chapter becomes true, not for physical Israel, but for spiritual Israel. (For Paul's message about physical Israel apart from spiritual Israel, see Rom 9-11, specifically 9:6-8, 9:30-33, and 11:25:27.) All those under the Old or New Testament who live their lives in faith in God are promised all these things in this chapter. I believe Heb 8:8-12 (Jer 31:31-34) is connected with this prophecy.

Whistle. God will whistle for His people. This sounds odd, like a father whistling to their children to come to them immediately. Actually, that is exactly what Zechariah means. Isaiah used the same imagery when God was calling the nations of Assyria and Babylon to come and destroy Israel and Judah (Is 5:26-29). God's true sheep will respond to His voice or His whistle.

Nile. The Greek does not mention the Nile. It says the same thing but just says “rivers.”

11:1-3 Lament of destruction.

[Meaning]. If this section is also a prophecy, there are many interpretations to this section. Some have said it describes the path of the coming army (Lebanon to Bashan to Jordan are all north to south), either the Greeks or the Romans. Some have said that the cedars are the wood of the temple which the Romans destroyed. As for me, I believe this is simply a poem lamenting destruction.

Lebanon, cedars. Whenever the Scriptures talk about the cedars of Lebanon, they always speak about them as really mighty. They are a symbol of pride. On the flip side, when the Scriptures talk about fires among the cedars of Lebanon, it's always a message of humility. The message of this lament may be one about the destruction of pride. The chapter is about the leaders of the people, so it is probably about the destruction of their pride. Of course, part of its purpose to get your attention. God is about to condemn the evil shepherds because of their treatment of the sheep.

11:4-6 God commands Zechariah to shepherd the people.

Shepherd. God is speaking to Zechariah here. God directly tells Zechariah to be a leader for the people and not just a prophet. Starting in verse seven, Zechariah will explain what he did as their shepherd.

Intended for slaughter. What kind of slaughter are these sheep suffering? The answer is found in verse 7 and 11. The Hebrew, Greek, and Aramaic manuscripts do not all agree there, so see my notes on verse 7 for more information. But in all cases, the sheep are being physically slaughtered. Verse 5 says that the sheep are hurt and are bought and sold like slaves. Verse 9 says that there is death, becoming lost (spiritually, socially, or physically), and people exploiting each other. Now slavery was allowed in the Old Testament, so for God to condemn it here, they were doing it wrong. They were buying people slaughtered them, and when it was time to sell them, they were sold to make their owners rich. And these evil shepherds were even thanking God for their prosperity which was attained by evilness. The point is that these sheep were being slaughtered at the hands of evil shepherds and God is furious with them.

Not punished. (1) This evil against the sheep of Judah is happening, but nothing is being done about it. Where are the punishments for the killing, the unlawful enslaving, and the cheating? Where is the righteous to speak out against this evil? Where is Jeshua the high priest who God removed sin and clothed in splendid clothes (Zech 3)? This is the first condemnation God has given the Jews since they have returned to Judah as a province of Persia. It is a big deal that they who were so motivated and filled with God's Spirit to rebuild the temple that they are now creeping back into idolatry, evil, and hate. (2) Is God expecting the Jews to punish the evil among their Jewish brothers? Yes. God gave the Jews a long list of laws through Moses that were to guide them to live in obedience and punish those who had done wrong. God expected the Jews to live up to the laws that God gave them. However, as Christians today, God has given us new commands through Jesus Christ His Son. When we see the world doing evil, it is not our place to condemn or punish them (1Cor 5:12-13a). Instead, this is now left to God alone (Rom 12:17-21). But when we see those in the church doing evil, we are to go directly to them and warn them, and if they will not listen, there is discipline for that person (Matt 18:15-17). When injustice is done, God gets angry regardless. When injustice is done among God's people, He will also become angry with those who remain silent. So the Jews had and the Christians have laws from God about curing the evil among God's people.

No compassion. (1) God is a God who loves everyone. Therefore, He gives each person free-will. Also, because God loves everyone, He gives them exactly what they want. If they want to have no compassion on their fellow man, then God gives them just that: no compassion on them. In short, because these evil shepherds have no compassion on the sheep, God will not care for them. (2) On the flip side, God has said that those who show forgiveness, God will show them forgiveness (Matt 6:14-15, 18:35, Mark 11:25-26, Luke 6:37). "God certainly treats us how we want to be treated, which is how we should treat others." All three things (God, our wants, our actions) are very interconnected and determine our eternity. (3) Jesus had something to say about evil shepherds that we Christians need to hear so that we will also watch out for them (John 10:1-2, 10:7-13)!

Neighbor, king. Whether it will be a neighbor or the king, God promises that someone else will control these evil shepherds. Instead of evil shepherds buying and selling people in order to hurt them and get rich off them, God will cause the evil shepherds to be sold to someone else to do whatever they please with them. God will make the first last and the last first when it comes to these evil shepherds and the sheep.

I will not deliver them. God has promised many times (mostly in Isaiah and Jeremiah) that He would ruin certain peoples. [Compile a list of examples.] Here, God is saying that He will not save these evil shepherds from the hands of their new owners. It seems that their coming punishment must happen for justice to be done because of all the people they had hurt. If there is no reason for God to save them from their punishment and their punishment is very great, then what does this say about the incredible suffering they must have caused the sheep of Judah!

11:7-14 Zechariah's experiences as a shepherd of the people.

I shepherded the flock. Zechariah did exactly what God said: became a good shepherd for the people.

Afflicted of the flock. (1) Most translations say "poor" and some say "afflicted." In the Hebrew, the word can easily mean both. And isn't it true that the poor are in a state of affliction? Perhaps there isn't a difference between these two concepts in the Hebrew. And it should be the same for us. The next time we think or say that we are "poor," we should consider whether we are in a state of affliction. If not, then perhaps we are not poor at all! For those who are truly poor are those who are afflicted in this life. It is this kind of person that God says He will defend over and over and over in the Scriptures. Jesus did the same things: went to the poor! These are the people who are being slaughtered by evil shepherds and will now be shepherded by Zechariah. (2) The Greek is different and reads, "in the land of Canaan." If this was Zechariah's original wording, then it means that he shepherded everyone in the province of Judah, not just the poor and afflicted. But it seems very, very odd to use "Canaan" at this time since this land has not really gone by that name since before King David. Unless this word became a figure of speech for any area where people still worshiped idols (which might be the case here), it seems very odd to me that Zechariah would say his sheep is from Canaan. Verse 11 has the same difference in Greek and Hebrew.

Favor. This word is often translated very differently. In the Greek its name is Beauty or Good. In the Hebrew its name is Agreeable. For an analogy, when someone enters a house they might want to buy, he might say, "This house is agreeable to my lifestyle." Because of verse 10, I believe Agreeable is the right word. The staff is the agreeable relationship between Zechariah and the people. When he quits shepherding the people, the agreeable nature between he and the people is broken. Zechariah breaks his staff as a sign that he is through. Unlike water and salt, his relationship with the people is more like water and oil. God's ways and the people are not agreeable right now. Zechariah will leave the people to God's impending punishments.

Union. Literally, this word means Rope. Figuratively, it means Portion, as in a portion of rope. But here, I believe it means Bond, as a rope that binds people to each other. For the righteous, they have a strong bond with God. This staff symbolizes the bond between Zechariah as the shepherd and the people as the sheep. But when Zechariah quits and receives his pay, there is nothing more that binds him to the people or the people to him.

No longer shepherd. It seems that Zechariah is giving up his God-given duty as a shepherd after only one month. The evil in the land must have been exceedingly bad. I don't know if God told Zechariah to quit or not, but God will use this event in Zechariah's life to prophesy about someone else's death (see verse 13).

Word of the Lord. Your translation might need some assistance here. Many translations say something about the sheep who were watching Zechariah break his staff. The word here is more like a follower or a protector. A better translation would be about the sheep who "were watching over me." These sheep are the good ones who knew that Zechariah was a good shepherd. This is why they understood the significance of Zechariah breaking his staff. They knew that he was a true prophet from God.

Wages. Apparently, shepherds were paid for their work in leading the flock. It probably was a full-time job. Notice that these wages came from the sheep who were watching over Zechariah. Zechariah leaves it up to them whether they want to pay him for his work.

30 pieces of silver. Zechariah was their shepherd for one month. This amount came out to one piece of silver a day. Verse 13 says this was a great price. These good sheep had lots of respect for God's prophet. They paid him more than a shepherd should make. They paid him the amount of a shepherd and shepherding prophet for one month of service. And it is a fair amount for the life of a slave (Ex 21:28-32). (However, this was weighed in shekels, so I'm assuming one shekel is the same as one piece.)

Threw it into the house of the Lord. Here is where this whole event takes shape as a prophecy. Judas also threw 30 pieces of silver into the temple. 30 pieces of silver is the same amount that the Jewish leaders paid for Jesus Christ (Matt 27:3-10). The similarities make this prophecy; events this connected are not coincidence. I don't know if the Jewish leaders in Jesus' day remembered this passage in Zechariah or not. As I said earlier, 30 pieces of silver was a great price for a prophet, the end of Zechariah's shepherding. So when they paid Judas this amount in order to end Jesus Christ's shepherding, they paid a great price for a prophet. However, that must have been all they thought about Jesus. This passage in Zechariah is all about shepherding. Jesus was the good shepherd. And 30 pieces of silver was still a great price for a shepherding prophet. But was Jesus merely a shepherding prophet or was He much more? While someone might find a great price for a shepherding prophet, what kind of price can you come up with for the Son of God? You see, the Jews could put a price on Jesus' life because they did not see Him for who He really is: God's Son.

Potter. The last major similarity in this prophecy is with this potter. (1) In Zechariah's day, apparently, there was a potter, that is, a man who worked the furnace, inside the temple. In fact, the Greek has an extra phrase. It reads, "The Lord said to me: Drop them into the furnace, and I will see if it is good metal, as I was proved for their sakes." So it looks like Zechariah did this to see if the money was real silver. In short, Zechariah tested the money with a person in the temple who worked the furnace. (2) In Jesus' day, the temple still had a potter. For it was his field that the Jewish leader's bought to turn into a graveyard. In both cases, the 30 pieces of silver ended up in the hands of the temple furnace worker, the potter. For these reasons, all of this was fulfilled again through Jesus Christ (Matt 27:3-10).

Judah and Israel. The separation of Solomon's kingdom into Judah and Israel is what this is referring to. But that era is long gone. The message from God is probably this: There is a province of Judah once again and they no longer united in God. But now, there will be two peoples: those who follow God and those who follow idols. The good things that were holding the people together as one in God are now broken. In other words, instead of a healthy garden, there are now many weeds spreading throughout the garden.

11:15-17 Prophecy of a very evil shepherd's coming.

Foolish shepherd. God wants Zechariah to dress differently now. Instead of an actual shepherd, he will dress like a foolish shepherd. This will be a sign to the people about God's prophecy here. Zechariah's clothing will their reminder that a very strong and evil shepherd is coming to punish all the evil shepherds.

Not care. God also warns that this shepherd will not seek the lost, heal the broken, or sustain the healthy. This strong, evil shepherd will bring hurt on everyone, even the good sheep. Ezekiel made a very, very similar prophecy against the shepherds of his day (Ezk 34:1-6). Here, God is once again promising that they will be destroyed.

Worthless shepherd. I do not know who or what God had in mind as to the identity of this worthless shepherd. (1) Many commentators (even as far back as Jerome) believe this is the antichrist who is spoken of in Paul's letters and Revelation. (2) This could be the Greeks who didn't care about the Jews. More specifically, this could be Antiochus IV Epiphanes who brought extreme evils upon the Jews and the temple. (3) This could be a prophecy of the Pharisees who didn't shepherd the flock and didn't care about them. Similar to Zechariah's woes to them here, Jesus had many woes to give the Pharisees in His day (Matt 23). (4) If this prophecy was directed specifically at the evil shepherds of Zechariah's day, I wonder if this is about the Greeks. However, those events wouldn't occur for another 300 years. And if this prophecy is ongoing, it can easily be about the Pharisees or antichrist.

12:1-9 God will protect Jerusalem and Judah.

[God's oracle]. In chapters 12 and 13, God does all the talking.

Cup that causes staggering. (1) The Greek reads, "shaking door posts." Unless this was a figure of speech in Zechariah's day, this seems to be jibberish. I believe the Hebrew is correct. (2) Like the possible antichrist described in 11:15-17, this seems to be similar to the apocalyptic images in Revelation (Rev 14:10, 16:19, 17:4, 18:6). (3) The prophets say that this cup of staggering and God's wrath is the same (Is 51:22, Jer 25:15-16). (4) The image is about what wine does to people. That is, going up against Jerusalem is a lot like drinking strong wine which causes Jerusalem's enemies to stumble around. It's an image of wine, but it is God's wrath that actually causes it to happen.

All nations of the earth gather against her. This is another image from Revelation (Rev 20:7-10). Zechariah calls this event a siege.

[Revelation]. It's hard to deny that these images which Zechariah uses are also used by John in Revelation. Starting in Zech 11:15, is all this a prophecy about the end of the world as John describes (specifically in Rev 20:7-10)?

Leaders. (1) In verse 5 and 6, the Greek follows "leaders" with "of thousands." (2) In this passage, it seems to be implied that the weak, few, and righteous inhabitants of the house of David are contrasted with the leaders. Verse 5 and 7 bring this out the most. The leaders see that God strengthens and works His good will through the weak, not as much through the leaders. And God saves the house tents first and the house of David (righteous) will become the greatest part of the people, not as much with those who live in sturdy houses or the leaders. To me, this whole passage is about how God uses all His people, but especially glorifies the lowly, righteous ones.

Residents of Jerusalem are my strength through the Lord. Here, the leaders recognize that true strength comes from the people of God, and not through their own political power. The victory may belong to all of God's physical people, but the victory belongs to the lowly persons more.

Leaders of Judah like a firepot. But the leaders still do their duty and receive recognition also. The images given to them here are images of victory. If their enemies are like wood and sheaves to burn, then they are like the pot in which they burn.

Weakest will be like David. The lowly people who fight for God will be given a similar honor and likened to David who was very, very successful in all his fights and became the first great king of Israel. David himself began in a low place, being the youngest brother and left to tend sheep. In the same way, the lowly people of Judah will become great, like David, because they get their strength from the Lord.

House of David be like God. Not only will God bring up weak people and make them strong and kingly heirs like the house of David, God will make these same people like Himself... like deity. How can mankind become like deity? Though mankind cannot become all-powerful gods, God can certainly make mankind become like God Himself. How does He do that? The Old Testament doesn't reveal this, but the New Testament does. When Jesus walked the earth, He prayed for this very thing: that we become like God (John 17:20-23). After Jesus ascended, Peter tells us that God has delivered us from the world so that we can become divine (2Pet 1:4). Then John says that this transformation in becoming like God will be complete when Jesus returns (1John 3:2-3).

As the Angel of the Lord. This is a VERY strong prophecy. As we have discussed earlier in this commentary, the Angel of the Lord is Jesus Christ pre-incarnate. In fact, in verse 10, Zechariah gives us a very clear prophecy about Jesus. How else could mankind be like God, as Zechariah says, but through the Angel of the Lord, Jesus Christ? We become like God when we become like His Son, Jesus. Jesus came to this earth to show mankind how to be like the Father. Those who see and know Jesus Christ know the Father (Matt 11:27, Luke 10:22, John 1:18, John 14:7-10). The only way mankind can become like God is because of and through God's Son, Jesus Christ. Paul gives us many instructions about how Christ can live in us and how we grow into Him (Rom 8:10, Gal 4:19, Eph 3:17, Eph 4:15).

12:10-14 Prophecy of the only Child who was pierced.

Pour out a spirit. These verses are a prophecy about Jesus. This is without doubt because of the reference to piercing Him. (1) This pouring out of the Spirit might connect to Joel's prophecy (Joel 2:28-32) and the fulfillment of that prophecy starting with the apostles (Acts 2:14-21). (2) This Spirit of prophecy might connect to Jesus Himself who was full of grace (John 1:14) and prayer (Matt 6:5-13). And Jesus was certainly a source of grace and prayer for the house of David and the residents of Jerusalem as He traveled around, did many miracles, and prayed for everyone around Him.

Look at me whom they pierced. (1) Why is this a prophecy about Jesus without a doubt? John told us so (John 19:31-37). The Jews had Jesus pierced and they looked at Him. There are two significant results of this. First, those who hated Jesus looked at Him, and I believe this is what Zechariah means here. John later wrote that those who pierced Jesus would see Him again that way when Jesus returns on Judgment Day (Rev 1:7). But second, those who love Jesus can look to Him on the cross and find healing and eternal life (Num 21:5-9, John 3:14). (2) Instead of the Hebrew's "whom they have pierced," the Greek reads, "because they mocked me." Both could be true because both happened to Jesus. But since John quotes this verse from the Hebrew, we know that the Hebrew is correct here. (3) God does all the speaking in chapters 12 and 13. Notice that God says that people will look at Me whom they pierced. How can mankind pierce God? Who among the Jews ever saw God and when they did they tried to use a weapon? Perhaps the Jews believed that God is talking about figurative piercing here. But for you and I, knowing the life of Jesus, know that God is not being figurative here. Not only was God physically pierced by mankind,

but He also was the Child and Firstborn of God. We see how specific this prophecy is and how it was completely fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

Only child, firstborn. (1) "Child" does not appear in the Hebrew or the Greek here. In the Greek, it implies a pronoun: "him." In Hebrew, the word is *yachiyd* which means "only." However, "child" can certainly be implied as it is in Gen 22:2, 22:12, 22:16, Jdg 11:34, Pro 4:3, Jer 6:26, and Amos 8:10. On the other side, *yachiyd* can also mean "lonely" as it is used this way in Ps 25:16 and Ps 68:6. Because the way Zech 12:10 is phrased so similarly to many of the passages where "child" is implied, I believe "only child" is the correct translation here. (2) Notice how Zechariah calls this person an only child and a firstborn. Of course, God is using this kind of child to demonstrate how much people will mourn and weep over him. And this sadness cannot be overstated. But this only, firstborn child is also part of the prophecy fulfilled in Jesus. John makes it clear that Jesus is the only-begotten Son (John 1:14, 1:16-18, 3:16-18, 1John 4:9). And not only was the first born of Mary (Luke 2:7, 2:23), but Jesus is also the firstborn of God's righteous image (Rom 8:29), firstborn of creation (Col 1:15, Heb 1:6), and firstborn of the resurrection (Col 1:18, Rev 1:5).

Hadad-rimmon, Megiddo. Greek reads "as the mourning for the pomegranate grove cut down in the plain." But in the Hebrew, what is this place? Jerome said that this was called Maximinianopolis in his day; this is where Josiah had been fatally wounded in his battle with Necho II of Egypt. This event with Josiah was a great day of mourning of the people. Josiah was the last good king. Even Jeremiah wrote a lament for him (2Chr 35:25). Today, Megiddo is a city in Israel. This is probably the location referred to.

Family of Nathan. Because the context mentions the house of David, this Nathan seems to be the physical son of David (2Sam 5:14), not the prophet who confronted David (2Sam 7, 12, 1King 1). Though he is a son of David, the kingly line didn't go through him but Solomon instead. In fact, there is nothing in the Bible about David's son Nathan's life.

Family of Shimei. Because the context mentions the house of Levi, this Shimei seems to be the great-grandson of Levi (Num 3:17-18), not the Benjamite Shimei who was David's enemy or any of the other many men named Shimei during David's time. Though he is a son of Levi, the priesthood was given to Aaron and his sons. The duties given to Shimei's family (the Gershonites) was the care of the curtains, hangings, and ropes of the sanctuary.

[Nathan and Shimei]. The only things that these two had in common is that they were descendants from men who were known for greatness: David and Levi. Yet neither of these two families had that greatness. The family of Nathan couldn't be kings. The family of Shimei couldn't be priests. Why would God mention such insignificant families? Perhaps these families connect to God's message in 12:8. That is: even the more insignificant families will mourn over this God-child who was pierced. (A) But on that day, the weakest will become like David. This can be seen in Shimei who had a descendant named Asaph (1Chr 6:39-42) who David appointed as chief musician over the temple and who wrote many of the psalms we have today. Asaph became like a priest in many ways. (B) But on that day, the house of David will become like God. This can be seen in Nathan who had a descendant named Joseph who was the legal father of Jesus (Luke 3:31). Nathan became like a father to God in a way.

By itself... themselves. (1) Within three verses, this phrase of aloneness is mentioned 11 times. Verse 14 is a summary of verses 12-13. Those that mourn will be separated by family and by gender. I'm not sure what the significance of this is. (1a) The meaning could be that people are not going to find much comfort. Is more comfort found when there is more people around? I believe so. Though the men will still be with the men and women still with the women, perhaps this is a message that their search for comfort will be limited. However, though the context of 12:10-14 is one of sadness, it does not seem to be a message of despair as Jeremiah 31:15 and Matt 2:18 are. For this reason, I don't believe this is God's message. (1b) Another meaning could be that peoples will become sad and scattered. This passage is about how God's Son will be crucified and the people, righteous and unrighteous, will mourn over Him. Twice in this context it mentions the people of Jerusalem, so this may be a clue that this future event was experienced by them. So if this is about a sad and scattered people, who is being prophesied? This event began when Jesus was arrested and continued at least until His ascension (Matt 26:31-35, 26:74-75, John 20:11-13, Mark 16:9-13, John 20:19). Furthermore, chapter 13 begins with more prophecy about what Jesus did on the cross. So it appears that all evidence points to this meaning.

13:1-9 God's fountain will purify the house of David, God's sheep.

Fountain will be opened. (1) In the Greek instead of fountain, it says, "location." As we have seen throughout Zechariah, the Hebrew has been more accurate than the Greek in most places. I believe the Hebrew is correct here. (2) What is this fountain God is talking about? Since it will wash away sin and impurity, and God already made some clear prophesies about Jesus being pierced, this is a prophecy about Jesus on the cross. We already saw how John (John 19:37) quoted Zech 12:10. It appears that this prophecy about Christ being a fountain was used very often by John. John must have known Zechariah very well. The

specific fountain John had in mind that washes away sin and impurity is when he saw the fountain of blood and water come from Jesus' side ([John 19:33-35](#)). That is the fountain that washes away sin and impurity! But John doesn't stop there with this fountain motif. Jesus talked about this fountain with the Samaritan woman ([John 4:10-15](#)). Jesus connected the fountain to the Spirit ([John 7:37-39](#)). In Revelation, the fountain is connected with heaven (Rev 7:17, Rev 21:6). But in Zechariah, God is talking about the fountain that will wash away sins and impurities. This fountain that God will open is Jesus' body on the cross. The fountain that hung on the cross has the power to cleanse all sin and all impurity! And John was there to tell us about it.

Erase the names of the idols. (1) Because of verse 1, it is clear that this passage is about what God will do with Jesus' crucifixion on the cross. Jesus is the fountain that will wash away sin and impurity. But here is what else the cross will get rid of: the names of idols, the false prophets, and the unclean spirit. (2a) How will God get rid of the names of idols? Perhaps this about the idolatry which was mixed with God's people. For the Jews, they were God's people based on physical descent, so they were always God's people. But there many, many, many times when many Jews worshipped idols. There were altars to God next to altars to Baal. In this way, they would often break the first of the Ten Commandments. So God's people had the names of idols were among them. Now for the Christians, they are God's people based on faith, so they become God's people when they do what God says. If there is a time when a Christian worships an idol, then that person ceases to be a Christian. In this way, there will be no idols among God's people because Christians cannot worship an idol as well as God. (2b) Or, perhaps how God will rid of the names of idols is by providing mankind with the an earthly image of God: the man, Jesus Christ. I think that people desire to make and worship idols because they want something tangible to deify. Perhaps this is why idolatry was such a great temptation for the Jews. They had nothing to represent God, so they made idols to become gods. But God sent Jesus whom people saw, touched, embraced, and kissed. Why would mankind ever need to fashion an idol to be their physical image of their god when mankind can look to Jesus Christ as their physical image of God the Father ([John 14:7-11](#)). In short, with Jesus Christ as the earthly image of the heavenly Father, there is no need for mankind to desire to make an earthly image of any idol.

Remove the prophets and the unclean spirit. (1) God will remove the prophets from the land. Now, God is implying that He will remove the FALSE prophets from the land. We know this is true from Peter's words on Pentecost when he quoted God saying, "I will pour out My Spirit on all humanity; then your sons and your daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, and your old men will dream dreams" ([Acts 2:17](#)). So after the cross, there will be prophets, but only true prophets will be among God's people. (1b) Even when the Jews read this, they knew God was talking about the false prophets and not all prophets. When Zechariah was translated into the Greek, it was explicitly translated as "false prophets." (2) Where "prophets" is plural, take note that "spirit" is singular. God will remove the unclean spirit from the land. What is this one unclean spirit that God will remove? (John Wesley believed that this unclean spirit is the devil.) The New Testament certainly tells us that Satan was defeated at the cross ([Heb 2:14-17](#)).

Pierce him through. I am not sure what is meant by this. Here are some possibilities. First, piercing someone's body on a pole was a method of capital punishment under the Persians. This could mean that after the cross, Christian parents should legally kill their children if they become false prophets. This was the law for the Jews ([Deut 18:20](#)). Of course, when Jesus came, He (as well as Paul) preached the opposite thing commanding that Christians are to do good to their enemies. The New Testament is opposed to capital punishment, so this cannot be the meaning. Second, this could be an ironic statement about what should be done to those who become false prophets. As the messiah will be pierced (crucified) by mankind, then Christians should figuratively crucify false prophets. There are a number of examples in the New Testament where the church had to discipline others for their sins. Perhaps this is the meaning. Third, the Hebrew word for pierce can figuratively mean to revile or to rebuke. If this is the meaning, then God's choice of words shows how severe the reviles or the rebukes would be. Christian parents would revile or rebuke their false prophesying children so boldly that it would be like stabbing them in the heart.

Every prophet will be ashamed. (1) False prophets were tolerated during the days of the Jews. In fact, chapter 10 is about this. There were many times when evil Jewish kings wanted to be surrounded by false prophets and evil counsel. But after the cross, false prophets will not be tolerated. They will be shunned and punished so strongly that they themselves will be ashamed of their false visions. Verses 4 through 6 demonstrate how utterly ashamed they will be in attempting to speak in God's place. (2) In the Greek, this verse just says "prophets." It does not say "false prophets" as it does in verse 2. The Greek has already explicitly said that it is talking about false prophets in this passage.

Hair cloak. "Hair cloak" is the best translation here. What does this piece of clothing symbolize? The only other time this is used in the Old Testament is to describe Esau's hair that covered his whole body. But I believe this is similar to what John the Baptist did for his clothing: a hair cloak made from camel's hair. It appears

that in Zechariah's day and in Jesus' day, it was a custom for prophets to wear a cloak made from hair. We just know what kind of hair John used for his.

A man purchased me. (1) Not all translations word it this way; the Hebrew could mean create or purchased. In the Greek, it says "procreate." So either the person became a slave at a very young age and has been a farmer ever since or the person was born as and has always been a farmer. Since the Jews had a custom of freeing all slaves every seventh year, the year of Jubilee, I believe the false prophet is saying that he was born a farmer. (2) No matter what is meant about how he became a farmer, the meaning is the same: this false prophet would rather be a life-long farmer than to be seen as a false prophet. Prophets became very famous. But after the cross, being a lowly farmer was far preferable to going around as a false prophet. That's how ashamed false prophets will be after the cross. (3) Contrast these false prophets with Amos the prophet. God took a man who was a farmer all his life and turned him into a famous true prophet (Amos 7:14-15).

I received the wounds in the house of my friends. Why would a false prophet have scars between his hands? Either they were from the punishments from being pierced by their parents. This would have been a shameful mark of a false prophet. Or, they received these scars between their hands because the false prophets of idolatry would cut themselves to appeal to their gods. We know this was the practice of the ancient false prophets of Baal (1King 18:28). Either way, the false prophets will be so ashamed of their false prophecies that they will lie about their scars that they received. He will lie that they received those scars when he was with his friends. They will be so ashamed of their false prophecies that they will claim their scars were actually because of the foolish things they did with their friends. It is like lying, "I received this scar when my friends and I did something really stupid in our fraternity."

Strike the shepherd. The end of chapter 11 prophesied the coming of a worthless shepherd. That cannot be who God is talking about here because God calls this man His shepherd and His associate. In the Hebrew, this man is God's companion or comrade. In the Greek, this man is God's townsman or citizen. This shepherd is God's answer to the worthless shepherd in chapter 11. I wonder if this striking of God's special shepherd reminded Zechariah's readers about what God said in Isaiah 53 (specifically, [Is 53:4-11](#)). Now that God's messiah has come, we know how Jesus was God's associate and citizen: Jesus was God the Son!

Sheep will be scattered. Of course, when Jesus, the Good Shepherd was struck, the sheep were scattered. Jesus Himself predicted this, quoting Zech 13:7 ([Matt 26:31](#), [Mark 14:27](#)).

Against the little ones. But that is not all Zechariah prophesied here. God also says, "I will turn My hand against the little ones." What does this mean? How and why will God allow His little ones to suffer wrath? Well, it is not God's wrath but God's purpose in having His future people suffer wrath from others. And God will cause this to happen to them. Jesus prophesied this too ([Matt 23:33-36](#), [Matt 10:17-25](#), [Luke 21:12-19](#), [John 15:20-21](#)).

Two-thirds... one third. (1) The way "two-thirds" is worded in the Hebrew and the Greek, this is not meant to mean exact percentages of 2/3 and 1/3. There is not a necessity that these three parts precisely amount to what we call 1/3 today. (2) One might think this has a connection to Revelation with all the one-third, two-thirds in that book (especially chapter 8). However, Zechariah says that the one-third will live and throughout all of Revelation, it always says that the one-third will die. There is no connection. (3) Because verse 9 implies that the one-third are holy, these "percentages" are just to represent the righteous minority and the wicked majority.

I will refine and test them. This refining, testing, and enduring of trials of the righteous is spoken of in the New Testament ([1Cor 3:12-15](#), [1Pet 1:6-7](#), [1Pet 4:12-17](#)). God was also clear on this in the Old Testament such as in this passage in Zechariah and [Is 48:10-11](#). Why does God desire to have His people go through suffering? All these sufferings are designed to purify us from sin and the desires of our flesh ([Jam 1:2-3](#)).

Call on My name. For the Christian, calling on the name of the Lord is a big deal. Both Peter ([Acts 2:21](#)) and Paul ([Rom 10:13](#)) quoted Joel saying, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved." Paul also wrote [1Cor 1:2](#).

My People. (1) God let's His people suffer many things. But this is in order to purify them. But in everything, when people call on the name of the Lord, God will never turn a deaf ear and will always respond with loving kindness acknowledging them, saying, "My People." (2) This is the same response from God as He explained through Hosea ([Hos 2:23b](#)).

14:1-7 Final battle at Jerusalem.

All the nations against Jerusalem. If all we had were verses 1 and 2, this destruction of Jerusalem sounds a lot like when the Romans destroyed it. Most old scholars believe Zechariah is prophesying the Roman destruction of Jerusalem. But the rest of the chapter—specifically verse 5—sound much more like the final

battle between God and all evil. If that is the case, the Jerusalem is spiritual Jerusalem (Gal 4:26 and context).

Mount of Olives. (1) This event of the Lord standing on the Mount of Olives with all power had been prophesied earlier in Ezekiel (Ezk 11:22-23). (2) If Ezekiel and Zechariah mean the actual Mount of Olives—which it appears that they do—, then Luke may also predict this in Acts (Acts 1:9-12).

Azal. In the Greek, this place is called Jasod. This gives us our clue to where this place is. Based on archeology from the 1800s, most likely this place is Wadi Yasul which is just south of Abu Tor, all of which is directly south of Jerusalem. I don't know what the significance of this place is to Zechariah, Christians, or anyone.

The earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. (1) The only other place in the Scriptures that mentions this earthquake is Amos who prophesied two years before this earthquake occurred (Amos 1:1). This earthquake must have been major because there is historical evidence of it. Multiple, different scholars believe the earthquake happened around 760 BC. Josephus and the Talmud say it was around 750 BC, at the time when Uzziah had entered the temple and was struck with a skin disease [need cross-reference]. (2) How did the Jews flee that earthquake? We don't know. It must have been known to the Jews in Zechariah's day, but now we don't know what the analogy is between the earthquake and how God's people will flee through the mountain valley. (3) Perhaps Zechariah isn't making an analogy of the way they will flee, but simply saying that the whole experience will be like experiencing a very major earthquake. This seems very likely.

The Lord my God will come and all the holy ones. The New Testament often describes Jesus returning to earth with His angels (Matt 16:27, 25:31, Mark 8:38, Luke 9:26). This phrase is most closely tied with Jude 1:14 where he quotes Enoch about "the Lord coming with thousands of His holy ones." The point is, this is certainly a picture of Judgment Day, Jesus' Second Coming.

The light, the bright ones will diminish. This is how it is worded in the Hebrew. But in many other languages including the Greek, the Syriac, and the Latin all say, "There will be for one day: no cold or frost." The meaning here is much more powerful than in the Hebrew. Not only will there be no light from anywhere, but these other languages say that there will not be any heat from anywhere also. This day will be unlike any other day in the entire history of the world.

A day known only to Yahweh. This idea of Jesus' return only being known by the Father is later repeated by Jesus Himself (Matt 24:36-37).

Without day or night. The final day will be a day of utter darkness. No sun, no moon, no stars, no day, no night—at least, no night that we are used to. This kind of apocalyptic language is used in the Bible often to mean the fall of a great nation. For example, in Is 13, Isaiah prophesies the fall of the nation of Babylon (Is 13:10) (also see Joel 2-3). Days of darkness is nearly always used to describe the fall of a mighty nation. In this event that Zechariah is prophesying about, the language he uses is the most strong in describing this utter darkness. Days of darkness are about the fall of great nations. This day of utter darkness is so dark because it is about the fall of ALL nations: the whole world!

[The final battle.] I believe this day of utter darkness will be the same as what John wrote about in Rev 19:11-21, 20:7-10.

There will be light at evening. Though the day and the night will be utterly dark, when the day is at an end, light will return. What does this mean? I believe it means that after everything is destroyed and all the nations of the earth are destroyed, God will win. He is the light and His eternal light is so bright, the first thing that God will illuminate with His presence is the evening... when light should be going away. This will be the first light from God that will last into eternity as John describes in Rev 21:23-25, 22:5.

14:8-11 God protects His people in Jerusalem.

Living water. (1) Verses 8-11 contains many beautiful things that God will use to protect and nourish His people. The living water is the first thing John describes about the New Jerusalem, heaven (Rev 22:1)! In fact, John uses many of these images from Zechariah in his own descriptions about heaven. (2) Joel gives another description of God's eternal kingdom (Joel 3:17-21).

Eastern sea and western sea. In the Greek, it says, "Former sea... later sea. It seems that the Hebrew is correct here because John said that in the New Jerusalem, "The sea no longer existed" (Rev 21:1). Zechariah is just painting the picture that God's eternal country will span to the ends of the earth.

Summer and winter alike. (1) In the Greek, it says, "Summer and spring." (2) There will be no seasons in heaven but it will always be like spring. John also uses this season-less beauty to describe the tree of life (Rev 22:2)!

Yahweh will become King over all the earth. John also uses this and describes how God will be the King of kings, really, the ONLY King (Rev 22:3b-4)!

From Geba to Rimmon will be changed into a plain. (1) Geba was the northeast-most point in Judah-Benjamin. Rimmon was the southwest-most point in Judah-Benjamin. Zechariah is saying that the entire country surrounding Jerusalem will be turned to a plain. What does this mean? It means that travel will be easy, there is more room to farm, and it will be an all-around more pleasant to live. (2) In the Greek, this verse is very different. The first half reads, "compassing all the earth, and the wilderness from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem. And Ramah will remain in its place." What would be the meaning in the Greek? Probably that the country will not be affected by the final battle. Even though the war will rage between God and Satan, the land will not be ruined.

Jerusalem will be raised up and will remain on its site. These are all places in Jerusalem that existed during the time of Zechariah. What seems to be meant here is that Jerusalem will remain unchanged and intact.

Despite the final battle, despite the earthquake, despite the darkness, Jerusalem will still be the city of God. Never again will there be a curse. John also says the same thing about heaven (Rev 22:3a)!

14:12-15 God brings a plague of rot to all His enemies.

Their flesh will rot. What is this rotting? I believe it is about Hell. One of the other ways the Bible describes things that have rotten is saying it was eaten by worms. This is what happened to the manna if the people kept some until the next day (Ex 16:14-20). Jesus had a lot to say about the worm and connects it to rotting in Hell (Mark 9:42-49).

Flesh, eyes, tongues. In Mark 9 where Jesus talks about one's hand, foot, or eye being the cause of some people going to Hell, Zechariah lists one's flesh, eye, or tongue because the cause of rotting in Hell. For all these body parts and even the body itself, the New Testament has a lot to say about how these parts of our bodies can be evil. To go through all the times the New Testament talks about how the members of our bodies ought to be holy, it would take another lesson.

Great panic from the Lord will be among them. This panic should remind us of what happened when Gideon attacked the Midianites (Jdg 7:16-22). What kind of fear would have come over a person so that they wouldn't think twice to kill their own friends because they were so afraid? Yet this kind of fear will happen because of God's coming wrath (Rev 6:15-17).

Judah will also fight. (1) Was this prophesied by Jesus in Luke 11:21-22? Was it only Jesus who did the plundering? Or could all the righteous also do the plundering on this final day? (2) In the Hebrew, it says, "The wealth of all the nations all around will be gathered together." In the Greek, it says, "God will gather the strength of all the nations all around." To me, the Hebrew makes more sense. Why would God gather the strength of the nations? Unless by "strength" the Greek means wealth.

The same plague as the previous one. (1) God's wrath is so complete against evil, even evil people's animals will rot because of them. I don't believe that this is literal, that actual animals will rot in Hell. It seems that this is just to point out God's complete wrath against the wicked. (2) At the beginning and end of verse 15, the Greek, it says "overthrow" instead of "plague." This is also the case in verse 18. I do not know what would be meant by "overthrow."

14:16-19 Survivors of God's enemies will worship the Lord.

Survivors from the nations. The meaning of verses 16-19 is beyond me. And I certainly do not know why Zechariah mentions Egypt twice in this passage. But I will still make some attempts to interpret these verses. (1a) The meaning that makes the most sense to me is that this passage is talking about Gentiles. They are the "nations" (which means Gentiles) who at one point in their lives have been enemies with God. The survivors are those who have been converted to be part of God's people, either then to Judaism or now to Christianity. So these converted Gentiles would worship God year after year. Those who converted to Judaism would celebrate the Festival of Booths with the rest of the Jews at the commanded time. Those who converted to Christianity would celebrate the Festival of Booths year after year at all times, as the New Testament says (2Cor 5:1, Heb 11:8-10, 11:13-16, 1Pet 2:11). If Gentiles submit themselves to God the King by entering into God's kingdom, then they will live with God in eternal life. But for those Gentiles who do not become Christians, they will be punished with the plagues Zechariah mentioned in the previous section. This interpretation sees the worship of God as done in the physical life and the reward or plague will come in the eternal life. This seems to be the most likely interpretation to me. (1b) Another meaning is that in the eternal life, there are those who live just outside of God's kingdom. And their bliss in the afterlife depends on if they will continue worshiping God in the afterlife. There will be those who live in the New Jerusalem. And there will be those who live outside of it in the countryside between the eastern and western seas, between Geba and Rimmon. Perhaps there is a connection between this interpretation and Jesus' parable about God rewarding people with towns in the afterlife (Luke 19:11-27). There, Jesus says that some people will oversee 10 towns, 5 towns, and an implication that someone could oversee 1 town. Are these towns in the afterlife? This is an interpretation of Zechariah's passage here, but I believe it is

weaker than the previous one. The idea that there will be different rewards in heaven doesn't mesh well with other things Jesus taught. Also, the idea that there will be punishments (such as no rain and plague) in heaven seem to be completely opposed to many things the Scriptures teach about heaven. (2) No matter the interpretation, it seems that John also uses this picture of the nations serving God in his description of heaven (Rev 21:24-26).

Then rain will not fall on them. In the Greek, this reads, "Even these will be added to the others." But when the rain is again implied in the next verse, "It will not be upon them," the Greek loses its meaning. In other words, since 18 in both the Greek and the Hebrew refer back to verse 17, rain is the only thing that makes sense.

Punishment of Egypt. In the Greek, the word is "sin." Since this verse is referring back to the plague in verse 18, I believe the Hebrew is correct here.

14:20-21 The splendor of living with the Lord.

HOLY TO THE LORD. In the Law of Moses, this phrase appeared on one thing: a gold medallion which was on the turbans of the priests. The meaning is this: under the Law of Moses, only the sons of Aaron were holy to the Lord. But in heaven, even dumb horses will have bells that say "HOLY TO THE LORD." The holiness in heaven will not only be for a select few individuals. Everyone will be holy there! From Jesus Himself through all the people all the way down to the bells that attach to horses. In short, EVERYTHING will be HOLY TO THE LORD.

Every pot will be holy to the Lord. Paul also used this analogy. He talked about how there is common things and honorable things. Through God's righteousness, common people can be made honorable and holy (2Tim 2:20-21). In heaven, all pots will be holy. All people will be holy. All objects will be holy. All the things that were common will be very honorable, like the sprinkling basins in front of the altar. There will be nothing but holiness.

Canaanite. The Canaanites were the original inhabitants of the lands around Jerusalem. They were already long gone by the days of Zechariah. What is meant by Zechariah by saying "Canaanite" could be a lot of things. And most of those things are probably very similar and along these lines: the ancient, pagan ways of doing things are no more. Now, there is only people who fear God and who are His children. There is no longer anyone who will hassle God's people or try to reclaim anything that had taken away from them. In heaven, the only kinds of people are those who are pure of heart.