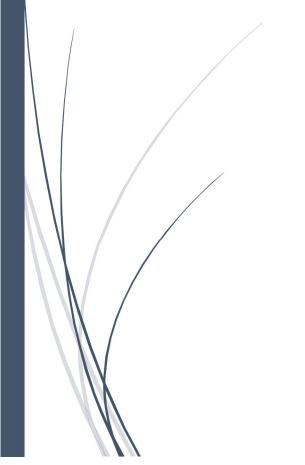
SEPTEMBER – NOVEMBER 2021

HOPE LOOKS UP

Hope Conquers Discouragement

A Study of the Book of Zechariah

A deep study the prophetic Old Testament Book of Zechariah is just what God has prescribed for you to turn DISCOURAGEMENT INTO HOPE!!



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Zechariah 1: 1-21: God Sees You in Discouragement and Calls You to Action!	2
FIRST VISION: Four Horses: Zechariah 1:7-17	3
SECOND VISION: Four Horns: Zechariah 1:18-19	5
THIRD VISION: Four Craftsmen: Zechariah 1: 20-21	6
Zechariah 2:1-3:10: God Continues to Make Everything New!	8
FOUTH VISION: Man with a Measuring Line: Zechariah 2:1-13	8
FIFTH VISION: Confrontation of Joshua and Satan: Zechariah 3:1-5	10
SIXTH VISION: The Branch and the Stone with Seven Eyes: Zechariah 3:6-10	11
Zechariah 4:1 - 5:4: God Removes the Slightest Impediment to Hope	13
SEVENTH VISION: Lamp Stand & Olive Trees: Zechariah 4:1-14	13
EIGHTH VISION: Flying Scroll: Zechariah 5:1-4	17
Zechariah 5:5 - 6:8 God Tells Us to Restore Hope Through Worship!	19
NINETH VISION: Woman in a Basket: Zechariah 5:5-11	19
TENTH VISION: Four Chariots Between Two Mountains: Zechariah 6:1-8	23
Zechariah 6:9 - 7:14 God Will Handle the Heavy Lifting	25
Zechariah 8:1 - 9:17 God Wants to Turn Your Fasts into Feasts	31
Zechariah 10:1-12 God Gives Hope Through Meaningful Events	36
Zechariah 11:1-17 The Greatest Gift of Hope—Rejected then Accepted	42
Zechariah 12:1-14 When God Gives Hope—It is Total Hope	48
Zechariah 13:1-9 God Will Build a Kingdom Where Only the Hopeful Will Be Content?	54
Zechariah 14:1-23 God Creates the Ideal World	60

Zechariah 1: 1-21: God Sees You in Discouragement and Calls You to Action!

Hope Looks Up Bible Study starts a new study of the Book of Zechariah, the most prophetic book of the Old Testament and a great book of encouragement.

Many of you have experienced a difficult year and one-half. You have not had regular contact with many of the people who add stamina and excitement to your life; your family relationships have been tested and strained by too much confined time together; you have missed your usual social time, had very limited contact with your distant family, Church family and friends. Add to that most of know of someone who has died of COVID and for many of us that has been in our own families. We have gotten discouraged and maybe you still are.

Then I have a prescription for you, a deep study of this prophetic book, Zechariah is just what God has prescribed for you to turn that discouragement into HOPE!!

Zechariah was written to a group of people who after 70 years were still living in half-destroyed houses, had only a foundation laid for their house of worship and had given up on seeing a better life. They had returned to Israel with great enthusiasm and thought that rebuilding the Temple would be a great adventure and that they were doing something very exciting. But now 70 years later they felt less like 'Indiana Jones' and more like "Wandering Nomads". To say, "the thrill was gone", would only start to describe where they were. They had become 'down-in the mouth; long in the tooth; worn out and dead tired.' Haggai had encouraged them to start rebuilding the Temple again after several years of no activity because their life was just not making them content or happy. Zechariah, two months after Haggai starts his prophecies has God visit him in the middle of the night and God gives him a series of visions that God said to share with the people. They need to hear these and become excited again. They need to see that God is on their side and they need to realize a truth that is true every time: "Inactivity depresses and activity blesses."

The couch setter is the most easily depressed person I know, except for the lounge chair addict who lays down through most of their day. Why, because they are so burdened and work so hard, no exactly the opposite. They have no Godly purpose to do anything and that is extremely depressing.

Zechariah begins his prophecy with a statement and a challenge:

Statement: "You know how bad your parents, grandparents and others in their generations messed up their relationship with God". I'm sure that got several 'Amens and 'You Got That Right'

Challenge: "So, repent and don't do the same dumb sins."

In the first 6 verses of the Book, Zechariah reminds them that they are now under the rule of a Gentile King, so different than God intended:

 That God has punished them for their apostate behavior for 70 years, to signify the 70 years where they had not kept the Sabbaths for the land, for the people, and for the stability of their nation;

- That God was still the Lord of Hosts, had more power, might, and armies than any earthly ruler.
- That their families had ended up buried by the canal banks of Babylon and the
 impoverished towns and districts of Persia, instead of the sweet cemeteries of Israel where
 they could be first fruits of the rapture when Jesus came and withdrew His followers from
 the earth.
- That while Israel was falling first to Babylon and later to the Medes-or Assyrians and Persians, only then did they listen to Isaiah and Jeremiah and the other prophets God had working at that time, but it was too late, their land fell and they went into exile.

The effect was immediate, they repented. So, **Zechariah 1:6** says, "Then they repented and said, 'The Lord Almighty has done to us what our ways and practices deserve, just as He determined to do.'"

Step one of getting out of discouragement is to recognize what you did that helped you get discouraged. Maybe you were the family member that made your home very miserable when you were confined and quarantined to your home last year. Maybe you were the one who quit saying anything positive and became the complainer towards God and everyone He put around you. Maybe you were the one who moaned and groaned about 'how long is this going to last. Where is God in all of this? What the heck is going on here? Maybe this is not real, just a hoax put up by people who want to control my life.'

Do you have something to repent of? I know I did: I was often that irritating person who said, "This isn't so bad, we'll all be fine soon." It took me a while to even grasp what God was wanting me to repent of that I was doing. But it came to me in pulsating rain-like reality several months ago. I had played the role of Job and thought that all the life-lessons were for someone else and definitely not me. I had the wrong attitude about the pandemic and was not listening to God for the lessons I was supposed to learn. I spent two weeks reading *Job 38, 39, 40, and 41* and repented of just not seeing how powerful and purposeful God is. It was amazing to me how almost all of my discouragement left when I acknowledged the supreme knowledge of my Lord and admitted the limited, finite knowledge that I possessed.

So, again I say—maybe the first step of getting past your discouragement is to acknowledge where you need to repent.

Then the visions began for Zechariah. There is some question of whether we are speaking of 8 visions or 10. It is true that 10 different situations are presented to Zechariah, so it seems that 10 is truly the number of visions.

FIRST VISION: Four Horses: Zechariah 1:7-17

The first vision was that of a man mounted on a red horse standing in a grove of Myrtle Trees and accompanied by three other horses. **Zechariah 1:7-17**. We need to see that this vision was built upon the teaching of Haggai who had challenged the people of Judah to start again to rebuild the Temple

and when they did, Zechariah had this vision that showed that Jesus was watching, guarding and approving of what they were doing.

This series of visions all occurred three months after Zechariah had given a call for repentance. The first rider was called, "The angel of the Lord". This was a name used often in the Old Testament to speak of the pre-incarnate Jesus: Genesis 16:11; 13; 18:1,2; 13, 17; 22:11-18; Ex. 3: 2; 4; Joshua 5:13; 6:2; Judges 6:12, 14; 13:21-22 are several other times the angel of the Lord is speaking about the Pre-Incarnate Jesus. Although this was at night, these were visions that Zechariah saw and not dreams he had while he was asleep. The 'angel of the Lord' was a term often used for God in the Old Testament, so we can say that the angel of the Lord in the Old Testament is the Lord Jesus Christ of the New Testament. He is the angel of the Presence. He is Jehovah Himself. He is the Messiah. Satan may be the prince of the power of the air, or prince of the world (Ephesians. 2:2), because a majority of the world believes as he does, but we must remember, God never leaves the stage of the world and He has the power to direct through those who follow Him and those who do not follow Him as well to direct the affairs of this world. Why a red horse? Red speaks of blood and bloodshed and in the Book of Revelation it speaks of bloodshed in war. But this is the blood of the rider that was to be shed. He is watching over the earth and over these returned Jews because He will die and shed His blood for the entire human family on this earth. Behind him are three horses and we should assume they all have angel riders because the man on the red horse, Jesus the Messiah, says they have been sent by him throughout the world to see how the world is doing.

I love the thought that Zechariah is giving us. Our Lord Jesus Christ is inhabiting the things we are doing for Him and watching over the entire world. Those who saw the vision would be impressed by the fact that He was in a grove of Myrtle trees. The Myrtle tree was very common in Israel, was a short 8-9-foot tree full grown and was the primary building branches used when they built their campsites for the Feast of the Tabernacles. Most home-made tabernacles were made and framed out of palm branches and covered with the branches of a Myrtle tree. Every one in Israel who heard this vision would know that Zechariah was describing what the Messiah was doing in their land. God gives specific visions to specific followers and allows them to know that He has His hand over and around them. The colors of the three horses are also significant: red, the symbol of warfare; white, the symbol of victory and sorrel, a mixture of warfare and peace treaties which will happen before the final battle and the ultimate victory. Before we leave this part of the vision, I want to remind us of one more reason for hope winning over despair: the rider on the red horse, Jesus the Messiah is a picture of the Lord Jesus just waiting for the day to come when He will take over the earth and rule here. In the meantime, He is patrolling the earth and watching over it. He is not alone; He has angel hosts with Him represented here by the three horses and riders. If you are in action for the Lord right now, then you have these very same promises given to you. It might be a Mesquite grove instead of a Myrtle grove and a hovercraft instead of a horse, but the message is the same. Jesus the Messiah is watching over you and is there for you.

Now Zechariah gets to the meat of the vision. It is great to know that Jesus is guarding us and watching over us; but Zechariah says He is willing to engage in discussion about His plans.

The Angel of the Lord asks a question to the Lord of hosts: "How long will God withhold mercy from Jerusalem and Judah?" Isn't that a question we often ask, "How long Lord will this last, can it end soon?" God begins to explain that the countries of Babylon and Assyria were to be instruments of the Lord but they have gone too far and did too much to Judah, so God will contain and dismiss them from the stage of prominence in history. How true that has been. No on today calls Iraq or Iran the most powerful countries in the world. They are known for their terrorism, a war from weakness and counter-attack and not a war of a military power. Their armies have proven to be no match for NATO powers, the US and even the Kurds in regular warfare.

There will be no world-wide peace until Jerusalem is at peace. The Medes and the Persians had the largest kingdom ever, from the East of India to the Mediterranean Sea and from the mountains of Russia to the sands of the Sahara; but their peace was short-lived. Soon Alexander the Great and his swift and destructive Greek army would destroy that peace. We are only fighting God and His Word if we believe our world can have peace without their first being peace in Jerusalem.

God is jealous for Jerusalem and He declares it, not the jealousy fueled by competition and petty disputes over possessions; no God is jealous because Jerusalem belongs to Him and His first people and it was not to be taken away permanently from God.

God was very disappointed with the treatment of Judah by the Babylonians and Assyrians because instead of just turning the people back to their fundamental truths, they had tried to annihilate the nation. Doesn't that have a familiar ring to it today—while many in the world are trying to annihilate Israel; God is still jealous for her permanent safety. So, God will allow Jerusalem to be free, to grow, the cities of Israel to prosper and expand for God loves the land. God chose Judah and Jerusalem as His place, "For the Lord has chosen Zion; he has desired it for his habitation. This is my rest for ever; here will I dwell, for I have desired it." Psalms 132:13-14; "Moreover he refused the tabernacle of Joseph, and chose not the tribe of Ephraim; but chose the tribe of Judah, the Mount Zion which he loved," Psalms 78:67-68. God loves the spot.

The Angel of the Lord ends this part of the vision with a sweeping statement of coming glory for Israel (Judah plus the 10 northern tribes). He will, in time, allow Israel to be the talk of the world and will rule for 1,000 years from Jerusalem over all the world. Since this was spoken over two and one/half millenniums ago it begs the question. Are you working at something that has eternal values? Will it make a difference in the Millennial Kingdom to come? Will it even make a difference 10 years from now or 25 years from now? We need to be doing things that have eternal consequences.

SECOND VISION: Four Horns: Zechariah 1:18-19

The second vision of Chapter One has two parts and is one of the reasons I believe we have 10 visions.

It is the vision of 'Four Horns' and the third vision is the four who shape materials with hammers and chisels. **Zechariah 1:18-21**

I'm sure that many of you are familiar with the Bible's use of 'horns' as a symbol of power and pride. It originated with the power that a horned animal possessed over a non-horned animal. So, a bull that had been dehorned was much less successful at fighting than a bull that had been allowed to keep his horns. They became symbols of nations and again the more powerful nations were termed "large horns" and weaker nations "little horns." Zechariah continues on with this series of visions to show how God would rebuild and renew the strength of Israel. The nations with horns in the Bible are always Gentile nations and here Zechariah speaks of the two that have already conquered Israel and the two that will conquer them at later dates. They are Babylon; Medes & Persians; Greeks; and Romans. They each went too far in the discipline of the nation of Israel and three of the four tried to annihilate Israel and the fourth set out to 'Hellenize' the nation to be like Greece. But in the third vision we shall see that God dealt with each of the four horns.

THIRD VISION: Four Craftsmen: Zechariah 1: 20-21

The third vision ends by showing that God is the one and only Kingdom maker in this world **Zechariah 1:20-22**. How did God do it? The same way He always does, He used another nation to vanquish each of the four horned nations. Dr. Merrill Unger years ago wrote: "Three of the horns became the craftsmen that God used to punish the horns. And the fourth will ultimately be cast down by the world-wide kingdom set up by the return of Christ. So, the first horn Babylon is eliminated by the Medes and Persians; the second horn, the Medes and Persians are defeated by the Greeks; and the third horn, the Greeks are eliminated by the Romans; and the fourth Horn Rome, under the revived 10-kingdom form will be destroyed by the fourth carpenter/craftsman to establish the Millennial Kingdom when: "The King of Kings and Lord of Lords" returns to take up rule on this earth.

The interesting thing is that if you study the history of Rome, you will see that Rome was not destroyed by an outside power and so it can and will come back to life in a rebirth. The Antichrist will be able to rally together again the Roman Kingdom and lead it to attempt to conquer the world. Christ will be the craftsman/carpenter who destroys this evil plan when He comes at the end of the 7 years of Tribulation and destroys the Antichrist and all of his armies.

It is interesting that when Jesus came at His incarnation, He became known as Jesus the carpenter of Nazareth. He is coming again and He again will be the carpenter/craftsman that puts down a world dictator and establishes a true kingdom for this world for 1,000 years.

We already see in these three visions what we shall see in all 10-namely:

- 1. God will never be through with the nation Israel.
- 2. When God speaks about Israel, Judah and Jerusalem, he means those exact geographic locations.

God did not speak to 10 lost tribes that morphed into Great Britain and the United States. It may seem a point of national pride that God would choose those two nations, but you know what, He didn't and that is not the way He chooses people today. We are chosen today by the power of the Holy Spirit as

He convicts an individual to follow Jesus Christ as their Savior. It makes no difference if you are a brown toned Arab; a yellow toned Chinese a black toned North American or a white toned European. God chooses you by your heart and not your skin color. We all, every ethnos, tribe and nation should be looking for that city, whose builder and maker is God, *Hebrews 11:10*. That is our hope, God will bring that city out of heaven to a remade earth where all is new and we will live forever. I guess as I John 3 says, "Now we are the children of God, and what we will be has not been made known. But we know that when Christ appears, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." I John 3:2. We will all have to wait and see what Jesus looks like to know what we will look like in heaven, but I assure you it will not have any emphasis on skin color. After all the only race in the Bible is the Human Race; nor is it about nationality, for God has built the Church into one body made up of people from all ethnos and nations.

Zechariah will teach us that God is faithful. The Bible tells us over and over that He is faithful to Israel and He is and will be faithful to the Church. Just be glad that you belong to Christ and He has chosen you to be on His team and get active for the Lord. Our world needs each one of us to get motivated for Christ and share our testimony and our hope with the world. We need to "Do something!"—Even for our own spirits.

"Inactivity depresses and meaningful activity blesses."

Zechariah 2:1-3:10: God Continues to Make Everything New!

I just want us to see a line of progression as we start our lesson for tonight. The willing Jews had come back to Judah and Jerusalem 70-years ago and at first started immediately to reconstruct the temple. This is the reason they had returned and the reason the leader of Babylon had allowed them to return to Judah. At first, even though persecuted they worked hard and rebuilt the wall around the city; but as soon as the foundation was built for the Temple, there was an uprising among the men and they insisted that the work on the Temple stop and they be allowed to rebuild their homes and establish their businesses. Can you image for the greater part of 70 years the entire group had walked by the Temple area time and time again and knew that all that was done was the foundation, but they felt no shame, no doubt, not even any remorse about the foundation just lying there and no building started yet.

Then God began to stir the pot and move these selfish people to get going again on their Temple. He used two young prophets, Haggai and Zechariah to get the people building again. In two years, the people had the Temple progressing and in four years they had the Temple built. I want us to see how God used those two prophetic young men to get the entire group into action.

• August 29, 520 BC Haggai's first sermon on need to finish the Temple

September 21, 520 BC The Temple building restarted
 October 17, 520 BC Haggai gave a second sermon
 October-November, 520 BC Zechariah started his ministry

• December 18, 510 BC Haggai gave the third and fourth sermons

February 15, 519 BC
 Zechariah was given 10 visions

December 7, 518 BC Group went to Bethel from Jerusalem
 March 12, 515 BC Ezra dedicates the rebuilt Temple

The message of Haggai and Zechariah had taken affect and the discouragement was lifted when the workers began to do what they had come to do, rebuild the Temple of the Lord.

The work that was being done in Jerusalem was only a foretaste of all that God had in mind for that city. It would continue into the final Millennial Age and for 1,000 years Christ would rule from that city over all the earth. The circumstances in Zechariah's day were discouraging and it seemed that God had deserted them, but God wanted them to know that not only had He not deserted them, but He had an eternal plan and purpose for them. They could say with us, "Being confident of this very thing, that he who began a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." Philippians 1:6

FOUTH VISION: Man with a Measuring Line: Zechariah 2:1-13

The next vision is the vision of the man with the measuring line. When a person sent from God shows up in a vision with a measuring line, they are always foretelling of the growth of that area, city or country. When God has an area measured, then God is ready to move and expand that area greatly. *Ezekiel 40* speaks of the same truth when God shows up to measure the Temple and have it rebuilt

larger than ever for the Millennial Kingdom. Verses 3-5 the angel speaking to Zechariah is almost overcome with joy about the great news that he is sharing. Jerusalem will outgrow its walls and the city will become huge. This is speaking of the time of the Millennial Kingdom and God Himself will defend Jerusalem with a wall of fire just as He defended the Israelites escaping from Egypt with a Pillar of Fire each night. He will protect Jerusalem and then project His glory from the middle of Jerusalem.

Then the prophet turns from the future and in verses 6-9 he speaks of the actual time the vision was given. They were to flee Babylon just as *Revelation 17:3-5* says they will flee Babylon in the end times. They are to come back to Israel and God will take care of them, just as you would guard the pupil of your eye from danger, so God will defend all of His people.

Then the angel tells Zechariah in the vision that God has only started. He will gather His people to Him; He will protect them in Zion, not Illinois or Utah or any other place in the US but in Zion, at Jerusalem. He will draw other nations to Him and they shall become strong Christians and follow Jesus. God will inherit Judah and God will cause this to happen. He has fulfilled a frequent prophecy of the Bible. Let me share with you:

Isaiah 2:2-3 "In the last days the mountain of the Lord's temple will be established as the highest of the mountains; it will be exalted above the hills, and all nations will stream to it. Many people will come and say, 'Let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the temple of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths." The law will go out from Zion, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plow shares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore."

In that day the whole earth will keep silence. Today we hear a lot about freedom of speech, but in that future day there is going to be a marvelous freedom of silence. Why? Because God will be in His holy temple. This will be the result of the physical presence of Jesus upon this earth.

This prospect for the future was an encouragement to those people in the days of Zechariah. I'm sure it was. And it ought to be an encouragement for us today. God has a plan and purpose for each one of us. He is working in your life and in my life. He works in our hearts both to will and to do His good pleasure. I would encourage you to be in lockstep with Him and going in the same direction as He is going!

My wife and I try to walk 3 ½ miles up and down hills and foothills 3-4 times a week. It can be so good when we change direction. You see, we go all four directions on our usual path and we often change directions only to feel a strong breeze meeting us to cool us off and give us the stamina we need to continue the walk. It is no different in our spiritual life. If you will just be faithful though those discouraging times and allow God to continue to move, He will give you the coolest and sweetest breeze that will dry every tear and cool every part of your life and your body. He wants to do that. He truly wants to take us at our most difficult times and stay with us until the sweet breeze of the Holy Spirit touches our heart and our life and allows us once more to breath and enjoy life.

We spend a lot of time talking about our plans, our goals, and our directions and what we intend to do. We often ask God to bless our plans, our dreams, and our goals. But in the Bible, it is God with the plans that will bless us and when we find the plan of God and implement it in our lives, our rejoicing will only have started. Our hope in life will take off in a vertical position like a rocket ship being launched into space. God wants us to be growing, increasing, and making a difference in our world. His intentions for each one of His own are immense. Plus, He will give us the hope that will allow us to take His plans and complete them.

FIFTH VISION: Confrontation of Joshua and Satan: Zechariah 3:1-5

The next vision God gives to Zechariah has to do with the plan of God to cleanse and restore the spiritual leaders of the land of Israel. God divides this vision into two parts.

In **Zechariah 3:1-5** God gives the vision and then in **Zechariah 3:6-10** God explains the vision. First, the vision:

Joshua was the high priest of the group that came back with Zerubbabel to rebuild the temple. He is being accused and the accuser is Satan himself. Joshua represents the entire nation of Judah and Satan or the adversary stands in the presence of God to proclaim the sins of Israel and how unworthy they are to receive any good thing from God. This is a role that Satan often plays: *Job 1,2* when he attacks Job and *Revelation 12:10* when he constantly accuses the believers to the Lord. The situation is crucial: if Joshua is proclaimed freed and accepted by God, Israel is accepted and if Joshua is rejected by God, then Israel is also rejected. There is no greater tattle-tale than Satan. Now, he has convinced the world that God just sits in heaven and watches for someone to foul up so they can be punished. That is so untrue that we could label it a "lie from the pit of Hell." It is Satan that accuses the followers of God all the time and it is he who repeats their sins and makes sure that God hears all the bad you and I have done constantly God is the one who leaves the 99 and seeks out the lost sheep; God is the one who says, "let him who is without sin cast a stone at this adulterous woman"; God is the one who grants heaven to a thief dying on the cross beside Him; and God is the one who forgives our sins and remembers them no more. The entire plan of God for the nation is revealed in the outcome of this vision. Israel's hopes would either be destroyed or confirmed.

The scary part about this is the people had only recently begun to do what God had wanted them to do. Rebuild the Temple and create a place for God to dwell among His people. They were not innocent and they knew it. They had squandered a lot of the last 70 years, they had been selfish, they had ignored God, and they had spent all of their energy on making money. So, it is very important what God will say and in verse two we find, 'The angel of the Lord' Jesus says: "The Lord rebuke you Satan." God has chosen Jerusalem to be His city and He has taken Joshua and the nation and pulled them out like grabbing a burning stick from the fire before it is destroyed. He pulled them out of captivity and potential disappearance and like a stick snatched from the fire right before it bursts into flames. God alone has rescued them from their self-centeredness and apathic approach to God.

Now, I do not know where you are with your walk with the Lord tonight; but "if you can still look up, you still have hope." Often the difference between Discouragement and Hope is how we have positioned our head. Discouragement always takes the head low and hides the eyes from other eyes and anything meaningful, while Hope looks up and allows our eyes to gaze on Jesus and what He is doing for us. I would encourage you to be honest and ask yourself, what way am I looking tonight. Have I focused on my problems, have I let my attention be on the things of my life that seem to be wrong or unjust; have I gone even further and kept my head down unable to lift it because I think I have been treated unfairly and falsely? Then look up, raise your head, lift your neck, open your eyes, and gaze on Jesus. That is our source of hope. He is the one who makes all things new. He is the one who welcomes every prodigal back from a life of sin or even a night of sin. He is the one who lifts the head of the sinner and asks," Does anyone accuse you, and when you tell Him no, He says, "Then neither do I, go and sin no more."

What is Grace? Grace is not getting what we truly deserve but instead getting what we truly need. It is God knowing we are guilty, yet telling us we have been made innocent. It is the act of God that forgets what we have done and focuses on what we have become. It is why God can tell us that He has great plans for us and everyone else who will get out of the pit of discouragement and climb to the top of that pit and live victoriously in Christ. It is the place where HOPE rules over dope (substance or mental fogginess); where God's high continues forever without any need for an increase in substance; where the eternal reward is strong enough to draw you to follow the Hope of the Lord. Don't take a pill to get over discouragement, follow Jesus up the hill to receive His forgiveness and salvation.

In **Zechariah 3:4-5** we see how this happens. God is totally aware of how filthy our life is. He knows that more promises have been made than kept, but He removes our filthy garments, forgives our sins and dresses us in clean garments to tell of our new position. In the vision the angel clothes Joshua the High Priest with a clean robe and a clean turban. The turban for the Chief Priest had inscribed on it, "Holiness to the Lord." Zechariah joins in the discussion and asks for the clean turban because he knows that once this nation of former exiles moves back under the leadership of God, there is nothing that they cannot accomplish.

That is also true for each of us. I Peter tells us we are the royal priesthood of God and so "God puts on us that clean robe and that clean turban that tells us to live holy for the Lord." We don't have to have a Joshua stand in for us today, we can receive the cleanest and best of new garments from God simply by letting Him lead and direct our life.

SIXTH VISION: The Branch and the Stone with Seven Eyes: Zechariah 3:6-10

Zechariah shows that the end of the vision has a valuable two-pronged promise:

First: God will bless Joshua and with him the entire tribe of Judah that had returned to live in the land. God will take the filthy clothes off of them, he cannot accept them that way and He will dress them in clothes of righteousness. God puts it on us and we become His.

This will come into complete fruition when Israel accepts Christ as Lord. *Zechariah* **12:10-13:1**.

Second:

This will be a great prophetic sign that Jesus shall come and rule the land. Zechariah talks first of the BRANCH. It is a term used exclusively for Jesus the Messiah. He is 'my servant, the branch", the one who makes it possible for us to know the plans that God has for each of us. He will rise from humble beginnings, a branch out of the stump of Jesse, but the fruit He produces will change lives for all times. Then Zechariah speaks of the STONE; This is another sign of the Messiah, prophesied in the Old Testament; Psalm 118:22-23; Isaiah 8:13-15; and Daniel 2:35, 45. It is fulfilled in Christ and as the New Testament explains, He is the rejected stone; the stone of stumbling; a stone of refuge; a destroying stone; and a foundation stone. I Peter 2:6-8; Matthew 21:42; Ephesians 2:19-22. He will have total omniscience and infinite intelligence, "seven eyes";

Like most of our conversions, this will occur in a day, when we put away our filthy garments and allow Christ to clothe us in His garments of righteousness. So, it will be with nations. They will turn to Jesus in a day, a short period of time and it will be complete conversion. The end result will be that everyone will dwell in peace and enjoyment of the day and people will rest and socialize under the shade and in the areas of refreshment. It is also a time of prosperity, when Jesus will rule over all the earth and none shall be left out of His protection and provision.

This vision speaks of the "wall of fire" that God will use to surround and protect His people. I want us to allow that wall to be our great protection. When I was a young man on the farm, we often would use an electric fence to contain the cattle in the area where they were to graze. There is nothing imposing about an electric fence. Multiple layers of barbed wire that is imposing, but an electric fence was merely one wire attached by an insulator to a metal post driven in the ground. It only had one area that could shock you and that was where you made contact with the electric wire. You could crawl under it, jump or hop over it and never get shocked; but it kept the cattle in the area where they were supposed to be.

I feel the "wall of fire" that God puts around us is much the same. It is something that we can rationalize away, crawl under it; it is something that we can ignore, jump or hop over it; but if our heart is right towards God, every time we need it, the wire will interrupt us with a shock to remind us that God is really in control and He has plans for you. He wants to make the best you can ever be.

Zechariah 4:1-5:4: God Removes the Slightest Impediment to Hope

We will start this study with Vision # 7 "Lamp Stand and Olive Trees" which assumes each separate encounter with the angel of the Lord as another vision. The visions we have seen so far:

- 1. Riders Under the Myrtle Trees
- 2. Four Horns
- 3. Four Craftsmen
- 4. Man With the Measuring Rod
- 5. Confrontation of Joshua and Satan
- 6. Branch And the Stone with Seven Eyes

The first four were all encouragement by God to tell the people that God is behind their project to build the Temple and rebuild the city of Jerusalem. The fifth and sixth vision tell us that God is preparing the land spiritually for the great work He wants them to do.

SEVENTH VISION: Lamp Stand & Olive Trees: Zechariah 4:1-14

It is this seventh vision that speaks so clearly to us about the great provision of God. It starts in **Zechariah 4:1-14**. It is a vision of God's provision. It is a constant prophecy of the bible—God will provide and He will do it in a way that removes all obstacles to completing what He has called His people to do. God will not call you to do something that He has not or will not equip you to do.

Zechariah has been overwhelmed by the vision of the cleansing of Joshua and the prophecy of the coming of the Messiah as the Branch and the Stone and he has collapsed into sleep from the holy trauma of the scene. But since these are visions, the angel awakens him and asks him what he is seeing. Zechariah sees a menorah and he actually sees one like the one for the Temple. It is solid gold and has the open almond blossoms as the top for the seven candle holders to set and light the seven candles for the Temple. The menorah may be the most common symbol of the nation of Israel and is universally recognized as a sign of the nation of Israel. You might think that since the last series of visions centered on the High Priest Joshua, this is a continuation of what the High Priest was to do. He was to light, trim and maintain the menorah inside the Temple. In the Book of Revelation, we have a picture of the High Priest, Jesus walking among the seven Churches represented by their lampstands or menorahs. Jesus warns them that if they do not repent, He would remove their lampstands. In Turkey today, where all 7 churches were, not one of those 7 churches are still in existence. They all lie in ruins. Christ removed their lampstands. And in our own country, our Great High Priest has closed the door of many a church which was not giving out the Word of God. Our Lord has a candle snuffer and He just snuff out those who are unfaithful.

But here it is just the opposite. God is giving Zechariah a vision that says the oil will be unlimited from the bowl on top of the lampstand, not on the real Menorah Moses was commissioned to have made,

but here represents God continually sending provisions to the people to make their light shine for Him. This oil reservoir is the all-important fact in this vision.

This is a great blessing to us as well. The "oil" is one of the clearest defined symbols of the Bible. (Heng Stenberg) The "oil" is a symbol of the Holy Spirit. The Lord Jesus Christ is the light but the oil is the power of the Holy Spirit allowing that light to shine. The two olive trees in the vision are representing in that day, Joshua, the High Priest and Zerubbabel, the king from the line of David who led the people back to rebuild the land. They would be the two main people that God would use to motivate and encourage the people to rebuild the Temple and replant the land. But this role is given more than once. Listen as I share **Revelation 11:3-4** where in the days of Tribulation God sends two witnesses to Jerusalem to testify to the world. It reads: "And I will appoint my two witnesses and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth. They are the two olive trees and the two lampstands and they stand before the Lord of the earth." God continues to paint a beautiful picture for Zechariah. This faithful remnant with a tremendously long stop has started again and has the blessing of God upon them. God will guide them to accomplish what needs to be done. It will be no different in the Final days of Tribulation, when God needs two witnesses upon the earth, He shall provide them and they will cause many more to come to Christ. I cannot doubt that God has done that several times and may even be doing it today, raising a spiritual leader and a political leader that they may combine the resources they have, led by the Holy Spirit to bring the light of God upon their land. Israel has failed in the past; but God will not quit using them to take His message. The church has often failed God in the present, and God will not quit using His Church to shine His light into this world. God is never without a witness.

Zechariah then in verses 4-6 begins to discuss what he is seeing with the angel of the Lord. This is beyond exciting. Israel will be restored and God will plant the needed olive trees beside His nation so they will have the leadership they need to accomplish what God has called them to do. I think Zechariah is trying to digest all that is happening and asks the angel, "What are these, my Lord?" The angel in essence says, Zechariah you should be able to interpret this as you look at this golden lampstand; but Zechariah in all honesty says, "No, my Lord." We need to realize that God is never turned off by our questions. He relishes explaining things to His children and delights in the genuine questions that we ask Him. It is His best teaching times and He often makes His best teaching points. This is no exception. What the angel says should be a banner we hang over our Christian lives and state in our prayers every day.

He says, "Not by might, not by power but by my Spirit says the Lord Almighty." **Zechariah 4:6**. This is a message to Zerubbabel, the king of the land who is a descendent of David and appointed by Babylon to lead the remnant back to Israel.

Let's take a moment and explain who Zerubbabel is. He is the civil head of Jerusalem, while the High Priest Joshua is serving as the spiritual head. Zerubbabel was the head of the tribe of Judah when they came back to restore the Temple and the city. This is outlined in the Book of Ezra and Zerubbabel did complete the Temple even though the work was opposed by those outside the walls of Jerusalem and

the people inside often became discouraged. God gives Zerubbabel a great principle in this vision that applies for all of us.

The message, "not by might or power but by my Spirit." In the Hebrew language the word might was usually used to speak about human strength, ability, efficiency, or wealth. It was something that was inherent to the person exerting their might. The word power was used to speak of mere human strength, physical, mental or material strength. We might change the words to literally interpret this to: "Not by brain or brawn, but by my Spirit says the Lord." Zerubbabel is one of the olive trees that supply the oil to the lamp, so God is saying, it will not be by your cleverness, your ability or your physical strength that the temple will be rebuilt, but by the Spirit of God.

I want us to pause and absorb this thought. If the Spirit of God is not in your enterprises today, they will never be successful because God will never carry on His work by our 'brains and our brawn." Our world and God do not need 'clever preachers' or 'clever Christians', we need men and women who are filled with the Holy Spirit and are conduits of the oil of God to carry out his work here on this earth. We do not need PR experts, backslappers, excellent administrators, exceptional personalities, charismatic speakers no matter how appealing they may be. God does not carry on His work by the abilities of humans. He accomplishes what He truly needs to have done by His Spirit.

Zechariah is encouraging this small remnant to move past their fears and doubts and do what God had called them to do. God uses this same challenge to encourage us to rely less on our strengths and more on the power of the Holy Spirit if we want to do anything meaningful for the Lord; and in this passage Zechariah foretells of the great day when, "The light of God, and by all means the golden oil of the Holy Spirit, shall be poured on the Jews abundantly and the candlestick of Israel must shine with a sevenfold brilliance to illumine the power of God to all the nations on this earth." That is truly not by might, not by power, but by my Spirit says the Lord Almighty.

Then God continues the vision and tells Zechariah that all can take up the gifts of courage and fortitude because God will be the construction boss for the rebuilding of the temple. Vs. 7-10

Mountains, they are nothing to fear, for God will move and remove them for Zerubbabel. The mountain here stands for opposition, just as Jesus said, "Truly, I tell you, if you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mountain. Move from here to there and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you." **Matthew 17:20**

I do not think in either passage the Lord is speaking of moving a literal mountain. The Bible does not tell us of any mountain moving unless God was behind the move, with earthquakes, volcanos, opening the water deeps in the sky or under the water, or other changes that God is making to the landscape. But the faith that removes mountains is the faith that removes obstacles and opposition to the work of God. That is the victory of this vision. God's temple will be rebuilt regardless of the seeming impossibilities and fierce opposition.

Zerubbabel will bring out the capstone and the shouts of the people will fill the air. It will be a tremendous time of rejoicing for this small remnant.

God promises that what Zerubbabel started he will get a chance to finish. God permitted him to build the foundation and God will allow him to put on the roof. God is the same with us. When we trust in the Spirit of God and His golden oil to be our source of strength, God will allow you to complete what you have started. It is true for us as believers also, "Being confident of this, that He who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus." Philippians 1:6 You may be in a spiritual slump right now, this last 18 months may have left you fairly depressed, but trust in His might, lean on the power of the Holy Spirit and claim the fact that God is not finished with you yet.

Zechariah 4:10 should convict every one of us listening tonight. Zechariah writes: "Who dares despise the day of small things since the seven eyes of the Lord that range throughout the earth will rejoice when they see the chosen capstone in the hand of Zerubbabel." **Zechariah 4:10**

I will tell you who despises small things, we Americans. We are often only impressed with the big and brassy. We want our Christian work to be a success story and we measure that by the crowds that come to hear us and the size of the surroundings where we worship. But watching a recent documentary on the hidden Church in Afghanistan; I am convinced that the small things they are doing is one of the main reasons that God is not wiping their country out of existence. God measures things so much differently than you and I. We look at numbers and assume those are all strong believers in God; but God looks at the heart and knows who really belongs to Him and who doesn't. God measures with His true plumb line before He places the Capstone on a project and declares it, well done. His measurements are accurate and always true. The people may have been disappointed in the smaller size of the rebuilt temple, *Ezra 3:12* "But many of the older priests and Levites and family heads, who had seen the former temple, 'wept aloud when they saw he dedication." and *Haggai 2:3*," Who of you is left that saw this house in its former glory? How does it look to you now? Does it not seem to you like nothing?" You know who was not disappointed in how it looked, God was not. It was just one more picture of that glorious Temple that will house the throne of Jesus Christ when He rules for 1,000 years upon this earth, in the Millennial Kingdom.

Once more Zechariah who has absorbed the new knowledge of how Zerubbabel will be able to complete the Temple rebuilding wants to know about some other items in the vision.

He asks about the olive trees on either side of the Menorah and wonders what they are. **Zechariah 4:11-14** The angel of God answers every question that Zechariah asks. God is not worried or upset by our questions. He relishes them as a special time to speak to His children.

The two olive trees represent the kingly and priestly offices in Israel through which the blessing of God was to flow. God can accomplish so much through His pairing. Jesus sent the 70 out in pairs to spread His Gospel and teaching throughout Israel and God today often calls pairs of leaders together to accomplish the great tasks that He has for them to do.

The two branches on the trees represent the two men that God is using to restore the Temple and rebuild the nation of Judah. They represent Zerubbabel, the kingly leader and Joshua, and the High Priest. They both have the right credentials for the task God has called them to do. The first is Zerubbabel, a descendant of David who is there as the king or earthly ruler and the other is Joshua, a

descendant of Eleazar who is there as the High Priest to give the direction of God upon the project. These two offices, king and high priest, were combined in the Messiah, Jesus Christ. Who is our High Priest, interceding on our behalf at all times and who is also our king, the ruler of our life? We state this when we make our good confession of faith.

"I believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God and I accept Him as my Lord (King) and Savior (High Priest)."

These special pairs of God and later those commissioned by Jesus Christ to accomplish His tasks, have a world-wide mission that will culminate in Christ ruling the earth. They will usher in a prophesied time when God will pour out His Spirit without measure. That is not happening today, in fact we see much of the world intent on squelching the Spirit of God. Trying to remove it from our land. But God has promised a day when the power and influence of the Holy Spirit will be unlimited and all will receive over and over a fresh over-flow of the Holy Spirit in every dimension of their life. Wow! what a day that will be, I can hardly wait to be a part of that great revival.

EIGHTH VISION: Flying Scroll: Zechariah 5:1-4

If we take each event as a separate vision, we are now presented the 8th vision. *Zechariah 5:1-4*. The last vision was so encompassing and so broad that it might be misunderstood. Yes, the oil of the Lord, the Holy Spirit will be poured out on people, but God does a little sorting before that happens. This is not meaning that every member of this nation, every Israelite, will be chosen, if they continue to live in rebellion and sin. So, how does God separate. This vision says, God sends a flying scroll that contains the things that He has commanded His people to do and has commanded them not to do. We call them the 10 commandments. This flying scroll is huge, it is 30 feet wide and 15 feet long, the exact size of the Holy Place in the Tabernacle. It is the divine standard by which God separates His people from the pretenders. It is really a picture of the curse that will fall on the ones who read it and realize that it is talking about them, but do not want to change. We see in *Revelation 5:1-9* a similar scroll in offered and in *Revelation 10:1-11* John is commanded to eat a similar scroll that is sweet as honey in the mouth but turns the stomach sour.

The scroll, although it probably contains all 10 commandments has only the 3rd commandment: "Everyone who swears falsely will be banished" and on the other side the 8th commandment: "Every thief will be banished.", highlighted or referred to. I assume these were the two most violated commandments in the day of Zerubbabel. Can you imagine what it would be today? False swearing and taking the Lord's name in vain is so common that most consider it normal speech. Hardly a soul I know keeps a Sabbath for the Lord; or what about the six ethical commands:

- 1. **Murder** abortions are legal, disposing of the elderly is legal in many areas.
- 2. **Honor Your Parents** that is almost a joke in our nation.
- 3. **Adultery** it has become the sign that you are serious about one another in our day, you become sexually involved.

- 4. **Steal** why is the tax code revised all the time, because people who make a lot of money often find a lot of reasons, they should not pay any of their taxes.
- 5. **Covet** is a sin, why most of our advertisement is a blatant attempt to get you to covet what your neighbor or friend has and go get one or more of them for yourself.
- 6. **False Testimony** We still have many who practice false testimony and it pains me to see that Church people often use gossip, slander, and even libelous speech to prove their points in church arguments.

I do not think God would have any trouble filling or highlighting the flying scroll for us today. This vision is clear that God is not going to let people into these blessings and the unlimited supply of the Holy Spirit if they do not follow what He has called them to do.

Every nation that has built the legal and moral base of their nation on the Ten Commandments has prospered until that obedience to the Ten Commandments has changed. We live in a nation that has rejected the Ten commandments and most Americans today would only include a few of these in the ten most important rules they want to see in our land. Israel had to see the results of the scroll, it would settle in the homes of those who stole and those who gave false witness and it would stay there until all was destroyed in those homes.

We live under grace today and that has many wonderful results; but one place grace will never work is in the life of someone who knows what they are doing is against what God taught and yet they will not give it up. That person will not make it to a place where they can share the promises of God. If you fail the grace test, and refuse to quit what God has called you to quit, so you do not get rewarded. You get punished.

The unlimited supply of the oil of the Holy Spirit is amazing but we all need to ask ourselves-, do I have sin(s) in my life that I refuse to confess as a sin and quit doing? If that is true, the fullness of the Holy Spirit may never become available to you.

God shifts the visions for Zechariah and explains that you can restore hope in your life through Worship. Worship is not the warm-up before the sermon and communion; nor is it something that allows you to enjoy music at Church. It is the power of the Lord ministering to all your senses and filling you completely with the Holy Spirit.

Zechariah 5:5 - 6:8 God Tells Us to Restore Hope Through Worship!

As we continue, may this Bible Study bless you as we study the last two visions the angel of the Lord gave to Zechariah.

We live in an age fascinated by aliens from outer space. We have many very intelligent people who believe that aliens are waiting to reveal themselves at the right time. They have seen the space ships they say, watched the aliens move about they say, and tell stories of their abduction by aliens and release back to the earth. We have two groups in this area: those who believe sincerely and vociferously that there are flyer saucers/or alien space ships. And those who just as vociferously deny there is any such thing. I have never entertained any space people thoughts because I do not think the Bible teaches that alternate people groups are throughout the galaxy.

I do not think that Zechariah believed in flying saucers and space aliens either but he did see flying objects in his visions and they were from outer space. God in the great apocalyptic books of the Bible and Zechariah is one of them often sent signs from the heavens. It is apparent to me that many times these were some of the angelic missions and demonic episodes simply revealed to those who saw the visons. But here it is God who is using these heavenly visions to tell Zechariah and all of the returning exiles, that they had brought one thing back from their years of exile in Babylon that would cause them great harm. God would do what was needed to be done in time to eliminate it, but He wanted His people to see the danger that was around them. This vision could not be any more relevant today than had God given it to one of the prophetic voices in our world today.

NINETH VISION: Woman in a Basket: Zechariah 5:5-11

It is a vision of a woman inside a large basket with a great lead lid. In the original language it was called an ephah or a measure for grain often used in the buying and selling of grain. It was obviously larger than the normal bushel basket and just like the scroll that we saw last week was large enough that no one could miss seeing it or knowing what it was all about.

In **Zechariah 5:5-7** the angel of the Lord asked Zechariah to look up and tell him what he sees in this ninth vision. I really do think that Zechariah knew that it was a woman in a bartering basket but since it was so foreign to anything that Zechariah would expect to see, he simply passed the question back to the angel of the Lord and said, "What is it?"

The angel does not hesitate to answer Zechariah, for the meaning of the vision is to see what God is presenting in the vision. The angel said "It is a basket." This basket represents all the common iniquity of the land of Israel. This seems to be a little strong. God has encouraged the people and told Zechariah that Zerubbabel and Joshua would get the Temple rebuilt, God would supply all the energy that was needed and actually not by brains or brawn but by the Spirit of the Lord this would all be done. This was the greatest news that Zechariah could ever hear and I'm sure he could hardly wait to give all this great information to the acting governor, the people, the High Priest and everyone else.

God has given the Churches where I have served some absolutely fantastic victories and I can tell you without a doubt, I could hardly wait to share that with the congregation from the pulpit; to share with the leaders in staff and elder meetings; and to shout to all my neighbors: "Let me tell you what the Lord just did for the Church where I get to be the Pastor!" I would get so excited that I would ask God to lead me to the right person to share this with before I just burst with excitement.

But God shifts the visions and gives two in a row that speak of what was needed to cleanse the land of Israel. While God was supplying all the energy and direction needed to get the Temple rebuilt and the town of Jerusalem in order, He would also be cleansing the land of those who were unwilling to quit breaking His laws and God would be asking the nation to go back and let Him be the only God in their country.

In **Zechariah 5:7-8** God reveals what has caused a great blight in their country. While they lived in Babylon, even though they hated being in another country as exiles and longed to come back to Judah, they had picked up a love of materialism. The reason for the ephah or basket of commodity trade used in this vision was to symbolize that commerce and trade had become the new god of the land of Judah. It is impossible to totally understand this vision without bringing **Revelation 18** into the picture. The judgement on commercial Babylon will be complete. In **Revelation 17**, spiritual Babylon will be judged and the one world church will be extinguished by those who despise her and in one of the harshest betrayals ever, the head of that one-world-church, the Religious Beast will allow the church to be destroyed while he moves over to become the right-hand agent of the Anti-Christ. Yes, there is a special place reserved for him in hell/Gehenna. It will be in the lake of Fire where he and the antichrist will spend their eternity.

But in *Revelation 18*, John tells us of a time when the entire world will turn on commercial Babylon and they will destroy the city and all that is connected with its trade, its transportation, and its wealth and divide it among themselves as bounty. One of the things that God is showing to Zechariah is that he will need to call the nation out of materialism so they can truly become what God wants them to become. We know that it did not happen. The Bible gives us some clear examples of how that materialism never really stopped.

Nehemiah came from the land of Persia after he had sought King Cyrus to allow him to come back and help rebuild the temple because it had stalled for so many years. One of the first things that he found is that the rich of the land were imprisoning the poor with their high interest rates or usury. This is something that God had commanded to never be a part of the Israel nation and had even established the Year of Jubilee every 50 years when everyone's debts were forgiven so all could start over. But now they sought money in every possible way and that included charging unbelievable interest rates to their friends, neighbors and family. It had gotten no better by the writing of the Book of Malachi, the last book written in the Old Testament and again God uses Malachi to chastise the people to quit charging interest for the money that was loaned to their friends, widows, orphans and countrymen. Malachi went one step further and said the materialism had become such a noose around the neck of the people that they kept the tithe instead of giving it to God; they gave God blemished and lame animals as their sacrifice; and they cheated God at every point so they could have more money. They

were guilty of coveting and they were willing to cheat God and enslave their fellow countrymen to get all the money they could for themselves. God says He will take that spirit of covetousness from the land.

This is the essence of the vision of the woman sitting in the basket of commerce or the ephah. Anytime in the Scriptures that that we see a woman out of place, it is a sign that something evil is happening. So, here in this vision, Zechariah sees the nation of Israel represented as a woman sitting in a bushel basket of commerce to point out the materialism that ruled the land. God wants to bless them and He will, but their awful addiction to covetousness must be dealt with first.

In Zechariah 5:8-11, the angel explains to Zechariah what God will do with the materialism in Judah.

In the vision the woman stirs and becomes somewhat restless. She seems to sense what is happening and she does not want to go where God is taking this basket. So, she is restrained in the basket by the lead weight that is on top of the basket. This is the exact sequence that will happen in *Revelation 18*. The angel will sound the warning and even those who have dwelt in Babylon just because of the comforts and goodies will be warned to flee the city. She has been judged and the way in which she has extracted her wealth has been so treacherous and evil that God has had enough. He will destroy her and with that give some mighty judgments. She has profited from the blood of martyrs and believers and has taken all the wealth that she could in every way she could. Those who have used her riches and her power all of their life will be lost with her.

In the vision of Zechariah, two more women will come to take the basket and protect the woman. Since they are compared to a stork, an unclean animal in the Bible, we can safely say they are not angels of light but of darkness and they are working very hard to protect and preserve this spirit of materialism in the land of Judah.

Zechariah again asks the angel, "Where are they taking the basket" This is the vision that God is giving and now the lady in the basket, which he knows represents the people of Judah are being carried away. God says, "I am taking the basket back to Babylon and when the house for it is ready, I will take the basket there and leave it." `

God is moving this matter of godless and heartless commercialism out of the land of Palestine or Judah. I want to pause and point out something here. The land of Israel was originally a pastoral and agricultural land and the children of Israel were known for their farming and animal husbandry skills. After all, the nation of Egypt put them in the area of Goshen or the Nile Delta to take care of their animals because they were so good with them. The Old Testament is full of illustrations on how to plant crops, how to harvest, how to raise animals, care of vineyards, grain, and everything that goes with a ranch, farm, or flock care. In our day many Jewish people have returned to Israel and many of them worked the land when they first returned. The Kubutz and other cooperative farms, fisheries, and animal care flourished all over the land of Israel. But when they were away from the land, they got in other businesses. I have not heard of any Jewish farmers in the United States. They had become good businessmen in Babylon and they acquired a strong appetite for the riches they saw the Gentiles have in that land.

We might say the same today. One of the things that each of us has to fight is the desire to increase our material wealth at the expenses of other important parts of our life. So, our job can come before our family; our friends; our emotional needs; our worship; and even our God. I would remind you that the Bible has much more to say about the poor being taken care of and sheltered by God than God's care for the rich.

I wonder how long God will allow some of the great corporations of today to stand when they drain their workers and others to line the pockets of the owners? There are so many industries where the focus is on making the most money and little focus is on giving credit to their employees, the customers or even God.

I love the fact that many wealthy people are giving unbelievable amounts to charity in our age; that some athletes are donating millions to better the lives of people; that some entertainers have given huge sums to change their world; but we still know those are exceptions and for every one you can name that has given a million or more, there are hundreds that have given very little.

Is God in the big business of today? Is God factored into the stock market? Is God in the giant labor unions; insurance companies, banks, tech companies, entertainment industry, sports industry? Anyone with any intelligence recognizes that God is left out of all of them. But all materialism has a shelf-life and one day God will remove all of it.

"Then a mighty angel picked up a boulder the size of a large millstone and threw it into the sea, and said: 'With such violence the great city of Babylon will be thrown down, never to be found again. The music of harpists and musicians, pipers and trumpeters, will never he heard in you again, NO worker of any trade will ever be found in you again. The sound of a millstone will never be heard in you again. The light of a lamp will never shine in you again. The voice of a bridegroom and bride will never be heard in you again. Your merchants were the world's important people, by your magic spell all the nations were led astray. In her was found the blood of prophets and of God's holy people, of all who have been slaughtered on the earth." Revelation 18:21-24

When this happens, then Israel will truly become the holy land; and when wickedness is destroyed from this whole earth, the kingdom of God will come to the earth. What a glorious prospect this is as we live in our materialistic world.

That is why I want us to focus on what can keep us moving towards God and away from materialism. I feel that is the value of preserving the things that God says are important. God saw music and worship as a great way to keep His people in focus. So, the singers, instrument players and dancers often led the children of Israel into battle as they moved from the land of Egypt where they were slaves and into possessing the land of promise, or present-day Israel. The mornings and evenings at the temple were marked by the great choir of Levites as they sang and played a tribute to God to start and end every day in the Temple in Jerusalem. The Feasts of Israel, seven in number, were marked by times of worship, singing, shouting, and praising and often the pilgrims, other Jews from all over the world, made their way to Jerusalem to celebrate by singing the entire day the Psalms and Scriptures that they

knew. What other faith has a hymnal of 150 songs right in the middle of its Holy Writings, but there is Psalms, literally the word means songs sung while accompanied by musical instruments. The other songs of the Bible are many: Song of Hannah, Song of Moses, Song of Miriam; Song of Elizabeth; Song of Mary; and the Song of Zechariah just to name a few.

If you want to put materialism in the proper place in your life, then just begin to praise God with your whole heart, voice, and feelings. You will quickly realize how Great is your God and how not so great you are! If you are battling depression right now, then sing songs, praise God, and let your love of God be known to you and to all. Find something on You-Tube that has Christian music and play that until you find your heart uplifted and the tears flow from your eyes. God goes before those who have hope in Him and nothing shows hope more than our desire to sing, praise, read Scripture, take communion, pray and give our God our whole being in worship.

The angel tells Zechariah, these women are taking the basket back to Babylon where it will be destroyed when Babylon is destroyed. It is then that we see a fulfillment of:

Revelation 18:1-5 "And after these things I saw another angel come down from heaven, having great power; and the earth was lightened with his glory. And he cried mightily with a strong voice, saying, Babylon the great is fallen, is fallen and is become the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird. For all nations have drunk of the wine of this wrath of her fornication. . .. And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, come out of her, my people, that you be not partakers of her sins, and therefore receive one of her plagues. For her sins have reached unto heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities."

TENTH VISION: Four Chariots Between Two Mountains: Zechariah 6:1-8

The tenth vision to unfold before Zechariah is in **Zechariah 6:1-8**. This last vision is foretelling of the time when God's angelic agents will carry out His judgment on the nations, just prior to the establishment of His new Messianic Kingdom. The vision starts with four chariots emerging from between two brass mountains. Most scholars think the mountains are Mount Zion and the Mount of Olives, where Jesus will return and judge. Why brass, because that is how God dealt with sin. Whether it was the bronze altar, the bronze serpent in the wilderness or the bronze laver for cleansing at the Temple, God dealt with sin by the use of brass. The chariots are drawn by four sets of horses: red for battle; black for famine and death; white for victory; and dappled for false entreaty and deceit. These are very much like the **Revelation 6** horses sent by God to prepare the way.

The chariots and horses are carrying out the judgement of God. They go north to take care of all the foes of the north and that has been almost every foe of Israel: Babylon, Assyria, Medes and Persians, Greeks, Romans, Russians, Syrians, Turks. They will take care of the foes of the south and that has primarily been Egypt and also the Hittites. None will go West, the Mediterranean Sea is there or to the East that is all desert. The Bible draws special attention to the fact that the enemies of the north will all be neutralized. The key to this last vision is that God is telling Zechariah 450 years before the birth of Jesus Christ that God will complete what He has started. There will not be a single foe of God or of

His people that God will not deal with. They will all be vanquished and God and His people will have first the earth and then the new heaven and the new earth to live as God intended His people to live.

Handel's Messiah is without a doubt one of if not the greatest work of praise written on this earth. But a close examination of the oratorio shows that it is direct quotations from Revelation that explain how God will deal with those who oppose His people and Him and then He will be exalted above everything. I would encourage you if you have any depression or a lack of hope in your life, get a good copy of the Hallelujah Chorus and play it over to yourself again and again; until you fully grasp that God does not leave anything to chance. He restores our hope through worship and we need to sing of the mighty God of Israel who is also our mighty God, PERIOD! And God over all.

And He shall reign forever and ever—and He shall reign forever and ever—King of Kings and Lord of Lords—King of Kings and Lord of Lords—And He shall reign forever and ever and ever.

Hallelujah, Hallelujah. I'm feeling more hopeful already. I sure hope that you are.

Zechariah 6:9 - 7:14 God Will Handle the Heavy Lifting

Zechariah has been given many visions by God in one night and they pointed out that the Temple will be built and it will usher in a greater Temple that shall house our Lord Jesus Christ. If we are not careful, we can miss the marvelous message that God is giving Judah in the visions He is sharing with Zechariah!

The nation had barely begun to rebuild the Temple after 45-50 years of the Temple foundation sitting idle. They did not have the walls up, the roof started or any of the major furniture that would be in the Temple built. Yet, here was God promising Zechariah that through the power of the Holy Spirit the temple would be built and this project would be completed. I do not know if we can really grasp what a shocking but joyful revelation this was. From idle and idolatry to constructive work and glorification of God, Judah had turned the corner and would be heading the way God wanted them to head when He allowed them to come back to Judah.

Have you ever had such a great blessing come to you? I remember the first church where I was the preacher. It was Walnut Grove Christian Church in rural Arcola, Illinois. I always called it My Little House on the Prairie Church. We had outgrown the building and we needed to add some classrooms, some offices, and expand our Fellowship Center. We drew up plans and had those approved by the congregation, we took a vote on the building among the congregation and it passed overwhelmingly 72-11. Sharon and I were still students at Lincoln Christian University and came down just on weekends. We had set a goal of raising \$30,000.00 so we could build the building without any debt. I remember thinking how hard that would be. The congregation was not the most generous in the world and that was a lot of money in 1965. But in just three weeks, the treasurer who had given a report every Sunday stood up and said; "we have collected over \$30,000.00 and I need to tell you that we have enough money to build." We had several other items that caused quite a bit of concern but in three weeks the congregation had raised enough money to build this sizeable new addition onto the Church.

That is exactly what was happening in Jerusalem. The people had needed a new Temple and they had returned to the land to build it and now God had told Zechariah, "IT WOULD HAPPEN!" The Temple was as good as done when God promised that it would be completed. Zechariah shifts his prophecy and gives some of the most unusual prophecy of the Book. God had showed him that three exiles from Babylon who had come with silver and gold for the temple would be asked to give their gifts to Zechariah who would make a crown(s) and put it on the head of the high priest Joshua.

God had not crowned His High Priests before but had kept the office of King and High Priest highly separated. But here in **Zechariah 6:9-11**, God was showing that Joshua was a prophetic pre-figure of Jesus who would return as both the King and High Priest and combine the two offices.

To make sure that everyone knew this was not a special honor for Joshua, the Lord tells Zechariah in verse 12 that this crown was really for 'The Branch', the Messiah who would come from nothing, poverty, but would change the world. He came like a dry root; the fortune of David and Solomon had Page | 25

long been divided among the oppressors and the cheats of the nations of Judah and Israel and Jesus was born as poor as any peasant boy could be. But He would return as the triumphant Branch that would rule the world in power and justice.

We know that the Temple that was built was not admired by all. Some of the older priests, Levites, and others were so upset when they saw the new Temple that they cried out loud and moaned the fact that the Temple was nothing compared to the Temple of Solomon.

But God didn't care. He had inhabited the Tabernacle made of seal skins just as much as he did the Temple of Solomon covered with gold. God saw this as one more of the Temples that He would have the people build: The Tabernacle, the Temple of Solomon, the Temple of Zerubbabel; The Temple of Herod; the Temple of the Tribulation; and finally, the one for Jesus to rule from, the Millennial Temple.

God is using two young prophets, Zechariah, and Haggai, to encourage the people. They were saying, "You are doing what God wants you to do. Sure, it looks small, but it is the plan and purpose of God. That makes it great and big. It is going to eventually house the Lord Jesus Christ when He comes to the earth to establish His kingdom."

Is that ever you? Do you moan the fact that you are not doing something tremendously significant and the numbers are not what you wanted them to be? Do you minimize what you are doing for God because it just does not seem significant to you? Then quit that loser talk. If you are doing what God wants you to do, then your work is tremendously significant. God may have you putting one special piece together in His kingdom that is essential for a whole community to turn to Christ. All we have to do is be willing, God will do the heavy lifting and get all the rest done for us.

The Gospels take up this theme of Jesus as Prophet, High Priest and King and it is a dominant part of their message. Matthew presents Jesus as the King, the Branch of David; in Mark He is Jehovah's servant, the Branch of God; in Luke He is, the perfect man whose name is the Branch; and in John He is, The Branch of Jehovah, God the Son.

In **Zechariah 6:13-15**, Zechariah begins to give His people a glimpse of what a magnificent one This Branch would be. In this short passage, God gives **Zechariah 8** facts about The Branch, Jesus Christ to tell us how magnificent His time will be upon the earth.

- 1. He Will Come from Israel or His Place. Vs. 12
- 2. He Will Build the Millennial Temple. Vs. 12b-13a
- 3. He Will Be Glorious. Vs. 13
- 4. He Will Be King and Priest. Vs. 13
- 5. He Makes Peace. Vs. 13
- 6. He Opens the Kingdom to The Gentiles. Vs. 15a
- 7. He Will Fulfill the Prophetic Word of God. Vs. 15b

8. He Demands Obedience. Vs. 15c

The crown was never really worn by Joshua the High Priest. It was placed on his head for a symbolic crowning and then according to Jewish tradition, the crowns were placed in the top windows of the Temple for a memorial, serving as a reminder that the Messiah would come and that He would be King and Priest.

The fact that these precious gifts had come from Babylon without being sent shows that Jesus will construct a Temple in Jerusalem that will be a place of prayer for the entire world. Listen to how Isaiah says it will happen in *Isaiah 2:2* "In the last days the mountain of the Lord's Temple will be established as the highest of the mountains. It will be exalted ABOVE THE HILLS AND ALL NATIONS WILL STREAM TO IT."

Jesus will build this Temple and it will be for the glory of God, Christ, and the world. I want us to stop at this point in the Book of Zechariah and see how it stands in the flow of history and prophecy. It is possible to lose our way through this section and in so doing, miss one of the greatest lessons of Scripture and one of the greatest principles that God puts down in His Word. God connects all prophecy and allows the totality of prophecy to tell the story that He wants to have told. It was true for the day the prophecy was spoken and the things that God told Zechariah would happen and it did! But it also told the story of the coming of Christ. A time when Israel would be exalted as one of the great nations of the earth. This includes the destruction of all who take up arms against Israel in the last days and climaxes with the coming of Christ to this earth as the great Priest-King to reign on the earth.

This was all given by God to Zechariah as an encouragement to the discouraged remnant in his day who were struggling to build the Temple. Not only was the work moving slowly and with difficulty, but it seemed so small and insignificant compared to Solomon's Temple and to the great heathen Temples they had seen in Babylon and later in the Medo-Persian Empire. But Israel was in a time of peace, and it was time for them to build.

Let me share how prophecy in the Bible works. It first of all has a message for the day it was spoken. It is never gibberish that will only make sense thousands of years later when someone will be able to interpret it.

What was the contemporary message? God wanted Zechariah to cheer the people up and so, God spoke to their situation. He was urging his own people not be discouraged but to know that they are in the eternal plan and purpose of God. The little Temple they were building would finally usher in the great Messiah Himself who would build a great Temple for the entire world.

The continuing meaning is a message for us in our day. "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable. . ." II Tim. 3:16 All of it has a message for us although not all of it was written just to us. God has not asked any of us to build a Temple for Him. It is foolish that we try to send limestone from Bedford, IN. or marble from Italy to put in the Temple in Israel. But God wants us to be faithful to the task that He has before us. Sixty years ago, it would have seemed impossible that the United States

would flee from Viet Nam; let a handful of Arab sheiks throw our country into panic over their control of oil and gas; have the World Trade Center destroyed by hijacked planes; or flee from Afghanistan living our dignity and dead allies and friends behind.

Perhaps you also hear the still small voice of God asking you to do your part to build the kingdom; to befriend and help those who have escaped persecution throughout the world; or to send help to missionaries that we might build on the work of the Lord. If we would have taken just one of the warspolice actions that the United States has fought the last sixty years and put that same amount of money into mission work and spreading the Gospel of Jesus, which do you think would have accomplished the most for God? The work of the missionaries or the war of our military. The prophetic visions of Zechariah teach us today that God's purposes will prevail. It also shouts at us that God is moving in history to accomplish all of His purposes. He will use the willing and shake the dust off of His sandals for the unwilling.

Finally, we see that a lot of this prophetic passage is for the consummation of history. History flows in the channel of prophecy. **Zechariah 6:12** lays out for us what will happen. "Tell him this is what the Lord Almighty says: 'Here is the man whose name is the Branch," and he will branch out from his place and build the Temple of the Lord."

This Branch is Christ Jesus our Lord who died on a cross for us. But He is coming again to reign. Isaiah has declared it as well in *Isaiah 4:2*, "In that day the Branch of the Lord will be beautiful and glorious and the fruit of the land will be the pride and glory of the survivors in Israel."

This should help you and me to keep things in perspective. There may be a small group of Christians in Pakistan, Iran, or Afghanistan who meet in the back room of a deserted building to keep from being detected but they are meeting in the name of Jesus Christ and seeking to honor Him. They study His Word, the seek to do His will; they sing songs of praise, like the old hymn, "My Jesus, I Love Thee, I Know Thou Art Mine"

That little group may be unknown to the world, but it is more important in the plan and program of God than the meetings held by heads of state in the capitals of the world. Until we adopt the total view of prophecy that it has a contemporary message for when it was spoken, there is a continuing message for each age that reads it; and there is a final consummation message for the world, we will never get the real blessing of prophecy. It is not just for the apocalyptic visions of what will come to pass in the "end times". The world may ignore you and other believers and multitudes simply pass you by, yet you are vital to the plan and purpose of God. This section of Zechariah should help us see how God operates when He gives prophecy through His people. There is a great message for you and me in seeing that what we are doing for Jesus will last.

Once Zechariah has explained to the people the answer to their question-will be Temple get restored; the answer is the same answer to our problems, keep doing what God has called you to do; and the answer for eternity, God will restore Israel to prominence, far above anything that she has ever

experienced and Jesus will build a Temple that the entire world can use as their place of worship. He addresses a concern that is raised by the fellow believers in Bethel.

This happened two years after the first message by Zechariah, two years after the night visions, and two years before the Temple was finished and dedicated. They came to Jerusalem and asked if the nation should continue to fast 4 months out of the year because of the fall of Jerusalem. They fasted, the 5th month, the month the Temple was destroyed, the fourth, seventh, and tenth months. They had kept this wailing and fasting for many years; but in light of the present prosperity of Jerusalem, the rebuilding of the Temple, and the condition of the nation it seemed like a wearisome ritual.

In **Zechariah 7:4-7**, Zechariah gives the first of his four-part answer. The question is; Should we continue to keep a ritual even if God did not command it to be done? Will this move God to action?

God commanded seven Feasts and one of these was the Day of Atonement and it is the only Feast that God ever commanded any fasting to be a part of the feast. But in captivity, they began to fast and weep about Jerusalem being captured and the land falling to the Babylonians and now they were asking if that was still essential.

God has Zechariah ask a question that we each need to answer. "When you fasted did you do it for me?" Did you do it to honor and praise God or did you fast and weep because you were wrapped up in your own self-pity. God does not say if the fast was good or bad, He merely asks what was the motive for fasting. God wants them to know that He desires obedience and not ritual.

God is just getting warmed up, because then He asks and when you feasted, did you feast and eat just for yourselves, or did it really draw you closer to me. Did you long for the fasting to be over just so you could begin the feasting? If you fast to the glory of God, go ahead and fast; but it you are doing it for some other reason than pleasing God and seeking Him, then quit.

God spells it out clearly: you went through all these same rituals before when you were in the land around Bethel and what happened? You went into captivity because you did not obey Me, you did not listen to the voice of my prophets. Let me share this clearly—when we go through sacrifices that God has not called us to do; then do not expect God to heap greater blessings on you. If it makes you feel closer to God, He is not opposed; but it does not indebt God to you to do something special that you want done.

Zechariah 7:8-14 explains the second answer to the question about fasting. If the heart is wrong, then the ritual is wrong. Your ritual and your liturgy are not worth the snap of your fingers unless you have a life that is related to Jesus Christ. Zechariah tells everyone that the Word of the Lord is clear; the ritual is wrong if the heart is wrong. God is saying that Judah did the rituals on the Sabbath and started right at 6:00 pm on Friday night but they should have met them on Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday. In the Book of Malachi God says to them, "You say that those sacrifices made you sick. You ought to have been in My position—they nauseated Me."

Zechariah goes ahead to say that God had placed His hand on their shoulder but they had turned away, stopped their ears, and would not listen. They turned their backs on God. They had broken the commandments which relate to God and they were guilty before Him.

The destruction of Jerusalem and the carrying away of the people into Babylon was a very awful thing. They were religious, they were going through a ritual, but their hearts were far away from God.

God lays out what happened. Because the Jews were just caught up in ritual and not real worship of God, they paid no attention to what God said, but focused on all the sacrifices they were making. So, when they called upon God and said, "We don't want to go into captivity, God did not listen to them." God is not forced to answer prayers that are mere ritual or not from the heart any more than He is forced to bless fasting and worship rituals that are not from the heart.

God scattered the people everywhere from this fall. Even as they came back to Israel the land was desolate and desert. It has taken over 50 years for the land of Israel to once again be blooming in the desert and to be the Land of Promise. God said that it would happen and it has.

What does this say to each one of us tonight? It tells us that God is primarily concerned that we follow what He has commanded us to do. He is not interested in our setting up some measure of sacrifice and ritual that appeals to us or makes us think that God will have to bless us with what we want now. God wants your heart, not your games. If you follow Him, He will do all the heavy lifting and make your life productive and blessed.

Zechariah 8:1 - 9:17 God Wants to Turn Your Fasts into Feasts

In this lesson, we will look at what God has to say to people who add their own versions of sacrifice in an effort to sway God to do what they want.

Zechariah has received all 10 of his visions and then God begins to tell Zechariah what will happen and especially in the end times of the nation of Israel. He begins with the crowns that will be made just for the Branch, Jesus Christ, to receive when He comes to rule the earth.

But then in a very strange encounter one night two years later, men from the city of Bethel arrive and ask Zechariah if they needed to continue to fast four months out of the year because Jerusalem fell to Babylon. Zechariah has two very clear answers.

- If your heart is right then the fasts do not do any damage.
- If your heart is wrong then the fasts are wrong

Zechariah 8 tells them that the past judgment of Israel, falling to the Babylonians, is a prelude to the future restorations of the land. The nation has seen that God will not prevent them from going into captivity, so they need to repent and live righteously. It could happen again. These last two messages look positively at the future when Israel will be in in an exalted place of special blessings and God will turn all of their fasts into feasts.

Let's look at the first message found in **Zechariah 8:1-17**. The message begins with a strong affirmation from God of His love for the city of Jerusalem or here called Zion, the mountain that the city was built upon. That God desires to be there for several reasons and one of the key reasons is because it is a city of truth. The truth is both in word and deed and it will never be truer than in the Millennial Kingdom when the city is ruled by Jesus Christ.

At that time, it will be an unbelievable city of tranquility and peacefulness. The most vulnerable, those old enough to need a cane to stand and support their walking and the littlest children will all be able to play in the streets of the city without fear. I take it that the cars and traffic that we have will not be a part of the Millennial Kingdom. Can you imagine the danger to little children and elderly cane-walking seniors all out in the streets but with no fear of being run over or hit and hurt? What a city that will be. The most defenseless people will live in tranquility, peace, and security.

It is interesting how quickly people decide if something does not seem possible to them, and when they do decide it is not possible, then they truly believe it is not possible for anyone to get it done. The idea that nothing is impossible with God seems to disappear when people decide that the task before them is just impossible. But God wanted them to know that it did not need to be in their possibility range for it to happen. God will do and still does many things that others said were not possible.

People tend to limit God, even believers. *Psalms 78:19-21* They spoke against God, they said, "Can God really spread a table in the wilderness. True, He struck the rock and water gushed out, streams

flowed abundantly, but can He also give us bread? Can He supply meat for His people? When the Lord heard them, He was furious; His fire broke out against Jacob, and His wrath rose against Israel. For they did not believe in God or trust in His deliverance. "

Do you ever limit God because you do not think something is possible? I wonder if we also have some fasts that are fueled by the fact that we think the task before us is just impossible for us to do. So, we pray more, seek out special Scriptures, sacrifice some things that we want, like fast for a while, give a special offering to the Lord, or even make promises and deals with God? God in essence says here, "Just because things seem too difficult for you—does not mean that they are too difficult for me."

God explains these great blessings when Israel is reassembled and becomes the most powerful nation in the world. God says the first thing I will do is reassemble my people from all over the world. They shall come from the East and many have: from Arab countries like Jordan, Yemen, all the nations that surround the Persian Gulf and great groups from Asia; and they have come from the West, like Europe, the United States, Argentina, Brazil, and many other nations of the Western Hemisphere. God will assemble them—and that has happened in a grand way during our lifetime; but then He will also direct a national conversion of the Jews and they will come to Jesus Christ and claim Him as their Savior. That has not occurred and until it does, we will have to wait for the rest of these prophecies to be realized.

Because this is true and Israel will have a great impact on the entire world at that time, Zechariah says, "God needs you to build His temple now and do all that you can do for the Lord." This was not only true for the remnant that returned, but for the couriers that brought the silver and the gold, and for this delegation of men from Bethel. They all helped build the Temple and move the plan of God forward.

Then God sends them to complete their mission. He says, "Follow the prophets I have given you; Haggai and Zechariah and they will tell you what I want done." Then God begins to tell them through Zechariah that He has been with them and will continue to be. The unemployment was terrible before the Temple was restarted and the lack of good jobs caused a lot of bitterness in the work force. God had been left out of the hiring and the work process and it just caused greater and greater divisions within the country.

I think that is where we are now. We have left God out of the leadership of our land and are operating under the idea that somehow if we cater to every group we will keep every group happy. I would remind you that causes and goals bring people together to accomplish great things while catering to all the different groups only heightens the divisions within the whole.

We have ethnic divisions, social divisions, economic divisions, and geographic divisions. There has never been a time we needed to unite more than right now in the United States and yet we continue to separate at a rapid pace. Do you know why? Because we have left God out. God may get some platitudes but no one in leadership is telling us that we have to consult God first and then make the right decisions to lead our nation. When you teach people to count on the government to take care of them, in time, no one wants to do the taking care of others. They just want to be cared for!!!

Has this helped us? Far from it, we are like the Israelites of the day of Zechariah, we have God telling us "You are not having peace, and there are divisions among you?" We are almost in a state of internal Page | 32

strife and war all the time with violence and destruction the common words in the fabric of our nation. It was no different in Israel and God wanted them to get a bigger picture of what He had in mind. We will not have peace until we consult God and do what He directs.

So, God lays out the plan for Zechariah and for us to have this happen in our lives and in our nation. It is **Zechariah 8:11-14** and it has three parts.

- 1. First, God says, "I have seen what you are doing and I am glad to be a part of it." I could not support you when you mistreated the land, argued with the Samaritans and used it all as an excuse to not build the Temple; but now you are doing what I called you to do and I have great blessings for you.
 - You want to be blessed by God, then do what God has called you to do and quit fighting imaginary battles that are not a part of the Word of God. God is much more interested in our leading our friends and neighbors to Christ than He is in out arguing them over which American political party is right. He wants us to worship and serve Him, not spend our time in pointing out what is wrong.
 - God blesses those who do what He says they should do and He does not bless those who decide that they have another route to serve the Lord.
- 2. Second, God tells them, "This occurred in a short burst of blessing over the next two centuries but it is a prophecy that looks to the time of the end when Israel will be the light of the world. This will reverse the prophecies God had given when Judah would not follow what God wanted them to do. Let me share what God said He would do when the people would not do what He called them to do: "I will make them abhorrent an offense to all the kingdoms of the earth, a reproach and a byword, a curse and an object of ridicule wherever I banish them." Jeremiah 24:9 God will reward obedience with honor and glory.
- 3. Third, God will because of their new righteous standards bring great blessings on the nation and they will become the standard bearers for God in all the world.

It is amazing how quickly we forget that God blesses those who He sees doing what He has directed them to do. *Romans 9:15-16* says, "For He says to Moses, I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion. It does not, therefore, depend on human desire or effort, but on God's mercy." Moses had gone to God and prayed about God not destroy the children of Israel, but God said, 'I'm going to hear you Moses, but I'm not going to hear you because you are Moses. I will show mercy and grace to those whom I will show mercy and grace. Therefore, it is not to him who goes through a lot of rituals or a lot of Church services that I will bless, it is to the one to whom the Lord Jesus Christ shows mercy. We are what we are and where we are because of the grace of Jesus.

While God is on a roll, He continues to tell them how He will raise up the nation of Israel and make it a blessing for the rest of the world. **Zechariah 8:15-17**

The third answer Zechariah gives them about should they continue to fast four months out of the year is, you can do what you want and set up any ritual that you want, but I intend to bless you and to bring special favors on you through my mercy and my grace.

God says, "Here is what I want you to do: I want you to be saved by my mercy and grace". God has always set the line on desiring our obedience to Him and not our sacrifice. You know why, because too often we sacrifice things that we know we can sacrifice. I'm not saying it doesn't cost us or we aren't doing something that is a sacrifice, but it is something that we know we can give up. We are like the rich young ruler who came to Jesus and asked to follow Him and Jesus said have you kept the commandments? "Yes", the young man said, "I have kept them all and have not violated any of them on any level." Now if that were true then the young man promising Jesus that he would not violate or break a command during the next year would not be a sacrifice, it would be something that he already knew that he could do. So, Jesus goes to his motivation and asks him to "sell all that he has, give it to the poor and then come and follow him." The young man turned and left upset and sorrowful. That was something that he was not prepared to do and a sacrifice that he was unwilling to make. God is much more interested in our obedience than our sacrifice.

God goes on to say and I want you to treat your brothers and sisters with truth. Be honest to them and with them. Do not tell lies or conceive lies that will advance you. Not only that, but make sure that all of your judgments are honest and that everything decided in your gates, the courts of our day, is honest and truthful. Do not decide to do evil to anyone else and always tell the truth. God hates those who through deceit, lies, and conniving disrupt the Church, tear down the fabric of our society and even destroy their homes and families. They will not be blessed by God. God will bring this blessing regardless of the rituals that they celebrate unless they forget and mistreat each other.

But it is the fourth answer that Zechariah is given by God that I think we need to focus on in this passage. In **Zechariah 8:18-9:17** God says, "It is My intention to turn your fasts into feasts." Wow, that is amazing, they come to ask if they should have these four months of fasting and God tells them through the prophet, yes you can keep them but I'm turning them into feasts not fasts.

God deals first with their enemies, the nations that surrounded them and wanted to destroy them and take their land. In **Zechariah 9:1-8**, God tells them what will happen to the nations that oppose Israel.

He goes through how the enemies will be destroyed and it resembles how Alexander the Great brought his Greek army though that area and starting with Damascus and ending with the Philistines, destroyed all the enemies of Israel. Zechariah is also telling us that God will do that again and it is clear in Psalms that the enemies of Israel will be destroyed by Israel and God before the second advent of Jesus. But here we have a question. It is true that Alexander the Great spared Jerusalem on the way to defeat Egypt and on the way back up the Mediterranean Coast again spared Jerusalem but how does that compare to God Almighty protecting Israel from all of their enemies in the last days? So, God had protected Judah from their enemies before Christ came the first time and He would do the same before Christ came the second time. What it says to me is: if God can use a pagan king to judge the

nations and save Israel, how much more will He use His righteous Messiah to do that? This will take us right to the final coming of Jesus Christ.

It is then that Zechariah begins to tell of the two entrances of Jesus into Jerusalem that are a part of this story.

- Jesus comes the first-time riding on a donkey, a kingly animal but only ridden when the King
 was bringing peace. That is exactly what Jesus did, He came into Jerusalem on a donkey;
 allowed Himself to be arrested and killed and in so doing brought peace to all who would
 follow Him. This was truly the Triumphal Exit of Jesus from this city.
- 2. Then Zechariah will remind all the listeners in just a few more verses that Jesus will return a second time, truly the Triumphant Entry and this time He will be mounted on a white horse, an animal of war, and through His waging war with the enemies of the Lord and will present 1,000 years of near perfect peace for Israel and all of the world.

He is telling the men of Bethel; it is at this time that God will change all fasts to feasts. They will celebrate what Jesus has done. Let's take these last few verses of this teaching to the men of Bethel and see what all will happen.

- 1. The offensive weapons of the enemies will be nothing to the Israelites. They will walk through missiles just as we would walk over stones, they are not afraid and they will not hurt them.
- 2. Why will this happen? Not because of the faithfulness of Israel, but because of the faithfulness of God. They will be pulled from every pit or jail in the world and restored to Israel.
- 3. God will protect them and just as they defeated the Greeks for a short time under the Maccabees Brothers, so in the end Israel will defeat every enemy.
- 4. The result will be abundant prosperity and the sparkle of the people of God and Jesus Christ Himself will be a beautiful sight for everyone.
- 5. The food and wine will be flowing for everyone to have all they need.

It is easy to see why God said that should be a time when all fasts are forgotten and they are all turned into FEASTS! God's intent is to save; His desire is to Bless; and His Will is to protect. Stay close to God and He will always stay close to you.

Zechariah 10:1-12 God Gives Hope Through Meaningful Events

Zechariah continues with the prophecies that God has given to him and he shares something in **Zechariah Chapter 10** that we need to know.

God specializes in meaningful events. When He wants to get His message across to a group of people or a nation. He seldom takes someone off to the side and tells them the Godly secrets unless He also has that person tell everyone involved. God calls people individually but He teaches everyone He wants to know the 'full truth.'

Zechariah Chapter 10 tells us why.

The Chapter begins with a verse that should have been a part of the great time of prosperity that God had promised Judah and Jerusalem in Zechariah Chapter 9. Not only would the city be immense, on the highest mountain in the world, having a humongous temple for the entire world and unlimited prosperity for the people in this Millennial Kingdom, He will bless the world with crops that are unbelievably plentiful. It would be sealed by the blessing of rain. Yes, God would send the early rains in the spring when the crops were being germinated and the latter rains in the late summer when the heads of grain were being put on the wheat, barley, rye, and oats. It had been a cycle for the lifetime of Israel and when the early and the latter rains came. Then the crops, the vineyards, the olive orchards, fruit orchards, and all produce grew and produced abundantly; but that had not always happened and when one of those periods of rain was missing, it was very easy to have a disastrous crop. God would make sure that all rains were given during this Millennial period and even the pastures would bloom with grass and alfalfa and clover and the animals would have great grazing. But also, at that time God would send the spiritual refreshment all need and the Bible often calls it "rain". That great passage of Joel 2:28-29 says, "And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people. Your sons and daughters will prophesy. Your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men and women, I will pour out my Spirit in those days--I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth. There will be a pouring out of the Spirit of God in those days and both the literal rain and the spiritual rain will make this kingdom seem like heaven on earth."

Then Zechariah begins to address what has undermined the nation of Judah and what Israel will have to battle again in the end times. This combination of activities and actions have led to the undermining of the nation of Judah and in the end times will make an attempt at undermining the nation of Israel, so God encourages them to not get caught up in what is done in secret and private; but to have events and festivals that teach everyone what God wants them to know.

Zechariah 10:2-3 tells us three things that have undermined their nation and will undermine any nation:

1. **FALSE PROPHECIES:** The use of teraphim was still in practice. These were private family idols that people often manipulated in such a way that the prophecies that they gave to the rest of the family controlled the family. That is why when Jacob or Israel fled Babylon with his two wives and Rachel stole the teraphim from her father, her father Laban was

hysterical. He followed them and demanded the teraphim back because he had controlled the family with them for years and it was a sign of ownership or control of the land they farmed.

- 2. **FALSE PREDICTIONS:** Diviners are those who supposedly have a link with the spirit world and call tell you things others cannot know. I remember at least two times as a young lad that we have a diviner come to our farm and 'witch for water'. He would take either two wires or two young fresh sapling limbs and would walk over an area until the two branches came together. That was where the water was. My Father spent over \$800.00 for one dry well and over \$1,000.00 for a very mediocre well that we used to water some of the cattle. We obviously had the diviner that was not of God. Diviners really imitate Bible prophets but they do it with a lot of biased ideas and thoughts. The diviners of Judah had lulled the people into believing that everything would be all right and they just quit doing the right things for the Lord. These things were religious rules and the people said they were so restrictive and controlling. In the Old Testament, this practice of divination was called, "cutting open" and it had to do with cutting a sacrificial animal open and examining how the liver was shaped and the way it was laying in the animal to predict the future. Ezekiel 21:21 tells of one such instance. "For the King of Babylon will stop at the fork of the road, at the junction of two roads, to seek an omen: He will cast lots with arrows, he will consult his idols, and he will examine the liver." The word from Zechariah to the land of Judah was; your diviners who copy the methods of the pagans have seen false visions. They have done something that God has commanded you not to do and the result is from the devil.
- 3. **FALSE COMFORT:** the dreams they were explaining to the people were not from God. They focused on casting out demons, which they were not doing, but told the nation they had done it and never focused on "casting in God." These who said they were warning the nation were really leaving the people without any direction and therefore the people were being led into confusion.

We are living in an era where the demonic spirit of our time has projected itself as the right, non-judgmental and tolerant way to handle most all moral issues and this makes it a very scary time, especially youth and vulnerable believers. When we are constantly bombarded with messages that those who do not tolerate abortion at all stages and ages; homosexuality as simply one more sexual choice and preference; transgenderism as essential to free people trapped in the opposite sexual body; and all the unbiblical practices of queers, those who define themselves as queers, deviates-those who label themselves deviates, bondage sexual practitioners, and other people who pervert the teaching of sexuality as set forth by the Bible. We have to make some unpopular choices to still follow God and the Bible. The need of the hour is not more tolerance but instead we need more loving leadership.

The recitation of what the leaders of Judah had done wrong leads God to tell Zechariah in **Zechariah 10:3**: "My anger burns against the shepherds, and I will punish the leaders, for the Lord Almighty will care for His flock, the people of Judah, and make them like a proud horse in battle."

God quickly affixes the blame for the problems of the nation of Judah. Their prophets and spiritual leaders were occultic and demonic and the leaders of the land were like 'The Judas Goat' that the packing houses of 100 years ago used to lead the sheep to their slaughter and death. The leaders should have been leading their people into the Word of God, to the place where they could have peace with God; but instead, they were false prophets, giving false comfort, and actually leading them away from God. That made God angry and it still does.

In the next 6 verses **Zechariah 10:4-9**, God spells out how He will prepare the nation of Judah to survive and the nation of Israel to thrive. It is a beautiful story of how God intends to get His people ready for what lies ahead. The beauty of this story to me is that God has just such intentions for you. You say, I am not ready to fight this secular world that I live in and you may be right, but when God is finished with you, you will not only be ready to fight in this secular world you will be ready to win.

1. God will remind everyone of His people who they are and what He intends to do through them. **Zechariah 10:4-5**

God reminds the readers and listeners:

- a. **CORNERSTONE:** The cornerstone is coming that can do what mankind could not do. He will be the cornerstone that ties the 10 tribes of Israel back together with the two tribes of Judah. He will literally tie them together. Israel has come back as a nation of 12 tribes and it was never a discussion that Judah might be the nation that was reestablished. Everyone knew it was to be Israel, all 12 tribes. He is also the stone, rejected by the builders that will divide the world when Daniel says this stone is slammed to the earth, **Daniel 2**.
- b. **NAIL OR TENT PEG**: The nail or tent peg is also coming out of Judah. The tabernacle was a portable Temple and it had to be secured each night by strong tent pegs driven deep into the desert sand. That is Jesus Christ. He is the one who holds things down, and we need to allow Him to hold us to the faith. What a beautiful picture of Him.
- c. **BATTLE BOW:** They will come from Judah. Christ will be the warrior and the conqueror. He is the one who is going to come to this earth to put down all unrighteousness, and the armies of heaven are going to follow Him. He is going to put down 'every oppressor', the false leaders both religious and political whom He has called 'goats.'

What will that do for all believers?

d. WARRIORS OF THE WORLD: God will prepare them to be the best warriors of the world and with the presence and power of the Lord they will defeat decisively all the enemies that come against them. God is telling that to not only Zechariah and the Jews of the remnant building the Temple, not just to the Jews of the end-times; God is also telling that to us. You do not feel equipped to do the battles that you feel God has called you to fight. Then don't whine yet, God is not finished with you, you will be prepared.

But believe it or not, the prophecy is not over and now Zechariah gives some of the most unbelievable prophecies of the Bible. Many of which we have seen come to fruition in our lifetime.

- 1. **NATION OF JUDAH PRESERVED:** God would preserve the nation of Judah and join with it many from Israel during the Intertestamental period. From the time Zechariah spoke this prophecy until the time our Lord left this earth after His death, burial and resurrection the nation of Judah was under constant attack, oppression, and persecution. How did they do it, just like you and I got saved, by the mercy of God Almighty. God is rich in mercy and unafraid to use it for salvation of the spirit and soul and for the body.
- 2. **ISRAEL REBUILT:** But this was not the only time that God rebuilt Israel. He did the same over the last 130 years as Jew after Jew has returned to Israel and this time it is not just the mercy of God that has preserved them. God has trained them to be one of the finest fighting forces in the world.
 - a. Each citizen spends two years in the Israeli Army and so the nation of Israel is a nation of veterans and there is not an adult man or woman in Israel who is not army trained and army ready.
 - b. They have an intelligence arm that is second to none in the world.
 - c. They have developed excellent pilots, planes, armaments, ammunition, and discipline. They are considered the finest military in the world for the size of the nation. I watched teen age boys, 13 and 14 years old, escort all the children to and from school when I was in the holy land and every one of them had a machine gun and knew how to use it.
 - d. They fight skirmishes with the Hamas and Palestinians where the death totals are often less than 5 for all Israeli forces and in the hundreds sometimes for those they are fighting.

We don't give this prophecy of God much credit, but this prophecy of training Israel to be a land of mighty warriors has come true in totality. They are one of the greatest fighting forces of the world and truly are warriors. I would like to contrast that with the victories of the ex-slaves coming into the land of Israel: The Battle of Jericho, the Battle of AI; and The Crossing of the Jordan or how about the Crossing of the Red Sea when they were untrained totally and unarmed? They did almost no fighting, God did it for them.

We recently saw just how well our training of the Afghanistan Army for 20 years held up. The country of Afghanistan fell almost immediately when the United States announced that it would totally withdraw from Afghanistan. Money, power, and time were not enough to train the army of Afghanistan to defend itself, yet God has trained Israel to defend itself against dozens of armed countries and thousands of intruders these past 75 years.

Then in the last three verses of this chapter, Zechariah again emphasizes the value of meaningful events and how we need to keep our eyes open to see them in fullness.

HIS PEOPLE CALLED BACK TO THE LAND

God will call His people back to the land where He wants them, Zechariah 10:8-10

I don't know if I have ever done much thinking about how good a whistler God is but His signal goes right to the heart. That should not surprise you if you felt the tug of God on your heart to accept Him as Lord and Savior. Didn't that cut right though you and penetrate your heart to tell you this is exactly what you should do. God sent that message and He continues to send His messages to all who are open to His leading.

Approximately 12 million Jews were in the land of Judah when Jerusalem was destroyed in AD 70 and the temple was destroyed, ransacked, and plowed under.

That number is smaller for the population of Israel today, 9 million, but God has reestablished His nation and His land. God has called them out of large nations, small nations, and tiny islands to return to Israel and be a part of this great nationalistic surge. They have come. They have restored the land, the forests, the mountains, drained the wet lands, and made the land once again "A land of milk and honey" and they have done this without the bountiful rain that God promised during the Millennial Kingdom. They build the greatest irrigation projects in the world. We are now talking about putting drip irrigation in Arizona so the farms will take less than 60 % of the water they now take. Remember drip irrigation was invented in Israel in the 1950's and they have had 70 years to perfect this method of irrigation and to divert the water to other needed projects. Guess who leads the world in desalinization plants and production, right Israel. Percentage use of wind and solar energy gathering and usage, right Israel. They have used the event of God calling them back to the land to show the rest of the world how to make a desert bloom, how to make a desert a resort, how to flourish in a land where many thought you could hardly survive.

God wants us to see that this same prophecy is available for us today. He is raising up large churches so they can do large projects. When I was a young boy a church of 200-250 was a large church and yet I have ministered in 5 churches and they have all grown larger than that. We should be able to garner the resources available and make great changes in our world. We are limited only in our ability to dream, for God will pull together the resources and the people needed to get done all that He wants to have done.

God is drawing a line between the Christians and the non-Christians that forces us to choose to do something meaningful for the Lord. The events of this life give us hope. Last week I went to see the movie 'Jesus Music the Story." I marveled at how what happened in California, Maranatha Music, Calvary Chapel at Costa Mesa, CA., the music of the Vineyard, and later the musical rallies of Bill Gaither in Indianapolis, where I had free passes for every event almost my entire ministry at the Creek. It literally brought tears to my eyes how those events had shaped my ministries, my life, my music, and my faith with God. It was without a doubt one of the most eye-opening events to show me the truth of this prophecy tonight. God brings hope to His people though the events that He oversees.

Zechariah closes this chapter of prophecy with wording that would have caught the attention and interest of every Jew who heard or read it. It is language that reminds them of how God delivered Israel out of the land of Egypt and returned them to their home land of Canaan. Similar to crossing the Red Sea, God will remove both geographical and political obstacles to Israel's return for the kingdom of Messiah. Assyria and Egypt, traditional enemies of Israel, symbolize all the enemies that would try to prevent God from accomplishing this great task of reunification.

But when it happens, **Zechariah 10:12**, God will see that the Israelites are the messengers of their Messiah in this Kingdom. It will be a total restoration of all who follow God in the nation of Israel.

Let me just review some of the events that will happen because they were prophesied in this chapter and see if that does not encourage you and help lift your hope:

- Falseness will be eliminated
- 2. God will put good faithful leaders in charge of the land.
- 3. God will change history through the Messiah who returns from heaven to lead Israel and the world into His Kingdom
- 4. God will build a great warrior nation out of Israel.
- 5. God will gather the nation of Israel from all over the world.
- 6. God will ignite a fire in Israel that will not be squelched.

I hope you will look at some of the events in your life that God has given to you to help restore your hope. And claim that re-found hope.

Zechariah 11:1-17 The Greatest Gift of Hope—Rejected Then Accepted

The **11**th **Chapter of Zechariah** where we see one of the most remarkable prophecies of the Bible. It is part of a chapter that describes the rejection of Jesus Christ as the Messiah to the Hebrew nation when He came to earth at His first advent. It is a chapter that has a host of negative thoughts and actions, it starts with the rejection of Jesus and includes a summary of the punishment of those who rejected Jesus. But it also gives us prophecies that describe and outline one of the many great traits about God.

Our God is the God of second chances. Never will there be a better 'do-over' in life than Jesus taking the punishment for our sin and giving us His salvation in return. When we ruin our perfect life by sinning, which we all do, God steps in and offers us salvation, a way to cleanse the sin from our life, have it forgiven and establish an eternal relationship with God. Our saved life is based on Him being our Savior and not based on us being perfect or sinless.

This is also how God operated when it came to the Messiah. The Messiah, Jesus Christ came the first time and was a sacrifice: He lived a perfect life as a human and died without any sin in His life. Therefore, He was the 'just right' sacrifice to take away our sins and give us forgiveness. This chapter in Zechariah is a chapter that tells the consequences of rejecting Jesus but it ends with God destroying the worst Shepherd ever, the Anti-Christ, and preparing the way for Jesus our Messiah to come again in triumph with all of His chosen.

It outlines three great promises that God makes to His people even though He is describing the most heinous crime ever; the nation of Judah refusing to accept and acknowledge their Savior, Redeemer, and Messiah, Jesus Christ, but killing Him instead.

God promises in the midst of describing this rejection and the accompanying consequences, three great blessings that affect each one of us:

- 1. Israel rejected Jesus but Jesus did not reject Israel.
- 2. God took the two great weapons or tools of the Shepherd and used them for the consequences of rejecting Jesus as the Messiah but He will use them again to unify and defend all of His believers against all the enemies of the faithful.
- 3. Jesus will destroy the Anti-Christ and all who persecute believers.

Think with me a moment how this prophecy must have shaken the believers when Zechariah was speaking this truth. He is telling them that the nation they are a part of will not accept this great saving gift of God's Son, the Messiah, but God's Son will restore them and allow them to have an integral part in the end days and the heavenly kingdom.

He then tells them that the two great tools of the shepherd in *Psalm 23*; "Your rod and your staff shall comfort me" will be broken at the time of Christ's first coming, but will be in full use when He comes the Second time as the King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Finally, Zechariah foretells of a time 2,500 years or more in the future when Jesus will destroy the worst Shepherd the world has ever seen, the Antichrist.

How does this great prophecy unfold?

In **Zechariah 11:1-3**, Zechariah in poetic form describes the way that all of original Israel as well as Judah will be destroyed. It will start as a great forest fire of judgmental destruction that begins in the mountains of Lebanon as the fire destroys the magnificent cedars that furnished the wood needed to build the Temple of Solomon; but it does not stop there, for it moves to the East of the Jordan River where the fertile forests of Bashan stand and that will also destroy the grand Oaks that marked that area; but the judgement will not end until it destroys all the woodlands and pastures of the Jordan River valley. So, from the north of Israel at its largest geographical status to the south of Israel beyond the Dead Sea, the land will be judged and physically and spiritually it will be burnt by the holy fire of God's judgment.

That is exactly what happened, less than 40 years after the death of Jesus at the hands of the Romans with the impetus and the collaboration of the Jewish leaders, Rome swept down from the North starting at the Mountains of Lebanon and going past the Dead Sea. Masada is a great testimony to that, where the last of the ultra-conservative Jews in Judah, about 990 in total, many from the Qumran Community, the Jews who hid the Dead Sea Scrolls in the caves around the Dead Sea, all committed suicide on the top of Masada rather than be captured by the Roman Army. The nation of Judah was destroyed. This included over 1,000,000 people killed in Jerusalem, the destruction of the city of Jerusalem, the destruction of the Temple of Herod, the entire city being plowed under and a huge tonnage of salt spread on the land to keep any vegetation from growing; as well as a follow-up 500,000 Jewish people killed as the Romans continued to put down rebellions even after the city of Jerusalem and the Temple were destroyed. It happened, there was no longer an Israel, a Judah, or a city of Jerusalem and in another 55 years after continual Jewish rebellions, Rome expelled every Israelite/Jew from the Promised Land. It was as total of a punishment as you could ever imagine. The Jewish state was dissolved, not to be restored as a nation until 1948.

Then Zechariah puts himself in the dialogue of this prophetic chapter and he will play the part of the Messiah Shepherd, Jesus Christ, who is to come not once but twice to the land of Israel to accomplish two world-wide tasks of God, Be the Savior and then be recognized as our King. The other Shepherd in this drama will be the worst shepherd ever, the Anti-Christ.

In **Zechariah 11:4-14** Zechariah shares what will happen to Jesus Christ when He comes to earth for His first advent. First, the instructions of what will happen, Verses 4-6:

God will take away His pity for the people! What does that mean? *Hosea 1:6* tells us, "Gomer conceived again and gave birth to a daughter. Then the Lord said to Hosea, call her, Lo-Ruhamah (which means 'not loved'), for I will no longer show love and pity to Israel, that I should at all forgive them." It is God taking His protection away and leaving disobedient people to their own defense.

It is amazing to me that when the Bible says, "Jesus came at just the right time," it does not seem very right at all. The spiritual leaders of the land of Judah had become very legalistic and worshipped ritual Page | 43

over faith. The land was occupied by the Romans. The people were not very faithful in what they were doing and how they were living. Jesus came when they truly needed a Savior and freely gave this gift of God to them. This must be what it means at the right time, the time He was the most needed.

I still think that is how God operates. Since He is the God of allowing us to move past our failures and back to Him. I feel that God often takes the worst and most challenging moments of our life and He intercedes. He gives us a chance to repent and turn back to Him and still have His pity to direct our life. It is those times when you begin to think, "Oh, I am not close to God right now and I need to return to Him." It is that very moment when you stop what you are doing and just ask God to forgive you and direct you back to trusting Him and living in His grace.

Zechariah then plays the role of being a pre-figure of Jesus and shows how God will guide the real Shepherd. Zechariah and later Jesus truly fed the sheep of the land of Judah. They taught the truth straight from God but only those who were outside the circles of influence, the poor, the oppressed, the handicapped, and the outcasts were the ones who truly followed Zechariah and Jesus. Paul later sums up what happened even when he began to take the Christian message into the European world. He wrote:

I Corinthians 1:26-28 "Brothers and sisters, think of what you were when you were called. Not many of you were wise by human standards, not many were influential; not many were of noble birth. But God chose the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, God chose the weak things of the world to shame the strong. God chose the lowly things of this world and the despised things, and the things that are not, to nullify the things that are."

Zechariah wants the people to realize how hard Jesus tried to encourage the Jewish people to follow Him. He took the two staffs He was given as a shepherd, the 'Favor' and the 'Union' and wanted to use those to direct His people. They were the rod and staff that the Hebrew world was quite familiar with and were used by the Shepherd to unify the flock and to defend the flock from predators.

The first staff, 'Favor' represents the acts of Christ as the Good Shepherd. He expressed the love and grace of God by tenderly leading and protecting His people. The staff of 'Union' was the rod that Jesus used to unify the nation and to bind together the divided house of Israel. Zechariah and Jesus both used their two staffs in the right manner to accomplish what God wanted them to do.

Zechariah 11:8 writes: "In one month I got rid of the three Shepherds and the flock detested me, and I grew weary of them"

One of the oldest interpretations of this passage is, that Jesus was able to use the grace of God to nullify the oppressive teaching of the priests, elders and scribes of Israel. He spoke clearly, strongly and often to their hypocrisy. They rejected Jesus as the Messiah and God eliminated these three offices shortly after the death of Jesus. In fact, God replaced the need for priests, elders, and scribes with believers.

I Peter 2:5 says, "You also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ."

But at this point the three shepherds: The Priests, the Elders, and the Scribes are still present and still causing a lot of the rejection of the Word of God given by Zechariah and later the teachings and healings of Jesus. So, Zechariah says the first staff, of graciousness and mercy will be broken and the Lord will not be obligated to continue to show mercy to Judah. They will resort to the worst of behaviors when this happens.

Zechariah stops and gives us a very special prophecy about the time of the first coming of Jesus to this earth. It is so accurate in every detail that it could have been lifted out of the New Testament account of the betrayal of Jesus. The good shepherd asks the people what they think that He is worth and they reply, 30 pieces of silver. This was the amount owed to a slaveowner who's slave had been gored and killed by an animal, *Exodus 21:32*. This was the amount that Judas Iscariot received for betraying Jesus, *Matthew 26:14-16*. The leaders of Jesus' day who offered that amount were saying Jesus was worth no more than a common slave. Zechariah continues to play all the roles of the people in the drama at the time of the death of Jesus and was told he was to throw the 30 pieces of silver in the temple. This was fulfilled when Judas overwhelmed by guilt threw the coins back on the temple floor. The priests gathered the money and used it to buy a field from a potter, *Mark 27:3-10*. It was not a princely price, but a pauper's price for the life of Jesus Christ.

The first staff of the Shepherd had been broken when Jesus was rejected as the Shepherd of all of Judah then the staff of Union, given to preserve the land of Israel was also broken and Israel as well as Judah disappeared from the world map for over 2000 years.

Jesus has been working in the Potter's field for a long time. He purchased it, not with 30 pieces of silver but with His life, His precious blood. He paid the price so that He might buy this old world in which you and I live, a world filled with the broken lives of people, broken physically, mentally, morally and often spiritually. The great Potter, the Lord Jesus, takes the clay that was thrown away, puts it on the wheel of life and shapes it into a vessel of honor. We are the clay and He is the Potter and even in the present days of His rejection, by people today, Jesus is still working in the potter's field.

Then the second staff was to be broken and God broke His conditional covenant with Judah and allowed their disobedience to open the door for Roman oppression. This caused one more separation, those who would receive Jesus did and with that avoided the long-term consequences by putting their trust in Jesus.

I started this study by giving you three positive prophecies that this chapter teaches us.

- 1. **First**, 'Israel rejected Jesus but Jesus did not reject Israel.' As we see the rest of the history unfold just as the Bible had predicted we note that God had said that Israel would be restored and rebuilt as a nation long before this time of Zechariah. God did take back His hand of pity and mercy and the consequences were terrible but He always had intended for Israel to become a nation again. This has happened and this part of the prophecy is well on the way to total fulfillment.
- 2. **Second,** the Good Shepherd Jesus would break the two staffs as Judah rejected the Messiah but would restore them in the last days and show mercy and pity upon the Jews and also

unify them. This has happened in every way except spiritually. We can still expect that spiritual reunification to occur but the nation has been put back together as Israel, the unity is back, and God's mercy and encouragement are fully on the people at this time.

3. **Third,** the prophecy of this chapter has not unfolded yet; but since the other two have, we can safely say that God will do it again and fulfill it as well. Jesus will destroy the Bad Shepherd, the Anti-Christ in the last days. Let's take a look at **Zechariah 11:15-17** to see how this will happen.

Just like the '70 weeks of Daniel,' this prophecy also takes a break. In Daniel, it was between the 69th week when Jesus died and week 70, the final 7-years of Tribulation. Here, it is stopping at the First Century after Christ and picking up again in the last days, the time of Tribulation, right before Christ returns. Both prophesies omit the time of the Church age. The focus here is not on the time of tribulation and persecution like the Book of Daniel; but it is on the final destruction of all the enemies of Christ and His people. It is the destruction of the Anti-Christ.

The Anti-Christ is well prophesied throughout the Bible: *II Thessalonians 2:3; John 5:43; Daniel 9:27*; are just a few that show us the Anti-Christ will be a human that uses his power and influence of the devil to reign havoc and evil upon the people of the earth. He is so wicked that he uses a broken staff or club to beat the stubborn sheep into submission. He had no care for the sheep.

What is Zechariah teaching us here? He is saying, God permitted this wicked shepherd to arise and destroy the sheep. Because they did not choose the Good Shepherd that God sent, Israel will receive a foolish one who will be absolutely opposite of what is expected of shepherds, he will destroy the sheep. This is also validated in prophetic passages from the Bible: *Daniel 9:27; Matthew 24:15-22*.

As Zechariah presents the foolish shepherd, he comes after God is finished with the church and turns again to Israel as a nation. He will be the worst of all shepherds; this foolish shepherd and he will eat the sheep and be so ravenous with it that he will destroy the hooves of the sheep even as he eats every last bite of the meat.

What a contrast to Jesus who said, "I have come in the Father's name, and you do not accept me; but if someone else comes in his own name, you will accept him." John 5:43 This sounds ridiculous and it would have been when I was a young man. But all we have to do is look at who and what the world is accepting as good leadership in our time and we realize that if someone will give the people what they want—they will follow that person. We have the right climate for the well credentialed Anti-Christ to arrive and be accepted.

He will be a worthless shepherd. He is no good, of no value, and he is the great deceiver. He will be destroyed by God. His right eye will be blinded and his right arm will become shriveled or atrophied. He will be judged harshly by God and punished before any others are. In fact, he will make it into the lake of fire even before the Devil gets there.

This false shepherd destroyed by Christ will actually be the one who brings the Great Tribulation to all of its terrible fury. He will seduce Israel in the first part of the tribulation to believe that he will take

care of them; but by the time they discover his real character, he will be the world dictator who draws the armies of the world to come together and attempt to destroy Jerusalem.

But God, ever present to guide repentant people back to Him will destroy the last great enemies of His people.

Never Give Up on God, Because He Never Gives Up on You.

Zechariah 12:1-14 When God Gives Hope—It is Total Hope

The next series of prophecies that Zechariah tells us will be about the future of Israel. It is not a hope or desire of Zechariah, it is the Word of the Lord and Zechariah backs up what he is saying with three descriptions of the God who gives the prophecy in **Zechariah12:1**:

- 1. **First**, the Lord who gives this prophecy is the very Lord "who stretches out the heavens." **Psalm 19:1** tells us: "The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of His hands." Everything out in the heavens declare the glory of God and show His handiwork. It is literally being stretched out and since the Universe is constantly expanding, it is literally being stretched more and more. We can safely say with the evidence we have that just in the short time you listen to this program, the Universe or Heavens will be stretched several million miles larger. The tremendous creations of God continually expand and stretch out.
- 2. **Second**, the Lord who gives this prophecy is the very Lord "who lays the foundations of the earth." God gives particular attention to this little planet called the earth. Man is just not satisfied with that and spends billions each year on: large sonar-scopes that listen to the universe to hear other sounds of life. We send space exploration vehicles, space capsules, and eventually people to the other heavenly bodies close to us to hear if they have any signs of life. We constantly as a planet are seeking for other forms of life in this Galaxy and Universe.
- 3. **Third**, the Lord who gives this prophecy is the very Lord "who forms the human spirit within a person."

God has made mankind higher than all the creations that He has placed on the earth but less than the angels that He uses to populate the heavens. We are not finding what God has created because we are looking for something that we think should resemble how we think, act, and operate. God has created a myriad of spiritual beings that our cameras, space ships, telescopes, and explorers will never pick up because they do not know how to even find them. God has formed the spirit of man and that allows man to have His power and His wisdom so that we can reach out to Him. Absent that spirit from God, none of His creations will be in communion and contact with God.

So, Zechariah uses three powerful illustrations of the power of our Lord to validate what he is going to say in prophecy about the land of Judah and Israel. Literally, that just opposite of the recent besiegement of Jerusalem by Babylon that ended in disaster for the Jews in Judah; God will raise up a Jerusalem that will be able to defeat all the enemies that come against it. **Zechariah 12:2-5**

Zechariah mentions the city of Jerusalem 10 times in this Chapter and this verse has the first and second time the city is mentioned. Jerusalem will become the very center of activity during the Tribulation and will be under attack. Jerusalem will become a "goblet of intoxication" or easy and profitable prey for those who oppose them. But their fascination with destroying Jerusalem will mean

the end of their nations and kingdoms because they will become the easy prey that is picked off and destroyed at the end of time, Armageddon.

Zechariah 12:4-5 tell us clearly that the destruction of these opposing nations will be a Divine directive. It will be God that wins the battles for Israel, but first, verse 3 tells us how total these victories will be:

Zechariah 12:3 "On that day, when all the nations of the earth are gathered against her, I will make Jerusalem an immovable rock for all the nations. All who try to move it will injure themselves."

God is clearly telling Zechariah to share in prophecy that those who mess with Israel/Jerusalem in the last days will end up being a destroyed mess. It does seem strange to me that even though God clearly states that Jerusalem located in Judah will have this special role in the last days, we still have dozens of speculators and even some commentators that want to insert Rome, Paris, London, Washington DC, or even New York into this verse as though that is the city that God is speaking about. Jerusalem means Jerusalem and when He says it is Jerusalem located in Judah; we can have no doubt that God means the Middle East and the land of Israel. God has His hand on the land and will continue to place it in a prominent spot as history winds down. There has been no nation that ever-ruled Israel that prospered greatly after that time of ruling. Each one has seen a steady decline and the last one the United Kingdom has slipped out of being the most powerful nation on the earth, a title they had when they were given oversight over this land to now be one of many mid-power nations in this world. The list is amazing of what happened to the nations that ruled over the land of Israel, let's take time to study the list: Babylon/Iraq; Medes and Persians/Iran; Greece; Rome/Italy; Syria; Turkey; the Ottoman Empire/Austria-Hungary, Turkey, who were defeated and split into separate nations after WW I and finally Great Britain.

None of these play immensely major roles in the World today except the United Kingdom and their influence continues to diminish.

What shall happen to those who attack Israel/Jerusalem in the last days: their armaments will be rendered useless and the people directing the fight will lose their ability to make sound and reasonable military decisions.

Zechariah continues with this prophecy of God, **Zechariah 12:** 6-9 and says this will true for every nation that attacks Jerusalem. God will defeat them all by His intervention as well as their soldiers and their military tools. God will destroy them with two items in His power that are compared to two things that are a part of ordinary life. First, He will use a "firepan", a container used to carry hot coals to start a wood fire; and a "torch" used to light a field of dry grain. In other words, the power of God will devour the armies that attack Jerusalem before there is even a fight. They will not be defeated in battle, they will be defeated as they finalize their plans to attack Jerusalem, with items from the armaments of God, which will be used by God.

Everyone will know it is from God, because actually God will start by delivering the defenseless country people of the land. It is not a matter of military might, intelligence, or strategy because these battles will be won without any attack on the capital city, Jerusalem. Zechariah tells the nation of Judah that Page | 49

God will save the common people of the country first, the farmers, shepherds, vineyard keepers, and other agricultural workers. He will do this so that no one in the leadership, the capital city or the hierarchy of Judah will take credit for what has happened. Everyone will know that it is from the Lord and He is the one who is responsible.

I would like to just take a moment and share something that I think we often miss. Not only will we be surprised to find out who is in heaven, I think that many of us will be surprised to find out who is not in heaven. We have such a conviction that people we choose as the best of God's Kingdom are the people that God will choose also. But that is not true. God chooses those who have a heart for Him and who always know that they are saved by Jesus and not by the things that they are doing. God makes it clear here, "the Lord will save the dwellings of Judah first" and only later will He save the city of Jerusalem and the inhabitants of that city.

Then in **Zechariah 12: 8-9** God tells how He will defend the city of Jerusalem against the rest of the world.

- 1. **First**, God is going to turn the entire city into clones of David. *I Samuel 18:7* tells us, "As the women sang and danced, they said, 'Saul has slain his thousands, and David his tens of thousands." David was a great administrator, a great soldier, a general of great strategy, a man of tremendous ability, and a great leader. Zechariah says that in the day when God strengthens Israel, even the weakest of men will be warriors like David was.
- 2. Second, God is going to turn the House of David into the House of God and the Angel of the Lord will go before this city to lead and save it. What a fantastic affirmation of prophecy. David, the model of the perfect defender will be the model for even the weakest man of the land; but One in the line of David will assume the leadership of the city and just like He led the children of Israel out of Egypt by being the Pillar of Fire by night and the Pillar of Cloud by day and finally into the Promised Land. He will do it again. Jesus Christ will be the one who leads this preservation of Jerusalem and Israel. How fitting, in Matthew 1:1 the Bible lineage of Jesus states: "This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham."

How will God accomplish this great protection and defense of Israel in the last days? He will put His son, Jesus Christ, also God, in charge and Jesus shall defend and protect the city.

The Book of Revelation makes it very clear that all the nations of the world will converge against Israel and Jerusalem in the last great battle. It is as though one of our great transportation hubs, centralized train station or a regionalized airport will have all the traffic diverted to their place and all of those coming intend to destroy the train station or the airport, but they are quite unsuccessful because Jesus will defend the people of the hub and protect them. He will also destroy all the enemies that have come against them.

Then in a fantastic series of prophecies, **Zechariah 12:10-14** explains how all of this will work. It is not because Israel has become so much stronger, they will be strong but not strong enough to fight off all the armies of the world. It is not because Israel shall be a great economic center or a land that controls Page | 50

a lot of the rest of the world, because it will still be a small country in the Middle East that is very productive but not an economic giant like China, the United States, or even The Common Market.

No, it will be because they finally come to grips with what happened the first time Jesus came to this earth and they repent for what happened.

It is the deliverance that Zechariah has pointed us towards from the start of his prophetic book. It is that time when Israel comes to grips with what they did as a nation with Jesus and they turn back to the Lord.

Now, this is not how we do it. We seldom repent or grieve for the sins of another generation even though we are told Biblically that is the only way to break a generational curse. We find it hard to repent for something our ancestors have done that is wrong, even though the consequences of their action often affect everything we do. But God deals with reality, not our over-done sense of freedom and individual rights that we often link with Christianity as American Christians. No, He knows what will work and moves the Spirit in our life to have it done.

Here it is in verse 10, God will pour out a spirit of grace and supplication on those who are in Jerusalem and Israel at that time. It will be so astounding in effect that nothing will be the same after it happens. It will be all over again. The passage in Joel says:

Joel 2:28-32 "And afterward, I will pour out my Spirit on all people, your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams, your young men will see visions. Even on my servants, both men a woman, I will pour out my Spirit in those days. I will show wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood and fire and billows of smoke. The sun will be turned to darkness and the moon to blood before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved, for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be deliverance, as the Lord has said, even among the survivors whom the Lord calls."

Peter tells us in *Acts 2* in the sermon on the Day of Pentecost that that was what was happening in Jerusalem after Jesus was killed, rose again, and poured His Spirit out on all the believers and here "in this Day of the Lord" Zechariah tells us that it will happen again. It will happen at the time that God needs to fortify the city of Jerusalem and the land of Israel so they work with God as He protects the land and not work against Him.

You might say how will that happen. Well, we have had a very special gift as part of the body of Christ, the church. We have received the Holy Spirit and He has been active and alive in our life. But when the Church is raptured, or removed from the earth, this will change the operation to some extent. The Holy Spirit who has no reason to be involved in being raptured and who has many tasks spelled out for Him to do in the Book of Revelation will stay here on this earth and will again call call individuals who are open to the direction and power of the Holy Spirit. This will be much like God operated before the Church age. As the Spirit is poured out on more and more responsive and receptive Hebrews the group will recognize Christ as their Savior. When the Spirit is poured out on them, they will be convicted of what happened when Jesus was 'pierced' by the actions and the attitudes of Jewish people. This will be so intense that they will mourn as a family mourns for their only child who has Page | 51

died, here a son; or for the loss of the firstborn on whom they placed all their hope for the future. Zechariah is touching the hearts of the listeners by telling them that their children whom they value the most, it will be as if they died. They will have the strongest grief and the most intense mourning they could have over what was done to Jesus the first time He came to this earth.

They will come to the realization that God sent them His greatest gift, the gift of His only Son and they destroyed Him. It is as though they will ask Jesus "how did you get these wounds; who did this to you", and Jesus will say, "I got these wounds from the house of my friends, from the land of my birth, and from those I called my brothers and sisters. When I came before, I was attacked and killed but I have come back to help you and lead you."

This will produce such an outpouring of grief that all of Israel will respond. It will come because Jesus pours a spirit of grace upon them. It will be so piercing that the veil will be removed from their eyes and they will see Jesus Christ for who He really is. I worry sometimes when we feel that was all taken care of by us when we received Jesus as our Savior. If any of us have any part of our life that is not totally under the control of Jesus, we need that grace to fall on us again so that our eyes see clearly and we know what Jesus wants in that area of our life as well. Although it is by grace, you and I are responsible to respond to the marvelous, infinite, wonderful grace of Jesus. Therefore, Jesus fills every part of our life, not by our ability, nor our faith, but by His precious blood that was shed when He was pierced.

Zechariah continues, "In that day", and he is speaking of the Day of the Lord that begins when the Church is lifted from this earth and the countdown to Tribulation starts. It will continue until the very last rebellion in the Millennial Kingdom is squashed and the eternal kingdom, where everything is made new begins.

In **Zechariah 12:11**, Zechariah tells us what will happen, Israel will have a Day of Atonement unlike any other Day of Atonement in their history. So, Zechariah compares it to the greatest day of mourning the nation of Israel had had in their history. It was when King Josiah died and the gathering of mourners was in the Valley of Megiddo. **II Chronicles 35:20-27**; a place and a death that Jeremiah said caused him to weep as if he had never wept before. The grieving will be complete. It will start with those who have ancestral ties to the kings, noblemen, and rulers of Israel; it will include those who have ancestral ties to the priests, Levites, and temple workers, note both of these groups were right at the front of destroying Jesus when He came the first time, and then from these groups it will spread to every home in Israel. It will not be a family grieving or a community grieving, but will be individual as each one comes to grips with the fact that their ancestors pierced Jesus and rejected Him.

When my sister died 10 years ago, I was devastated. My mother had lived a long life, my father had not heeded the warnings of the Doctor, and my brother loved his addictions, drinking and smoking more than he loved living, so I did not feel the intensity of grief at their deaths and services. But my sister was just a few months older than I was and it was as if the last piece of my feeling rather immortal was taken away. In the vulnerability that was left and the fact that now I was the oldest in my family, I begin to intensely grieve. I was not sure that I was going to be able to really get over what

had happened. I was not angry at God nor was I disappointed at anyone left alive, I was just empty and feeling a lack of clear direction. As my grief grew more intense, I felt the presence of God come to me and explain, "Bonnie did all she could for the Lord, I need you to do the same." It was that sense of purpose that directed my life out of my grief.

Zechariah says the same will happen for the Israelites in the last days, The Day of the Lord. They will come to grips with what was done to Jesus, they will repent of it, and God will direct them through the time of the Great Tribulation. Their generational curse will be gone and they will live under the grace and power of Jesus Christ.

I hope that is where you are as you listen. You have repented of all the sins that you have committed or that have been committed by those who influence your life and you follow Jesus with your whole heart? God intends to give you hope without any limits.

Zechariah 13:1-9 God Will Build a Kingdom Where Only the Hopeful Will Be Content?

Zechariah has just told in prophecy of the great conversion of the Jewish nation in the last days and how that change will allow God to work with the Jewish Christians all the way through the time of Tribulation. Now Zechariah wants to explain more of the details that not only make it possible but explain how it can and will happen.

Only part of the prophecies about Jesus were fulfilled when He came to earth the first time when He was rejected as the Good Shepherd who gave His life for the sheep. There will be a second time that Jesus comes to earth and this time He will come right after the false shepherd we saw last week called the Antichrist. This false shepherd is a pretender who will capture the hearts of the Jewish nation but will be a fake. He will not bring peace but intense suffering and destruction on all the earth. The Israelites will be fodder for the world when the Antichrist sets them up as the foe of all mankind.

We are fast approaching the Christmas Season and one of the joys of Christmas is to remember that the "Prince of Peace" *Isaiah 9:6* will be the one who finally brings peace to the earth.

We often focus on the physical aspects of the new Kingdoms, Millennial & Heaven of Christ: no sadness, Christ ruling with an iron fist, no tears, streets of gold, the desert will blossom like a rose, the lame will leap, the blind will see, we will get to see all who have passed, and we will experience the sheer thrill that will come from being in heaven or even the Millennial Kingdom.

But Zechariah tells us the greatest blessings about the fulfilment of the Kingdom of God is that it will be filled with spiritual blessings.

Zechariah 8:3 told us: "This is what the Lord says: I will return to Zion and dwell in Jerusalem. Then Jerusalem will be called the Faithful or Truthful City, and the mountain of the lord Almighty will be called the Holy Mountain."

It will be the city of truth when Jesus reigns there. It is worth noting there is no capital in the world today which is noted for truth!!! It will be a Kingdom where holiness and righteousness will be ever present and as Zechariah tells us where the bells on the horses, the cooking pots and pans, and even all the kitchen utensils will be inscribed with the holiness of God on them. It will be a kingdom without fear and overflowing with joy. This is described in **Zechariah 10:6,7** "I will strengthen Judah and save the tribes of Joseph. I will restore them because I have compassion on them. They will be as though I had not rejected them, for I am the Lord their God and I will answer them. The Ephraimites will become like warriors, and their hearts will be glad as with wine. Their children will see it and be joyful; their hearts will rejoice in the Lord."

Christ will be the source of true and real peace. We have followed Zechariah's prophecies and saw God's program which will ultimately bring permanent peace to the world. When Christ came the first

time, He was rejected, sold and turned over to the Gentiles who crucified Him. Then Zechariah just like the prophetic Book of Daniel skips over the Church age that we are living in today to tell about a time after the Church age when the worthless shepherd appears and deceives the Israelite people. He won't bring the kingdom into being, but the Tribulation will be his great gift. His world dictatorship can only be ended by the coming of Christ to establish His kingdom upon the earth. This unfolds for us prophetically in **Zechariah Chapter 13**.

This chapter as well as this book of Zechariah should be taken literally. People try to spiritualize these verses, weave it into what they think is happening in world politics and often try to work the United States into every nook and cranny of the Old Testament prophecies. But the focus of *Zechariah 12-14* is Jerusalem and we saw it mentioned 10 times in Chapter 12 and will be another 11 mentions of the city of Jerusalem in Chapters 13 and 14. God did not talk about Peking, Moscow, Berlin, New York, London or Rome, he is talking about the actual city of Jerusalem.

If we are not careful, I believe that spiritualizing passage after passage of the bible can be a practical denial of the inspiration of the Word of God. When we are done showing that this city is really not the city that Zechariah said but it only represents the real city, and then through spiritualization speculate how another city is meant and what this really means. It is no different than trying to take the condemnation of God out of homosexuality or changing the verses of the Bible that prohibit same sex marriage. When you are done, you have eliminated the meaning that God gave the verse.

Zechariah has just told all his listeners how the Jewish nation will be converted to Jesus Christ and now in Chapter 13, he begins to answer many of the questions that this great prophetic statement would have brought to people's minds. Remember, Jesus had not even come to Judah the first time when this great book of prophecy was given.

It will begin with a spiritual cleansing of the nation of Israel. Verse one starts with the national cleansing of Israel. It is a very clear passage that speaks of something Jesus will offer at His second coming that never was offered at His first coming. He will open a "fountain" a place of God's cleansing power that was first opened for all people when Christ died on the cross. Here this fountain will be specifically offered to those of the House of David—Jewish people. The Day of the Lord or here "that day" will become available to the Israelites and the Spirit of God will fall on many who see that they were ancestrally part of the piercing of Jesus. The veil will be lifted from their eyes and they will have a real Day of Atonement with the Lord. It is not going to be a mental decision; no, it will be a time when the Israelites give up their 'sin', the denial of the Messiahship of Jesus and they accept Christ as their Lord and Savior. God will eliminate the demons from their land as well as those who are giving false information about Jesus.

The Israelites had long ago given up putting the golden calves back at Dan and Beth-el but they had not given up superstitions, myths, and a fascination with horoscopes/zodiac direction. The demons will be put out at the time of Christ's return and whether this is instantaneously or over a short period of time, the demons will not be a part of the Millennial Kingdom of Christ.

He is telling them that there will be a time in resurrected Israel's life that the demons and the result of paganism will be forever removed. It will be a time when everything connected with the occult will be dismissed as devilish trash.

People will become so convicted of the truth that they will chase out those who are of idolatry and false prophecy and even parents will rather see their children dead than promoting what is of the Devil. It will be a time when the Bible reigns and those who have perverted it will be removed from the earth.

False prophets will no longer hang out a sign and fortune tellers will no longer have some grotesque animal statue in their front yard to advertise their trade. In fact, they will claim to be farmers not fortune tellers or prophets. When people ask them about the tell-tale signs still in their bodies or around them, they will mock what Jesus said about being pierced at the home of His friends and will say that it was something that happened to them at the home of their friends when they rough-housed together.

It will be an attempt by those who promoted false fortune telling and prophecy to claim mistaken identity. They will say, "Yes, I knew that was happening in our land and it was just as offensive to me as it was to you". However, I feel the greatest tragedy of the ages is expressed in just eleven words, "He came to His own, and His own received Him not." What a picture! John the Baptist declared it when he said in John 1:26-27, "I baptize with water," John replied, "but among you stands one who you do not know. He is the one who comes after me, the straps of whose sandals I am not worth to untie."

Paul summed up the very teaching of *Zechariah 12*, and *13*, the restoration of Israel and how it could have taken so long, when he wrote in:

II Corinthians 3 13-16, "We are not like Moses, who would put a veil over his face to prevent the Israelites from seeing the end of what was passing away. But their minds were made dull, for to this day the same veil remains when the old covenant is read. It has not been removed, because only in Christ is it taken away. Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts. But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away."

Paul had already told us what happens when Israel is converted, *Romans 11* all are saved and Zechariah spells out how the land will be cleansed and turn to Christ. Notice the veil is on their heart, and when the heart is right, they will turn to him.

There are many striking contrasts between the first and second comings of Jesus Christ. When He came the first time it was to offer Redemption to the world. The second coming is simply to offer Revelation, a fulfillment of all that the Bible said would happen. The first was a focus on reconciliation between God and man; but the second time it will be recognition; Christ recognizes and rewards those who have followed Him and recognizes those who have not. His first coming was clothed in some mystery as the general public had to discover who He was; but the second coming will be Manifestation of all God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit intend to do. The first coming was prevention and the second coming will be proclamation. What a picture this gives us of how thoroughly Christ will cleanse the earth and cleanse Israel.

Zechariah closes this part of the prophecy by returning to a description of Jesus, the true Shepherd and highlighting how all this had been fulfilled in the first coming of Jesus and how Israel will have a very difficult time through the Tribulation but how those who accept Jesus as Lord and Savior and hold to Him will come through this great tribulation still in the arms of Christ.

Let's look at how the two times that Christ comes to earth have been tied together by God in this prophecy. I think it will make a better understanding for each of us how God puts everything together and shares with us how it will all happen.

First, Zechariah tells us how God looked on the first coming of Jesus Christ. You cannot study this verse without remembering what Zechariah wrote in:

Zechariah 12:10, "And I will pour out on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem a spirit of grace and supplication. They will look on me, the one they have pierced, and they will mourn for him as one mourns for an only child, and grieve bitterly for him as one grieves for a first-born son."

Zechariah now contrasts the false shepherd, the Antichrist, to the real Shepherd, Jesus Christ. God the Father identifies Jesus by phrases that show clearly the prophecy is saying that Jesus is the Son of God. The phrase in **Zechariah 13:7** that says. "Against the man who is close to me." It would be better translated, "the man of my equal" or "the man of my union." This is a clear Old Testament reference to the deity of Christ. Similar teachings in the New Testament are found in **John 1:1**; **John 10:13** and **John 14:9** which says, "Jesus answered, don't you know me Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, Show us the Father?

Then Zechariah completes this verse. It had started with a contrast between the false prophets and their pathetic excuse that they got cuts and gashes from rough housing with their friends to the true prophet Jesus who was truly wounded and pierced at the home of His best friends, the Jews. He will now compress the events of the first coming into verse 7 and the events of the second coming into verses 8-9. The first event that Zechariah reminds them of is the crucifixion of Jesus that occurred the first time He came to this earth. The second will address the Jews that will be present when Jesus comes back the second time.

Zechariah is not trying to flesh out the entire story of Jesus when He came the first time nor to record every event that will happen when He comes the second time. He is showing how God will move on the heart of Israelites in the last day s to show how they will all be converted to Christ.

Here Zechariah focuses on what happened that alienated Israel from accepting Jesus as Savior. Now, we know that it was basically the sin of pride. They took so much pride in their rituals and ceremonies that they became angry with Jesus when He would not commend what they were doing but tried to direct them back to true worship of God. They combined forces with the Romans and saw that Jesus was crucified. It was the worthless Shepherd that God struck in the prophecies of the last chapter and destroyed his right arm and his right eye. He lost all power and reason, deservedly so, for as a shepherd he led people away from God and not too God. "Strike the Shepherd" When God allowed the death of Jesus, it was not a judgment on Jesus but the elimination of sin through the perfect sacrifice.

However, the emotions of the Jews and the Romans were real. The Jews really truly wanted Jesus dead and the Romans truly wanted some level of peace in Judah. The combination was lethal for Jesus and He was killed. A sacrifice in the eyes of God but an elimination of a blasphemer in the mind of the Jews and a small loss to keep peace for the Romans.

The effect was tragic. The Shepherd had been struck down and the sheep were scattered. Jesus Himself told us that this prophecy applied to Him.

Matthew 26:31-32, Jesus says at the Last Supper, "This very night you will all fall away on account of me, for it is written: 'I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered.' But after I have risen, I will go ahead of you into Galilee."

Jesus tells the disciples the night before His death that this scripture applies to Him and to them. If you doubt that God has a future purpose for Israel, you need to look at this Scripture carefully. It was something that happened in the first coming: the piercing of Jesus and the striking or death of Jesus, and they both had a fulfilment in the time of the second coming of Christ. Because God poured out His grace and forgiveness on the Israelites of the last days, they will repent of their ancestors' sins and the blindness that it gave them, and accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. That which finally split the nation apart, the rejection and death of Jesus, will be the very item that God uses to restore the nation of Israel to Him.

It will have one more side-effect. When Jesus was struck or killed at the end of His first coming, the protective hand of God was lifted off of the nation of Judah, and as the disciples scattered, the protective hand of God was removed for a while from the remnant who remained on the earth faithful to Jesus. They suffered persecution, death, and other mistreatment. *James 1:1* tells us much more about all that Jewish Christians suffered in the First Century, especially, it notes how the nation was dispersed and scattered. The verse says: "James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes scattered among the nations, Greetings." Jesus had told His followers this would be a part of their future in *John 16:1-4a*, "All this I have told you so that you will not fall away. They will put you out of the synagogue: in fact, the time is coming when anyone who kills you will think they are offering a service to God. They do such things because they have not known the Father or me. I have told you this, so that when their time comes you will remember that I warned you about them."

Zechariah has taken the high points out of the story of how Israel will be converted to believe that Jesus is the Messiah. It will involve a strong conviction on the part and heart of those who realize that the piercing of the heart of God's Son, the Messiah, has kept them alienated from having a relationship with Jesus Christ for over 2,000 years and will see that when the Shepherd was struck down the followers of Jesus were scattered and persecuted. But one other thing will become apparent to them, after this happened, because they had also been involved, the Jews, in the striking of the shepherd, they were also scattered, disorientated, and persecuted.

But God in His eternal perspective has once again brought them back to their land and has poured out His grace and supplication/forgiveness on them and they will receive Him as their Lord and Messiah. Zechariah closes this part of the prophecy about the conversion of the Israelites and the acceptance of

Jesus as Messiah with two verses of prophecy, lifted right out of the days of persecution that will come against Jewish Christians during the Tribulation.

This will be the remnant of Jewish Christians who survive the persecutions and natural judgements on the land and look upon Christ in repentance. I think this will include the 144,000 who are sealed in *Revelation 7:14*. Once again, this number has been used by many Christians and cults to augment their teaching. The Jehovah Witness have even taken the Jewish character out of the sealing of 12,000 from each of the 12 tribes and has taught that it is really the 144,000 most holy and pious Jehovah Witnesses who ever live. Interesting that no one from the time before 1900 will be included in that list.

This is the group that will ask Jesus where He got the wounds on His body. And this one third of the original group in Israel will be strong believers who will go to heaven as Jesus separates those still alive at His coming. We have often called this the separation of the Sheep and the Goats. *Matthew 25:31-46*

I want to draw attention to the last verse of our study tonight:

Zechariah 13:9, "This third I will put into the fire; I will refine them like silver and test them like gold. They will call on my name and I will answer them, I will say, 'They are my people,' and they will say, 'The Lord is our God.' "

Isn't that a wonderful statement? These are the ones who will take a stand for Christ and will be faithful to Him. They will make it through the Great Tribulation because He has sealed them. We see them again in:

Revelation 14:1,3 "Then I looked and there before me was the Lamb standing on Mount Zion and with him 144,000 who had his name and his Father's name written on their foreheads. . .. And they sang a new song before the throne and before the four creatures and the elders. No one could learn the song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth."

God will raise a repentant believer to the greatest heights. He has a wonderful way of allowing His grace and supplication fall on all those who are willing to receive Him as Lord and Savior and when He does, He saves them and elevates them to new heights. Zechariah is making sure that those listening to him see the great position that God holds them in and that in the end days, even that which was given away by the Israelites will be restored to them. They will be more important than they have ever been before and they will set the tone for the rest of the world.

In the next lesson, Zechariah lays out for us some very detailed events that will happen when Christ comes again and puts the wrapping paper and bow on this great prophecy for the Jewish believers. We will see that when Jesus is King of the earth, He will make everything holy, even each one of us. Look above your cares and concern to see the Lord, and let that be the basis of your faith

Zechariah 14:1-23 God Creates the Ideal World

This final *Chapter 14 of the Book of Zechariah* is a totally prophetic chapter. It will explain to us exactly how all the events packed into *Zechariah 13:8,9* will unfold.

Zechariah 13:8,9 says, "In the whole land, declares the Lord, two-thirds will be stuck down and perish; yet one-third will be left in it. This third I will put into the fire, I will refine them like silver and test them like gold. They will call on my name, and I will answer them. I will say, 'They are my people', and they will say, 'The Lord is our God.'"

Prior to the national conversion of Israel to follow Jesus as their Lord, Savior and Messiah, **Zechariah 12:10-13:1**, the Jews will make a pact with the false messiah, **Daniel 9:27**, known as the foolish shepherd in the Book of Zechariah. In the middle of that seven-year agreement, the Antichrist will break the agreement and require everyone worship him, and him alone, **Daniel 9:24-27**; **Matthew 24:15**.

II Thessalonians 2:3,4 which says: "Don't let anyone deceive you in any way, for that day will not come until the rebellion occurs and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the man doomed to destruction. He will oppose and will exalt himself over everything that is called God or is worshiped, so that he sets himself up in God's temple, proclaiming himself to be God."

Israel will refuse and the armies of the world will besiege Jerusalem and Jesus will come to their rescue. After Armageddon has been fought, Israel will be restored as prophesied.

Verse one tells us "The day of the Lord is coming. This is a Biblical term that means, God's wrath will be unleashed against all who trample His sacred people and His teachings. It will end the rule of mankind here on this earth and usher in the Lord's 1,000-year reign here on this present earth.

Zechariah tells us this story of the coming of Jesus in the context of the last siege of Jerusalem in verses 1-3. Zechariah has told us before that this time of suffering would come for Israel in the last days but the emphasis has always been on the rescue that Jesus will offer to them. Here Zechariah spells out just how tragic this time will be and how much the nation of Israel will suffer. It is a time of darkness and darkness rules until Christ comes.

It is the final time that Jerusalem will be under siege and it is a siege by the rest of the world. We saw recently that Zechariah says the Antichrist when he turns on Israel will make them sitting ducks for the world to take and destroy. It will be armed forces from all the nations of the world. I think this will be like an United Nations force or a military force that is maintained by the Antichrist, made up of people from every nation. Since it will be a one-world government with one-man rule, a combined military that encompasses all the nations of the earth makes great sense. They will come against Jerusalem and they will take the city. In fact, it will be so complete of a triumph that they will calmly divide the spoils of the invasion on the very streets of Jerusalem. They will have no fear and this military force will be completely in control. It will have three horrible sufferings for the Israelites: their homes will be plundered and destroyed, the women will be raped, and half of the city will be held in captivity. The Page | 60

only redeeming comment about this terrible time is half of the city will be able to escape captivity. This will be the climax of the "time of Jacob's trouble." **Jeremiah 30:5-7** This will also purify, purge, refine, and judge those who will not be willing to follow Jesus in the Millennial Kingdom. All who remain will have a heart that is open to following and worshipping Jesus Christ.

Zechariah then tells us in verse 3 that Jesus Himself will come to intervene and save the nation of Israel from extinction. Their help will not come from the East, West, North or South but from the Lord, the Maker of the heavens and the earth. It will be Jesus that rescues His people.

When Jesus comes this time, it will not be to a quiet pastoral village like Bethlehem, nor will it be in obscurity, but He shall come just as we watched the astronauts go and return to the earth. Shot up in a rocket and returning in a capsule to a spot in first the Pacific Ocean and later in the Atlantic Ocean just a short distance from where a ship was waiting; and now landing both on land or the water in spots that are hit by the capsule like an arrow into a bullseye.

Jesus left from the Mount of Olives, Acts 1:9 and He shall return to earth and land and stand on the Mount of Olives. This is a tremendous statement but it is quite literal, the Mount of Olives is literal, still goes by that name today; Jerusalem is literal and still goes by that name today, and the people who saw Him ascend and the people who see Him descend are also quite literal, they are real people. This should not come as a surprise to us. God sent two angels to tell them this is what would happen as Jesus was leaving or ascending. Acts 1:11 says, "Men of Galilee, thy said, why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven." It has always been fascinating as well as troublesome to see people refer to a phrase of the Bible as literally true "saved by grace;" "the Lord is my Shepherd"; "take my burden for my burden is light"; "repent and be baptized every one of you for the forgiveness of sins and you shall receive the Holy Ghost"; and yet come to this passage and say, "I'm really not for sure that Jesus will land on the Mount of Olives, I think that was just to tell His followers that He will be among them." But I tell you, Zechariah wrote in 450 BC and no writer of the Bible after him ever corrected this statement when Zechariah said that Jesus would touch first on this earth as His feet came down on the Mount of Olives. When will this happen? In the Day of the Lord, in the time that Jerusalem is being invaded, when the city is taken for the last time. It will have nothing to do with international coinage, bitcoin, one-world government, or even the betrayal of the Antichrist. It will be to save, rescue, and deliver the part of the nation of Israel that is still alive.

When Christ comes nothing will ever be the same again. Just like the flood of Noah's Day changed the earth from a tropical paradise to a multi-seasonal climate so the coming of Christ will send the world into a topographical whirlwind that will change the world. *Zechariah* 14:4-8 tells how those changes will affect the land of Israel and the city of Jerusalem in the end times and through the Millennial Kingdom. Now, we know that the rest of the world has to change also. Mt Zion cannot be the tallest mountain in the world unless, Mt. Everest, Mt. Karakoram in Pakistan/China; Mt. Kangchenjunga in Nepal/Indian; Mt, Lhotse in Nepal/Tibet; Mt. Makalu in Nepal/Tibet; Mt. Cho Oyu in Nepal/Tibet; Mt. Dhaulagiri in Nepal; Mt. Manaslu, Nepal; Mt. Nanga Parbat in Pakistan; or Mt. Annapurna I in Nepal—

the ten tallest mountains in the Himalayas change their height, and that is not even counting the Indies, Andes; Rockies, Swiss Alps or hundreds of other mountain ranges in the world.

Just like the time of the flood, the Bible speaks in specifics about how this will take place in the areas addressed: Israel, Jerusalem and the Middle East and ignores most of the rest of the world. So, let's look closely at what Zechariah says will happen in the areas of Jerusalem and Israel.

When Jesus returns to rescue His people and His feet touch the earth at the top of the Mount of Olives, a great topographical upheaval will occur. Earthquakes are the most common ways that God reshapes the earth when He announces that He is coming in judgement. *Micah 1:2-4; Nahum 1:5 and Revelation 16:18-21.* The immediate result that will happen is that the Mount of Olives will be split in two and a valley running East to West will be created as the mountain is pushed northward and southward *Nahum 1:5; Revelation 16:18-19*.

The notation of Azal is interesting, scholars are divided on where it is but we know it is in the new valley that has been created and many believe that it is the far Eastern end of this valley that extends out towards the Jordan River. It is also the escape route for the half of Israelites still alive in the city of Jerusalem. All the saints will flee with the Israelites: all believers, Jews or Gentiles and the angels that are with them, *Revelation 19:14*.

As these believers flee the valley God will again change the lighting of the day. It is a common act of God to cause darkness, excessive light; or alter the light source when He has a plan that He is fulfilling. So, here the lights go out, *Isiah 13:9; 10:24:23; Joel 2:10; Matthew 24:29-30; and Revelation 6:12-14* and will be replaced by the light of Christ's glory. Only the Lord knows the fullness of the plan for that day when the lights go out and then are lit again in the millennial kingdom, *Isaiah 30:26* and *Malachi 4:2*. This will last the rest of the Day of the Lord, an indefinite time period but one set by God to accomplish what needs to happen in His day of judgement. When the judgement has been accomplished, then God will relight the earth "there will be light."

Zechariah notes one more great topographical change that will happen because of this movement of the earth when Jesus steps on the Mount of Olives. Jerusalem will become a port city. **Zechariah 14:8** says, "On that day living water will flow out form Jerusalem, half of it east to the Dead Sea and half of it west to the Mediterranean Sea, in summer and in winter."

The source of the water flowing out of Jerusalem will be a spring, "living water", and it will be plentiful and never ending. The remainder of the Millennial Kingdom, this literal water will flow out of Jerusalem towards the Dead Sea and towards the Mediterranean. Since the Mediterranean will connect with Jerusalem, I think the living water will always flow into the Great Sea. It will not be like most of the springs and streams of Israel and Palestine today—it will not dry up in the non-rainy seasons but will flow the entire year around.

In the next three verses Zechariah begins to paint a sketchy picture of the Millennial Kingdom. Most importantly, Jesus will be King of the Earth in this new Kingdom. There will be one Lord and one language. This could have been something that was done during the reign of the Antichrist over the Page | 62

world with his one world government, but it will be one language. We see God using that approach when Jesus came the first time and the Church started. Greece had conquered the known world and felt a strong need to 'Hellenize" the world and force everyone to do what they thought would improve life. So, Greek became the language of every nation; gyms and bath houses were built in every town they conquered; their coinage was adopted for the world; and the democratic form of government was encouraged in every land they conquered. So, Jesus and all of His disciples could speak Greek as well as Aramaic and Hebrew.

This will be very unifying. It will be the ultimate fulfilling of the Abrahamic Covenant: providing the Jewish people the nation of Israel which would match the land promised to Abraham and the Davidic Covenant, which promised a king from the tribe of Judah and the line of David. It will be a time when spiritual redemption will be offered to the Jew and to the Gentile and it will all be fulfilled by the Lord Jesus Christ.

All the nation will flourish as the lowlands of the Jordan Valley. It will be a place of intense fertileness and production and will have Jerusalem rise above it as a solitaire gemstone rises above the ring. It will be the proper place for the Temple of God and for the throne of King Jesus.

Zechariah mentions one further blessing for Jerusalem during this time when Christ rules. For the first time in history, Jerusalem will be a safe place to live. It has often been the most sensitive spot on the planet and often a tinderbox of riot throughout the Middle East. Peace will have come to the earth for the first time and that is because the Prince of Peace, Jesus Christ will be the ruler of this new Kingdom.

Zechariah circles back over the judgment that precedes the kingdom of Jesus Christ. He needs the readers to realize that unlike the time when many of them saw the city of Jerusalem overtaken and destroyed by the Babylonians; in this last age God will stop the invasion and disperse the enemies of Israel and Jerusalem.

In four terse verses, Zechariah tells the listeners that God will take care of the invaders, using many of the tactics that He used in previous times when He entered the battles to help the Israelites. The tactics God will use are:

- 1. Supernatural plagues like His judgment on the Assyrian army in Isaiah 37:36
- 2. The result of the plague will be confusion and stupor that turns the enemies of the Israelites into destructive fights against each other. *I Sam. 14:15-20, II Chronicles 20:23* and this will enable the ½ left in the city to flee.
- 3. God will enable His people to fight, *Isaiah 11:13-14*.
- 4. God will send a widespread plague that will extend to all the military animals and not allow them to be used—meaning that any support military vehicles, planes, missiles, drones, etc. will be rendered unusable by this plague.
- 5. God will thwart their efforts until they are ultimately destroyed by Jesus in Revelation 19:11-16.

You might wonder why Zechariah would continue to focus on the fact that God will destroy these enemies of the Israelites and that the defeat is total. He is speaking to a small remnant of less than 250,000 Jews; he is talking about world-wide situations, often the early Jews were only threatened by their small neighbor countries or slightly larger countries, but after a time the list included every World Kingdom Country: Babylon, Medes and Persians, Greeks and the Romans and Zechariah wants them to know that God is well aware of all they have faced and He wants to truly tell them He will guide them through these very final days to a victory with their Messiah.

Zechariah also includes some verses, **Zechariah 14:16-19** that speak to what will happen for the Gentiles that also survive the battle of Armageddon and are a part of the Millennial Kingdom. God will cause conversion among the nations who sent their armies to Jerusalem to destroy the city, kill the people, rape the women, and take the valuables from the people. They will come from every nation that was involved in the attack and this converted remnant of each nation will go right into the Millennial Kingdom and assume a place there. They will be asked by God to go to Jerusalem each year and celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles at the temple. This feast was the last feast of the Jewish year and it celebrated God taking care of the Israelites when they escaped from Egypt and lived for 40 years in tents/tabernacles. It is a time to remember how God takes care of His people even in the direst of circumstances. They are required by God to take this annual trip to Jerusalem and to give God honor and devotion for what He has given to them. Because God knows the nature of those who do not want to obey what He says, He puts a warning and curse on this command. He will not allow rain to fall on the nations where the people refuse to come and worship Him in Jerusalem. God is testing this huge remnant of people and they are also choosing to do what God says or rebel against God This is the litmus test for these Gentile believers. He uses the nation of Egypt as His example of how this will happen and this seems fitting, since the Israelites came out of Egypt and allowed the Lord God to lead them.

Zechariah concludes this great prophecy with a description of how this Millennial Kingdom will reflect the life of Jesus ruling every part of their life. It will be **Zechariah 14:20-21** a land where:

- 1. In that day even the most mundane of items, the bridles and harness of the horses will have 'Holiness to the Lord' inscribed on them and they will be dedicated as holy. There will not be a cooking utensil, pot or pan that will not be inscribed to the holiness of God.
- 2. Every pot and pan will have 'Holy to the Lord' inscribed on it and will be treated just as holy as the metal bowls were in the temple that were used in the work of the priests. Everything will be for the service of the Lord. We live in a time where almost nothing is set aside for the service of the Lord.
- 3. Everything people own or have in that day will be dedicated to the service of God. People will see their relationship with God is the primarily important part of their life.
- 4. This passage, just like the passage of *Ezekiel 40* talks about the sacrifices that they will offer.

In those days, there shall not be any Canaanites in the house of the Lord. This national title is used for those who are morally and spiritually unclean people. They will be prohibited from entering the Millennial Kingdom Temple. Before Israel conquer the Promised Land, the vile Canaanites inhabited it. So, for Israel the term Canaanite became proverbial for the degenerate and spiritually unclean people.

This means that every unbeliever will be removed, all hypocrites removed, and there will be none in the service of God unless they belong to Him. This will be the Millennium. What a glorious picture this is!

This is a great climax of promise for the prophecy of Zechariah.